

National Civil Society Alliances for UNTOC Implementation (NACSA4U)

Concept Note

Background:

As part of the work of the UNODC Civil Society Unit (CSU), the project “Stakeholder Engagement for the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), its Review Mechanism and Related Activities”, or SE4U in short, was initiated in 2019. The main objective of the SE4U Project is to facilitate the engagement of non-governmental stakeholders in the implementation of UNTOC and its review Mechanism.

One of the key outcomes of the SE4U project is to support country-specific “Voluntary Pilot initiatives” (VPI) by interested Member States, aimed at strengthening cooperation at the national level between relevant government authorities and civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector on country-specific transnational organized crime priorities.

To facilitate the operationalization of the VPIs and to coordinate national civil society engagement in the implementation of UNTOC, the CSU encourages and supports the establishment of National Civil Society Alliances. The National Civil Society Alliances are opportunities for non-governmental stakeholders’ engagement in efforts to counter organized crime, that allow to coordinate their efforts and initiatives in support of UNTOC implementation or other national responses to organized crime.

Objective:

Given the variety of non-governmental stakeholders working at country level on issues of transnational organized crime, it is essential to coordinate the voices, expertise, and work of such actors, to facilitate their engagement with government and streamline communication. The objective of the National Civil Society Alliances is two-fold:

1. To serve as a central unified point for coordination, contributions, and actions of national stakeholders in the fight against transnational organized in the context of the UNTOC.
2. To allow national governments to have a coordinated mechanism through which to engage non-governmental stakeholders in the review process.

Thematic areas:

The National Civil Society Alliances are wide networks of non-governmental stakeholders working in fighting transnational organized crime in the context of UNTOC. Broad thematic areas include but are not limited to:

- The UNTOC and its implementation.
- Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
- Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air.
- Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms.

- Drug trafficking, corruption, and related crimes in the context of UNTOC.
- Emerging crimes such as cybercrime and crimes that affect the environment as they related to UNTOC.

Besides thematic areas, members of the Alliances provide a range of services as part of their work and in response to the impact of organized crime in their communities, including:

- Crime prevention.
- At-risk youth support.
- Victim's assistance.
- Human rights protection.
- Advocacy and awareness raising campaigns.

Structure

Each National Civil Society Alliances decides their own structure and organize member's contributions depending on their country's UNTOC context. They are established either in the context of the VPI, or as proactive initiatives by country-based civil society actors that are involved in various SE4U activities such as capacity building and Constructive Dialogues.

The membership of the Alliance should be inclusive, representing the broadest spectrum of organizations from all parts of the country, and covering the broadest possible organized crime types. Based on previous experience, the following structure is proposed:

- **A Steering Committee** to coordinate the National Civil Society Alliance, led by a National Coordinator chosen by its members.
- **The National Coordinator** represents an organization which has expressed interest to serve as the Secretariat and serves as the main focal point between the Alliance, the Government and UNODC.
- The Steering Committee is formed based on expression of interest of members. It represents the broadest possible membership of the Alliance and ensures gender balance and thematic focus.
- **Working Groups** to coordinate technical expertise, strategic communication, engagement, and action.
- **Ordinary Members** are members with no specifically assigned roles in the Alliance. They support the Alliance as much as possible and as needed.
- The Alliance decides the responsibilities and tasks of the Steering Committee and the topics covered by Working Groups.
- The Alliance may agree a **Co-Coordinator and an Administrative Focal Point** to support its operations.

The Alliance may choose to adopt a different structure that works best for the benefit of its members and Government. Among other structural considerations, the National Civil Society Alliance may:

- Include a government representative as an observer to the Alliance's Steering Committee. This would allow the representative of the Government to observe relevant meetings of the Alliance and contribute as needed on behalf of the Government.

Activities

When the Alliance is established in the context of the VPI, the starting point for the activities is the implementation of the agreed priorities as captured in the VPI report. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that the Alliance contribute to governments' responses to the UNTOC review self-assessment questionnaire, upon Government request.

In addition, the National Civil Society Alliances may decide their main activities based on their needs, on their own or in coordination with the Government. These may include but not limited to:

- Create an activity plan to set out the actions of the Alliance in line with the recommendations mentioned in the VPI report, or as agreed by the Alliance and the Government. This is led by the Coordinator with the support of the Steering Committee, and may include ordinary meetings, a calendar for the Steering Committee meetings, the tasks of the Working Groups, capacity building sessions, engagement activities with other stakeholders, and preparations of policy briefs or publications, among others.
- Create national practice knowledge on organized crime which can benefit members and the Government.
- Contribute to the development and implementation of organized crime strategies by UNODC.
- Propose improvements of governments' policies or actions to fight organized crime.
- Contribute to Constructive Dialogues in the context of UNTOC Working Groups.
- Conduct regular consultations and coordination meetings with the Government (for example on a quarterly basis) facilitated by the Steering Committee to exchange and strategize on the implementation of the agreed priorities. The Steering Committee is encouraged to meet on a more regular basis.

Connection between National Civil Society Alliances and Civil Society Regional Networks:

National Civil Society Alliances (NACSA4U) and Civil Society Regional Networks (NET4U) are complementary coordination and engagement mechanisms. While the activities and actions of the National Civil Society Alliances are focused on a specific country, Civil Society Regional Networks operate at regional level, serving as an engagement bridge between issues at national and regional levels. Members of Civil Society Regional Networks can help initiate the establishment of National Civil Society Alliances in their respective countries, while members of the National Civil Society Alliances help to bring national issues and actions to the regional level, ensuring that transnational organized crime is addressed effectively.