

Voluntary Pilot Initiatives (VPIs): Fostering collaboration between governments and relevant non-governmental stakeholders for the implementation of UNTOC, its Protocols and the Review Mechanism

1. About the Voluntary Pilot Initiatives (VPIs)

In the context of the implementation of United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and Protocols thereto, as well as the Review Mechanism established through the [Resolution 9/1](#) of the Conference of the Parties to UNTOC (UNTOC COP), “**Voluntary Pilot Initiatives**” by interested State parties are aimed at strengthening cooperation between relevant government authorities and non-governmental stakeholders (Civil Society Organizations, academia and the private sector) at the national level. The objective of the VPI is two-fold:

- (i) To enable governments and non-governmental stakeholders to work together on country-specific priorities to ensure a comprehensive response to transnational organized crime within the framework of the UNTOC and Protocols thereto.
- (ii) To support an effective Review Mechanism through collaboration between governments’ review team and non-governmental stakeholders.

The VPIs are a unique opportunity for dialogue between the concerned government experts and relevant non-governmental stakeholders at the national level in preparation for the UNTOC COP Working Groups sessions that precede the [Constructive Dialogues](#) on the review process. This collaborative opportunity at a national level enables government representatives to receive useful perspectives from non-governmental stakeholders prior to the Working Groups sessions, setting the ground for meaningful exchange and contribution during the Constructive Dialogues.

A. Process of the Voluntary Pilot Initiatives

Upon agreement with an interested State party, UNODC supports the VPIs through the following activities:

1. Identifying relevant non-governmental stakeholders at national level.
2. Organizing a “Scoping Missions” with the relevant government entities to facilitate the identification of entry points for the Government to engage non-governmental stakeholders in the fight against organized crime and the UNTOC review process. The outcome of the “Scoping Meeting” will be a set of priorities related to the Government policies, which will inform the agenda of the launch of the Voluntary Pilot Initiative.
3. Organizing a “Scoping Missions” with non-governmental stakeholders to identify priorities for engagement with the Government. The priorities identified will be submitted to the Government for review and approval.
4. Facilitating a Voluntary Pilot Initiative meeting with relevant Government entities, civil society, academia, and the private sector to exchange and agree on the priorities identified during the “Scoping Missions” and to agree on a roadmap for collaboration. This meeting serves as the official launch of the VPI.
5. Supporting the Government in drafting a report of the process and the outcomes.

6. Facilitating the establishment of a National Civil Society Alliance to coordinate with the Government's relevant authorities.
7. Organize briefing sessions for States parties, civil society, academia and the private sector on the margins of relevant sessions, such as UNTOC COP, Constructive Dialogues, etc. to present the experience from the VPIs and ways in which governments and non-governmental stakeholders can further cooperate towards a comprehensive fight against organized crime and an effective Review Mechanism.
8. Subject to availability of resources, facilitating the implementation of the roadmap as reflected in the report of the VPI launch.

B. Expected outcomes of the Voluntary Pilot Initiatives

The outcomes of the VPIs are a set of agreed priorities for engagement and a roadmap for collaboration. To facilitate sustainability of the initiative and ensure coordinated communication, a National Civil Society Alliance is established to coordinate with the Government's relevant authorities.

2. "Menu of options" for collaboration:

It is at the discretion of each State party volunteering to conduct a VPI to determine the degree of collaboration with relevant non-governmental stakeholders. However, to provide an outline of potential components for such collaboration, the following three scenarios are provided as reference:

A. Minimum impact – space for constructive collaboration

- Regular dialogue and consultation meetings between government experts and representatives of NGOs, academia, and the private sector.
- Identification and agreement on national priorities on combatting organized crime.
- Development of joint recommendations to address issues related to organized crime.
- Establishment of a National Civil Society Alliance.

B. Medium impact – consultative and inclusive collaboration

In addition to options provided in scenario A:

- Invite National Civil Society Alliance members to consult with government experts on thematic issues ahead of UNTOC COP Working Group sessions.
- Invite National Civil Society Alliance members to provide inputs to responses to the self-assessment questionnaire for the UNTOC review. Inputs can be solicited before, during or after the completion of the self-assessment questionnaire.
- Establishment of informal thematic Task Force groups between relevant government authorities and NGOs, academics and the private sector.

C. High impact – formalized collaboration and integration of stakeholders

In addition to options provided in scenarios A & B:

- Establishment of a formal national multi-stakeholder body (e.g., an Advisory Board) whose members would meet regularly (e.g., at least twice a year) to review the progress made in the implementation of UNTOC and Protocols at the country level, complementary to the official review.
- Include members of National Civil Society Alliance as observers or experts in the REVMOD¹.
- Inclusion of NGOs, academics and private sector representatives in the national delegation to the Conference of the Parties to UNTOC.
- Initiation of relevant projects/initiatives at the national level.

3. Implementation

States parties have the final say about the decision to hold a VPI. When a State party accepts or requests to hold a VPI, they also decide on the focus and scope of engagement with non-governmental stakeholders in consultation with UNODC.

UNODC Civil Society Unit coordinates and facilitates the VPIs in close collaboration with the UNTOC Review Mechanism Secretariat, relevant UNODC thematic programmes and the field offices.

4. Mandate

Various articles of UNTOC provide for the involvement of non-governmental stakeholders in addressing transnational organized crime (e.g., Art. 32 (3c): improving the capacity of States Parties to combat TOC [...] by cooperating with relevant international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations). At the ninth session of the UNTOC COP, held in Vienna in October 2018, a Review Mechanism was adopted under [Resolution 9/1](#), entitled *'Establishment of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto'*. As per the Procedures and Rules of the Review Mechanism, an important role was given to the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations.

5. Entry points for the engagement of non-governmental stakeholders in the review process

- Civil society organizations can participate, as observers, in the sessions of the Conference of the Parties to UNTOC in accordance with Rule 17 of its [rules of procedure](#).
- In accordance with paragraph 53 of the Review Mechanism's [Procedures and Rules](#), "Constructive Dialogues" are convened for government experts and non-governmental representatives following the conclusion of the working group sessions.
- Pursuant to paragraph 23 of the Review Mechanism's Procedures and Rules, States parties under review are encouraged to prepare their responses to the [self-assessment questionnaires](#) through broad consultations at national level with all relevant stakeholders.

¹ REV MOD is a secure module of UNODC's SHERLOC through which the review of the UNTOC and the Protocols thereto is conducted.



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6. Context for implementation: SE4U project

The VPIs are implemented through UNODC's *Stakeholder Engagement for the implementation of UNTOC, its Review Mechanism and related activities*, known as [SE4U project](#). The aim of the SE4U project is to prepare and facilitate non-governmental stakeholders' (civil society organizations, academia and the private sector) engagement in the implementation of UNTOC and its review process. In line with various articles of the Convention and the Protocols, as well as paragraphs 23 and 53 of Resolution 9/1 which established the UNTOC Review Mechanism, the SE4U project carries out its activities through capacity building, facilitating national and international opportunities, as well as through [WhatsOn](#) knowledge hub.