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**Commission on Narcotic Drugs**  
**Reconvened sixty-fourth session**  
Vienna, 9–10 December 2021  
Agenda item 4 (c)  
**Strategic management, budgetary and  
administrative questions: Working methods of the  
Commission**

**Commission on Crime Prevention and  
Criminal Justice**  
**Reconvened thirtieth session**  
Vienna, 8–10 December 2021  
Agenda item 4 (c)  
**Strategic management, budgetary and  
administrative questions: Working methods of  
the Commission**

## **The New Working Methods of the Governing Bodies of UNODC: From Business Continuity to preparations for the Post-COVID era\***

### **A. Introduction**

1. The present document provides information on the working methods of the Governing Bodies of UNODC during the ongoing pandemic and in preparation of the transition to the post-COVID era. It provides an update to the last document of its kind, entitled “Note by the Secretariat on the working methods of the UNODC Governing Bodies during the COVID-19 pandemic” (E/CN.7/2020/CRP.21-E/CN.15/2020/CRP.2, from 23 November 2020). The document addresses activities of the Governing Bodies of UNODC from December 2020 to November 2021.

### **B. From business continuity to “new normal”**

2. Hybrid meetings have become part of the new reality during the COVID-19 pandemic, triggered by the measures taken by Member States for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 such as lockdowns, travel restrictions, quarantine requirements and limitations to the number of participants in events. The working methods of intergovernmental meetings have quickly adapted to the new reality, although a number of challenges remain, as will be elaborated in this paper. The Secretariat of the Governing Bodies has continued supporting the Vienna-based Commissions and their subsidiary bodies in the discharge of their mandates and in testing innovative solutions, also with a view to facilitating the transition to a new generation of intergovernmental meetings in the post-COVID era.

3. In the first half of 2020, the Vienna-based functional Commissions of the ECOSOC took a frontrunner role in the United Nations system, with an almost immediate transition from in-person to online and hybrid meetings. As hybrid working methods were established early on, full business continuity was guaranteed during the reporting period, meaning that all meetings scheduled were held as

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\* This document has not been edited.



planned. In addition to the sessions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), a number of intersessional meetings, briefings and special events were organized. Further, 22 meetings of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (FINGOV) and nine meetings of the Extended Bureaux of both the CND and CCPCJ were held.

4. Most meetings were organized in a hybrid format, combining online participation (on different platforms) with varying degrees of in-person participation (in accordance with the respective physical distancing measures defined by the host country and the Vienna International Centre Crisis Management Team). Some meetings were held in a podium-only format, with the Chair and the secretariat in the room and delegations joining online. A few informal consultations were held fully online, meaning that the Chair, the secretariat and participants joined online.

#### **Reconvened 63rd session CND and reconvened 29th session CCPCJ (December 2020)**

5. On 2–4 December 2020, the reconvened 63rd session of the CND, the scaled-down regular 29th session of the CCPCJ and the reconvened 29th session of the CCPCJ were held. They took by consensus several decisions, in particular on the implementation of the budget for the biennium 2020–2021.

6. The CND at its reconvened 63rd session further adopted decisions on the international control of cannabis and cannabis-related substances, following the recommendations by the World Health Organization on the change of the scope of control of cannabis and cannabis-related substances. This constituted the first instance in which the Commission had to vote in a hybrid meeting. According to decision 63/16, adopted during the reconvened session, and following advice provided by the secretariat of ECOSOC, the session was held with the physical presence of one representative of each member of the Commission, for voting and decision-making, and with online participation of other Member States and stakeholders. Voting by roll-call was carried out by the delegates physically present. One delegation, which was not able to join physically, delegated its vote to a representative of another Member State (“proxy voting”).

7. The CCPCJ also held its scaled-down regular 29th session, which had been postponed from May 2020 due to the impact of the COVID pandemic, on 3 December 2020, in a hybrid format, with in-person participation limited to one delegate per Member State of the Commission. According to ECOSOC Decision 2020/230, the items that were contained in the provisional agenda for the twenty-ninth session, as set out in Council decision 2019/223, including the thematic discussion on “Effective measures to prevent and counter the smuggling of migrants, while protecting the rights of smuggled migrants, particularly women and children, and those of unaccompanied migrant children”, were to be included in the provisional agenda for the thirtieth session.

#### **Intersessional period (January–March 2021)**

8. On 2 February 2021, the CCPCJ held a Special Event on the Launch of the 2020 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons in a podium-only format. The Commission was addressed by the Chair, the Executive Director by UNODC, the President of the General Assembly and the Austrian Minister for European and International Affairs. Representatives of the Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section of UNODC, as well as of the UNODC Field Office Network, presented the findings of the Global Report.

#### **Preparations of the 14th Crime Congress**

9. The CCPCJ also acts as the preparatory body of the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (Crime Congress). In this capacity it held

two intersessional meetings, on 22 January and 17 February 2021, for the preparation of the 14th United Nations Crime Congress, in a podium-only format.

10. Following the informal consultations held until December 2020, three additional rounds of informal consultations were held in the reporting period in a hybrid format (in December 2020, January 2021 and February 2021), during which delegations were able to finalize the text of the outcome document. As a result, Member States were able to adopt, at the beginning of the high-level segment of the 14th Crime Congress, on 7 March 2021, the “Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

11. The 14th Crime Congress was held from 7 to 12 March 2021. It was the first major hybrid United Nations meeting held away from a United Nations duty station and the first United Nations meeting held on a customized online platform, which provided participants with full virtual access to all meeting rooms and ample networking spaces. 5,500 participants from 152 States, 114 NGOs, 37 IGOs and 600 individual experts came together to discuss crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Apart from the regular conference programme, 13 special events and 130 ancillary meetings were held.

#### **Regular 64th session CND (April 2021)**

12. The CND held its regular session on 12–16 April 2021. In-person participation was limited to three plenary meetings: The opening session (including election of officers, adoption of agenda and adoption of a “Joint statement on the COVID-19 pandemic”), the session in which the Commission considered the WHO/ECDD recommendations on the scope of control of substances, and the closing session (including adoption of resolutions and report). For these meetings, in-person participation was limited to one delegate from United Nations Member States and a limited number of delegates from United Nations Entities, IGOs and NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC. The other plenary meetings and the meetings of the Committee of the Whole, as well as the related informal consultations were held in a podium-only format. Despite the limitations of in-person participation, the session was attended by 1,400 participants from 132 Member States, 17 intergovernmental organizations and 76 non-governmental organizations. In addition to the meetings of the plenary and Committee of the Whole, the Commission held a number of informal consultations and 111 side events were held during the session. The Commission also held a ceremonial opening to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 and the fiftieth anniversary of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, organized in cooperation with WHO, INCB and the Executive Director of UNODC. During the ceremonial opening segment, the Commission was addressed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Executive Director of UNODC, the Director-General of WHO, the President of the INCB and the Chair of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs. During its 64th session, the Commission adopted eight decisions and five resolutions, among them, the “Statement of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the implementation of Member States’ joint commitments to address and counter all aspects of the world drug problem”.

#### **Regular 30th session CCPCJ (May 2021)**

13. On 17–21 May, the CCPCJ held its 30th regular session in a hybrid format. In-person participation was possible for all delegations throughout all meetings of the plenary and the Committee of the Whole but limited to one delegate per delegation. The session was attended by more than 1,100 participants from 125 member States, 21 IGOs and 50 non-governmental organizations. The Commission held meetings of the plenary and the Committee of the Whole, a number of informal consultations and 84 side events were held during the session. The Commission adopted seven resolutions. The Commission also held a ceremonial opening to commemorate the

30th anniversary session of the Commission. During the ceremonial opening, the Commission was addressed by the Chair, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Executive Director of UNODC, the Ministers of Justice of Austria, Italy, and Japan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chair of the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. On 17 May 2021, the Commission held a Workshop organized by the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network on “Lessons learned and the impact of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol 20 years after its adoption”.

#### **Intersessional period (June–November 2021)**

14. On 25 June 2021, the CND held a special commemorative event at the occasion of the United Nations International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. During the event, held in a hybrid format, the 2021 World Drug Report was launched. The Commission was addressed by its Chair, the Executive Director of UNODC, the Chief of the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch, two representatives of youth, the Permanent Representatives of Colombia, Nigeria and Kyrgyzstan to the United Nations (Vienna) – which are members of the Bureau of the 64th session of the CND – the President of the International Narcotic Control Board and the Chair of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs.

15. The third round of the CND Thematic Discussions on the Implementation of all International Drug Policy Commitments, following up on the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, were held on 19–21 October 2021. National practitioners and policymakers from over 100 United Nations Member States, as well as United Nations entities, other intergovernmental and international organizations and civil society experts exchanged good practices and lessons learned in addressing the following challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019: increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, low value of confiscated proceeds of crime related to money-laundering arising from drug trafficking, and increasing level of the criminal misuse of information technologies for illicit drug-related activities.

16. The first CCPCJ Thematic Discussions on the Implementation of the Kyoto Declaration, were held on 10–12 November 2021. National practitioners and policymakers from over 100 United Nations Member States as well as United Nations entities, other intergovernmental and international organizations and civil society experts exchanged good practices and lessons learned in addressing the following topics: addressing the causes, including the root causes of crime; enhancing evidence-based crime prevention and promoting tailor-made crime prevention strategies; addressing the economic dimension of crime; and mainstreaming a gender perspective into crime prevention; addressing the needs and protect the rights of children and youth in crime prevention; and empowering youth for crime prevention.

17. The presentations and statements held during both Thematic Discussions were posted on the respective websites of the events,<sup>1</sup> thereby creating a repository of experience regarding national action taken to address the political commitments made.

18. On 19 November 2021, a CND special event was held in a hybrid format to launch the UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy 2021–2025. The event was opened and moderated by its Chair, the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations in Vienna. The Executive Director of UNODC delivered opening remarks, followed by a panel with the Chairs of Regional Groups, namely the Permanent Representatives of Algeria, Bangladesh, Latvia, El Salvador, and Belgium to the United Nations in Vienna, and the Chair of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs. The Chief of the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/64\\_Session\\_2021/thematic-sessions.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/64_Session_2021/thematic-sessions.html);  
[https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CCPCJ/session/30\\_Session\\_2021/thematic-sessions-kyoto.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CCPCJ/session/30_Session_2021/thematic-sessions-kyoto.html).

Laboratory and Scientific Service of UNODC presented the UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy 2021–2025.

#### **Meetings subsidiary bodies CND (September 2021)**

19. Meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the CND were organized in a podium-only format, as extraordinary sessions, on 20–24 September 2021, for one day per subsidiary body.<sup>2</sup> The bodies discussed, from a regional perspective, the impact of COVID-19 with regard to the implementation of the topics to be discussed at the thematic discussions of the CND in October 2021: COVID-19 and the increasing links between drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime; COVID-19 and proceeds of crime related to money-laundering arising from drug trafficking; and COVID-19 and the criminal misuse of information technologies for illicit drug-related activities. The sessions were attended by 660 participants from 99 countries, and 40 observers from 11 organizations.

#### **Meetings FINGOV**

20. FinGov held twenty-two meetings in hybrid and podium-only formats in the reporting period. Among others, the Group reviewed the functioning of the working group in the period beyond 2021 in ten rounds of informal consultations and reached consensus on a draft ECOSOC decision on the extension of FINGOV and a draft CND and CCPCJ resolution containing recommendations stemming from the working group, as well as on the draft CND and CCPCJ resolution on UNODC's 2022–2023 biennial consolidated budget.

#### **Contributions to the work of the Economic and Social Council**

21. The Commissions continued to actively contribute to the work of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly:

- On 25 January 2021, the Chairs of both Commissions participated in a virtual Meeting of the Chairs of the ECOSOC Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies.
- The Chair of the CCPCJ participated in the first Dialogue of the Integration Segment of the Council, held on 27 May 2021.
- On 10 June, the Chair of the CND addressed the ECOSOC Integration Dialogue on “Human well-being and capabilities: Building back more resilient, healthy, equitable and sustainable societies”.
- Both Commissions submitted contributions to the High-level Political Forum. They co-organized on 7 July 2021 with the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations (New York) a side event to the High-Level Political Forum, entitled “The Impact of COVID-19 on Drugs and Crime – Sustainable and resilient recovery through the lenses of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”, with the participation of the CND and the CCPCJ Chair, as well as the Ambassador of Japan to the United Nations in Vienna, representing the host country of the 14th Congress.
- The Chair of the CND and CCPCJ briefed the Management Segment of the Council, held on 21–22 July 2021, which was held in hybrid format.
- The Chair of the CCPCJ and the first Vice-Chair of the CND participated in a virtual meeting with Chairs of ECOSOC Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies on the preparations for the 2022 ECOSOC Coordination Segment, held on 22 October 2021.

<sup>2</sup> [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Subsidiary\\_Bodies/extraordinary-sessions-of-the-subsidiary-bodies-of-the-commission-on-narcotic-drugs\\_2021.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Subsidiary_Bodies/extraordinary-sessions-of-the-subsidiary-bodies-of-the-commission-on-narcotic-drugs_2021.html).

- On 23 November 2021, both Chairs participated in a meeting convened by Ambassador Stoeva, Vice-President of ECOSOC (Bulgaria) on the review of the work of subsidiary bodies.
- Moreover, with regard to the work of the General Assembly, an information briefing was organized by the Secretariat of the two Commissions together with the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations (New York), on the occasion of the Third's Committee's deliberation on "Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice" and "International Drug Control", on 4 October 2021.

### C. Training Tools and Multilingualism

22. To help mitigate the impact of the lack of in-person meetings, including in-person training, the Secretariat to the Governing Bodies continued to make easy and hands-on information available on the mandates, policies and activities of the two Commissions. Alternative ways of knowledge-sharing have been strengthened, considering that in-person opportunities for informal exchange and learning continued to be scarce. Also, in the reality of virtual or hybrid meetings, multilingualism gains a new importance, as written information becomes an even more crucial basis for delegations' preparation and participation.

23. On 13 September 2021, the Secretariat to the Governing Bodies held a hybrid briefing to new delegates on the work of the Commissions.

24. The Secretariat to the Governing Bodies, in cooperation with Conference Management Services, has offered specific testing sessions before major intergovernmental meetings. They did not only serve as an opportunity to test technical equipment and make sure it fulfils the requirements, but also as hands-on training opportunities on the practicalities of hybrid meetings. Ad hoc testing was also available shortly before each meeting. The testing sessions were well received by delegations, as indicated repeatedly by delegates in their comments made in satisfaction surveys.

25. During the reporting period, the following new training tools were produced:

- Two introductory videos on the CCPCJ and the CND were produced and launched during the briefing for new delegates on 13 September.<sup>3</sup> They provide an overview of the work of the two Commissions (mandate, elections, membership, bureau etc.) as well as substantive information on the respective policymaking and operational functions and general logistical information. They will as a next step be made available in further languages. They are also pilot products for the development of more comprehensive e-learning resources.
- An eLearning course on the political commitments on drugs was developed. The tool provides an introduction to the work of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and its relationship to the realization of the sustainable development goals, as well as an overview of all drug policy documents and processes. The course introduces the policy recommendations made by Member States in the respective areas of drug policy, including demand reduction, availability and access, supply reduction, rights, trends, international cooperation and alternative development. Recent data is provided with regard to the challenges identified in the respective areas. Examples of implementation and of technical cooperation opportunities offered by UNODC are shared. The course will be available online for all interested delegations and can also form the basis of a live training.
- An eLearning course on the Kyoto Declaration was developed. The course aims to provide an introduction to and facilitate the implementation of the Kyoto

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<sup>3</sup> <https://youtu.be/Mzi3iFH9Bfw>; <https://youtu.be/bDaqi0jyY2U> – also available at the Commission's website.

Declaration. The user learns about the background of the Kyoto Declaration, its relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the substantive areas covered in the Kyoto Declaration. The course also informs about UNODC's portfolio of technical assistance and provides contact information for follow-up action. A selection of areas of the comprehensive Kyoto Declaration was made based on UNODC's expertise and the research and background information available, with a view to making this training course short and user-friendly.

- The online course on the normative functions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs under the three international drug control conventions,<sup>4</sup> so far available in English only, was translated into Chinese. The online course is entitled "Introduction to Scheduling" and aims at supporting Member States in gaining a comprehensive overview of the treaty-based function of the Commission and explains how the scheduling process works in an interactive and easy-to-follow way.

#### **D. Sub-Task Team on Intergovernmental Processes as affected by COVID-19**

26. In April 2020, UNODC had set up an internal interdivisional task team on the COVID-19 response, covering all areas related to the work of the Office, including a sub-task team on "Intergovernmental Processes as affected by COVID-19". It is led by the Secretariat to the UNODC Governing Bodies and comprises representatives from the Secretariat to the Governing Bodies, the Organized Crime Branch, the Corruption and Economic Crime Branch, Conference Management Services and the Information Technology Services of the Division for Management.

27. The members of the sub-task team have continued to meet on a regular basis (approximately once a month) to discuss challenges and opportunities, as well as exchange lessons learned in the organization of intergovernmental meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to ensuring the greatest possible consistency in the management of hybrid meetings.

#### **E. United Nations system-wide Informal Network of Secretariats to Governing bodies**

28. The Secretariat to the UNODC Governing Bodies has throughout the pandemic been in close contact with the Secretariats to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to receive guidance, and exchange on lessons learned and developments with regard to working modalities in the respective bodies. This was particularly valuable in the planning for the first voting in the Vienna-based Commissions in a hybrid meeting, during the reconvened 63rd session of the CND in December 2020.

29. In addition to the regular exchange with the Secretariat of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, the Secretariat to the Governing Bodies continues to be part of an informal United Nations Governing Body Secretariats network (UNGBS). This network aims at ensuring coordination and exchange of good practices in the United Nations Governance system. Participating entities in that network include, among others, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Bank, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Framework

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<sup>4</sup> [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Mandate\\_Functions/scheduling-elearning-tutorial.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Mandate_Functions/scheduling-elearning-tutorial.html).

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

## **F. Lessons learned and outlook**

30. While no online meeting will be able to live up to the in-person exchanges and deliberations, hybrid meetings have ensured the full business continuity of intergovernmental processes during the reporting period.

31. Participants lists of the Commissions from 2019–2021 show that hybrid meetings not only led to maintained, in some cases, higher participation numbers, but that also the diversity (e.g. ministries represented) in the representation of Member States and Organizations could be fully maintained. Smaller countries that had never (or not regularly) participated in Commission sessions were for the first time (or first after a long time) represented in hybrid Commission sessions. Moreover, the participation of technical experts from capitals was facilitated. Furthermore, hybrid meetings decreased travel, thereby reducing travel costs and a reduction of the carbon footprint, and presented a – not yet fully used – potential for disability inclusion.

32. While the experience with hybrid meetings were mostly positive, a number of challenges remain. Problems with connectivity and limited access to technology have caused delays in intergovernmental proceedings and, in some cases, impaired the effective participation of delegations. Furthermore, experiences made by the Secretariat in the reporting period has confirmed that the additional online component is labour- and resource intensive from a Secretariat’s point of view. Managing the online component not only requires hardware and licences. To make it run smoothly, every meeting requires a number of additional roles to be carried out by the Secretariat (registration for different speakers and observer roles, admission to platform, trouble-shooting, tech chat, list of speakers, operating for power point presentations upon instructions of online speaker, recording, muting). Before the meetings, test and training sessions need to be carried out. Moreover, as long as COVID measures are in place, there are also additional tasks to be carried out to support the in-person component, for example, the contact tracing required by the local authorities. At the same time, all other substantive and organizational functions of the secretariat remain to be carried out, as they existed before the pandemic.

33. Hybrid intergovernmental meetings are an important contribution to the implementation of the “Leaving no one behind”-vision, in the sense that they guarantee that all Member States can exchange views and take decisions at a level playing field, with the Secretariat providing them with the opportunity to make their voices heard, during the pandemic and in the transition to a new generation of intergovernmental meetings in the post-COVID era.

34. The Secretariat wishes to thank those Member States that have provided extrabudgetary resources<sup>5</sup> which enabled it to guarantee business continuity and to develop innovative solutions to new challenges. The Secretariat keeps working to develop innovative ideas to further strengthen the framework for intergovernmental meetings during the pandemic and in the preparation phase towards the post-COVID

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<sup>5</sup> Since 2015 the following countries have contributed to project AUTZ69: Qatar, Germany, Australia, United States, Austria, Japan, China and France.

era. Such ideas include the enhanced use of platforms for guaranteeing an inclusive conferencing environment and for facilitating the CND and CCPCJ day-to-day business and coordination among Permanent Missions – in and outside of Vienna. The Secretariat to the UNODC Governing Bodies stands ready to discuss these ideas and related funding needs with interested delegations.

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