



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

West African
Central
Authorities and
Prosecutors
against
Organized
Crime

WACAP

Programme overview

Background

The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Organized Crime Convention, in its resolutions 5/8 and 6/1 has mandated the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to foster international and regional cooperation by facilitating the development of regional networks and, where appropriate, by facilitating cooperation among all such networks. To this end, UNODC is endeavouring to establish regional networks of central authorities and prosecutors to more effectively combat transnational organized crime. The West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors was created pursuant to this mandate.

WACAP is linked to the Bamako Declaration on Impunity, Justice, and Human Rights in West Africa, which has as a priority the promotion of mutual legal assistance networks among magistrates in different countries.¹

Objectives

The purpose of WACAP is to strengthen the capacity of central authorities and prosecutors to combat all forms of organized crime and impunity, and to facilitate regional and international cooperation

In the first phase, the Network will assist West African central authorities in developing contacts with their counterparts within and outside the region. Through regular meetings and training programmes, the Network will enable central authorities and relevant practitioners to exchange information about their respective legal systems and procedures, to develop a common language, and to share good practices. This will allow them to better prepare and respond to requests for mutual legal assistance and extradition, and the seizure and confiscation of the proceeds of crime.

In the second phase, the Network intends to develop and strengthen the capacity of prosecutors specialized in organized crime to lead successful prosecutions and to cooperate at the regional and international levels.

¹ Bamako Declaration, Objective 1, Make the Fight against Impunity a Priority in the Promotion of Good Governance.

Activities

- Creating a safe forum for the exchange of informal and formal information between central authorities, prosecutors and magistrates;
- Providing or developing the necessary tools to central authorities, including legal and practical information, to help them manage international cooperation processes and to resolve any related impediments (such as the UNODC MLA request writer tool, guides related to international cooperation in criminal matters and tools related to specific forms of organized crime);
- Developing a better understanding among participants of the application of relevant international, regional and bilateral legal instruments;
- Facilitating contacts between the West African Network and other regional networks.

In the long term, WACAP aims to:

- Promote live or virtual meetings of prosecutors and magistrates to facilitate the sharing of experiences;
- Support operational cooperation, including joint investigations of specific cases, as required;
- Support the establishment and strengthening of specialized units to investigate and prosecute various forms of organized crime;
- Foster the expertise of prosecutors and magistrates in organized crime in its various forms, as well as their knowledge of relevant investigative and prosecutorial approaches and procedures through professional exchanges and other forms of training in cooperation with national and regional training institutes, where possible and appropriate.

Benefits of the Network

WACAP provides the following benefits:

- Enabling face-to-face interactions that build trust between officials and a better understanding of each State's legal and procedural requirements. This is especially important in West Africa, a region divided between civil law and common law traditions, where three languages are in use.
- Facilitating understanding of the crimes being dealt with at the national level in their broader regional and international context. This would encourage prosecutors to look beyond the crime at hand and examine possible links to other crimes, including those which may have links to other jurisdictions. Such an approach is key to dismantling criminal networks and implementing effective prosecution strategies to reach leaders and those most culpable for the crimes.
- Promoting South-South cooperation, in the sense that the more advanced countries of the region can share know-how and experience.

Contacts

Karen Kramer, Senior Expert
Organized Crime Branch
karen.kramer@unodc.org

Veronic Wright, Senior Legal Regional Advisor
Regional Office for West and Central Africa
veronic.wright@unodc.org

Ousmane Diallo, Criminal Justice Administrator
Regional Office for West and Central Africa
ousmane.diallo@unodc.org

WACAP is an initiative of
The Global Programme for Strengthening Capacities
to Prevent And Combat Organized Crime (GPTOC)
and the UNODC Regional Programme
for West and Central Africa, in cooperation with ECOWAS.

Donors: Governments of France and
the United States of America