

## **STANDING AGENDA ITEMS FOCUSED ON THE DEVELOPMENTS AND OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW PROCESS**

### **AGENDA ITEM II**

#### **STATEMENT**

### **GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME**

#### **Constructive Dialogue on International Co-operation Vienna, 13 September 2023**

I am making this statement on behalf of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, a global, independent civil society organization headquartered in Geneva, focussed on analysis and improved responses to all forms of transnational organized crime.

I would like to thank the Chair, UNODC and the NGO Alliance for all the preparations that have gone into today's Constructive Dialogue and yesterday's multistakeholder preparatory day. It is welcome and that a broad cross section of civil society has been invited and is participating.

Since the Convention and the Protocol were adopted at the beginning of the millennium, a lot has changed, and we must be honest that the nature of organized crime has evolved. And as we speak – the harms of illicit markets, in terms of violence and instability, are clearer to see than ever. The GI-TOC's Global Organized Crime Index 2021 showcases how high rates of criminality are the norm – 80% of the world's population live in countries with high levels of criminality. Our next iteration of the Index will be published later this month and show how things have evolved since 2021.

On the review process, we have seen from the Secretariat's presentation and background documents – the implementation review mechanism of the UNTOC is only just starting. As we speak, no country has completed its first period of review, meaning we are very far from 70% threshold needed for countries to move to the review phase on international cooperation, the driving objective of the treaty. This leaves the working groups, the Conference, and the wider public with as yet no reviewed information on the implementation of the Protocol and the Convention in countries. It is unclear when countries will indeed complete their reviews.

Whatever the reasons for the delays, this leaves us with a big data gap on how the widespread ratification of the Protocol should be understood in terms of evaluating its performance or impact on criminal markets, including on how effective international cooperation efforts have been. This is reflected in research that we have undertaken, including a recent research paper on the UNTOC in Africa which reflects on the lack of public data or evidence on international cooperation.

Data and expertise from civil society plays a vital role in filling this gap, which is why multisectoral engagement is so important, but unfortunately the working group takes place behind closed doors, and avenues for engagement in the review mechanism are restricted.

Civil society can help push the review mechanism forward and produce data and evidence that helps states and societies better understand the harms and dynamics of organized crime, and how we can improve on our existing responses, including through international cooperation.

