

Statement by
Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Before
Twelfth session of the Working Group on International Cooperation:
The impact of Covid-19
in the field of international cooperation in criminal matters

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the merciful

Ever since the outbreak of the virus and the global pandemic, the world has changed. As a result of this situation, the fights against all kinds of crimes have been affected, including the minimized ability of law enforcement authorities to counter crime and the heightened vulnerability of victims due to the drastically poor situations of so many people. The situation has also provided a window of opportunity for criminal groups to expand their criminal activities. However, the global pandemic reaffirmed once again that international cooperation, is the only way for the world to effectively respond to the pressing challenges the States Parties face every day. Going through such awfully difficult times which threatens the way of life as we know it, can also raise awareness to other challenges some countries have been forced to face every day, without any hope for a global lifeline. It is our shared responsibility to address such challenges collectively, and eliminate any opportunity for criminal groups to commit crime.

As established time and time again, combatting transnational organized crime requires a collective and coordinated response, without losing sight of the full respect for sovereignty and security of States Parties. In this context, international cooperation, having a prominent place in the Convention, must be regarded and used as a mechanism to address the alarming gaps in our efforts, and to increase the outreach of our activities in line with the Convention.

That is why the mandate of the Working group on international cooperation is of great importance, especially since the situation calls for a fundamental strategic change in the severity of our collective efforts.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with its international commitments and despite serious international impediments, has maintained its determining role in the region in fighting crime and consistently supported an international response to transnational organized crime under the auspices of the United Nations. To this end, many agreements have been concluded with the neighbors and the countries beyond, in the context of mutual legal assistance and extradition. These instruments have provided the law enforcement authorities with opportunities for a strengthened cooperation, timely exchange of information and necessary coordination in criminal investigations.

That being said, our fight has not been without challenges. The Unilateral Coercive Measures, while violating the fundamental principles of international law, article 4 of the Convention and its underlying purpose in promoting cooperation, have impaired international cooperation in combatting crime and allocation of resources to this cause, which only encourage criminal groups to expand their activities further, regionally and internationally. This, in time, is going to affect all states, as we have witnessed in the case of the pandemic that these consequences tend to *spread*. That is sufficient to merit a change in the approach of the States Parties and the UNODC, to provide cooperative measures and assistance to address such illegal restrictions in order to remove them, once and for all.

The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its dedication and its unwavering resolve in fighting crime and strengthening cooperation in this context, while having to deal with the negative consequences of restrictive measures imposed by a certain state and even a global pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Chair