

United Kingdom Statement
12th UNTOC Working Group on International Co-operation
Impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on international cooperation in
criminal matters: a one-year overview

26 March 2021

Thank you Chair for giving me the floor.

In the context of today's agenda item on effective International Cooperation during the past year of the Covid-19 pandemic, I'd like to provide a couple of remarks and share some recommendations for the consideration of the experts.

Tackling transnational organised crime remains a top priority for the UK, now more than ever in light of the impact of Covid-19.

The pandemic has highlighted, and often increased, the adaptability, operational capacity, extensive networks, and the bank balances of transnational organised crime groups. We have seen crime and security-related trends of the past three decades accelerate faster than we could have expected.

The UK is grateful that during the Covid-19 pandemic we have been able to make the best use of our innovative UK serious and organised crime network, "SOCnet" - our overseas network of organised crime and illicit finance policy officers covering over 100 countries. The network has ensured our international partnerships around the world have continued to make great strides in tackling serious and organised crime despite the challenging environment of the last year.

Their work is further evidence that international cooperation is more important than ever to tackling these evolving threats.

Opportunities such as the one presented here to discuss the new challenges posed by Covid-19 and the role of international cooperation are more timely than ever. And again, we thank the United Nations for facilitating this incredibly important discussion at a critical time.

I would also like to reflect on the importance of the UNTOC Review Mechanism at this time, as an international tool to test the robustness of strategies to tackle transnational organised crime at a point where Covid-19 is rapidly changing the status quo. Given the importance that we attach to the Review Mechanism, we encourage all States Parties to constructively engage in the process, so as to promote examples of good practice in the implementation of joint-commitments and engagement with civil-society and international partners, as well as identify gaps, challenges and capacity-building requirements in the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols.

In February, in collaboration with the UNODC we demonstrated our leadership in championing the UNTOC, by funding a series of expert events on UNTOC and human rights, UNTOC and gender and on creating effective strategies against transnational organised crime. We're pleased that these events were attended by experts and practitioners across the globe.

These productive sessions with our UN partners and many fellow member states highlighted the importance of considering the context of Covid-19 and enhancing international cooperation, but

also of factors such as gender perspectives, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and human rights when creating effective strategies. As Covid-19 nudges us towards revisiting our approach to combating transnational organised crime as it continues to take a heavy toll on countries and communities, it is crucial that we remain mindful of doing no harm in our attempts to tackle the organised crime threat.

We therefore would like to share some recommendations for the consideration of the experts and we have them in advance to the Secretariat.