



**INTERVENTION BY
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

AT THE

**15TH SESSION OF THE UNTOC WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION**

**AGENDA ITEM 2: THE ROLE & IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY WITH REGARD TO
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN CRIMINAL MATTERS: OPPORTUNITIES,
CHALLENGES & CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS**

05 JUNE 2024

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

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Co-Chairs,

On behalf of the Government of South Africa, I wish to thank you and the panellists for their able leadership and guidance to the deliberations of this Working Group on International Cooperation. Equally I thank the Secretariat of the UNODC for the work put in place in preparation for this 15th Session.

The crime landscape has exponentially changed in the past years due to the rapid advancement of technology, allowing organised criminal groups to evade detection and enable the increase in cyber-related criminal activities which have negative societal and economic consequences.

Technological progress has given rise to new and sophisticated tools and methods that criminals can exploit. The widespread use of the internet, along with developments in encryption, cryptocurrencies, and dark web markets, has provided criminals with unprecedented opportunities to conduct illegal activities while remaining anonymous, which poses significant challenges for law enforcement and societies alike.

Co-Chairs,

Despite the growing pervasiveness of organised crime on a global scale, the advancement in technology has also improved the efficiency of international cooperation in criminal justice matters, leading to enhanced communication and coordination through real-time information sharing, integrated databases, artificial intelligence tools in face recognition and digital forensics.

Co-Chairs,

I am pleased to inform the Working Group that South Africa has created an electronic repository system for the processing of requests for mutual legal assistance and extraditions to effectively track and manage all incoming and outgoing requests.

South Africa likewise makes provision for the electronic submission of requests for mutual legal assistance from other States through the Central Authority's official website. Equally, South Africa utilises electronic portholes of foreign States to receive and submit requests.

In addition,

South Africa utilizes video conferencing for engagements with foreign states on the extradition of fugitives, which is a valuable tool in ensuring fast and efficient cooperation. It also results in cost efficiency, enhanced accessibility and facilitates broad participation of multiple stakeholders from various inter-agencies.

While the integration of advanced technologies in combating organized crime has enhanced cooperation, it also necessitates a robust framework for cyber security including data protection and the promotion of ethical standards to ensure that these tools are used responsibly and justly. This includes data protection through encryption and limited access control, standardised protocols and upholding ethical standards of transparency and accountability.

Co-Chairs,

South Africa recognised the significant progress made in international efforts to enhance international cooperation through the use technology, however, access to these digital technologies still remains a challenge to developing countries. Some of the challenges confronting developing countries includes limited access to technology such as reliable, quality and cost-efficient internet, poor technological infrastructure,

skills and knowledge deficits, inadequate cybersecurity measures and lack of financial resources.

To this end, my Government encourages international donors through the UNODC, to avail the necessary unburdened extra budgetary resources to enable the Working Group to fulfil its mandate in assisting the Conference of Parties to develop cumulative knowledge in the area of international cooperation in criminal matters through the use of technology and innovative tools. This necessitates training and capacity efforts to equip authorities involved in international cooperation in criminal matters with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize these technologies. This also includes fostering collaborative partnerships, facilitating access to global databases and necessary technological equipment and encouraging the sharing of best practices in cybersecurity and data protection so that developing countries can effectively combat transnational organised crime,

To conclude, we are pleased with the efforts of the Working Group on International Cooperation in facilitating the development of the recommendations aimed at enhancing international cooperation and mutual legal assistance.

We have listened very carefully to the Panellists and we appreciate the exchange of information. We would particularly support recommendations made in relation to facilitating access to global databases and the necessary technological equipment across regions and encouraging the standardizing of communication protocols to enable effective data sharing.

I thank you.