



**Conference of the States Parties
to the United Nations
Convention against Corruption**

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**Review of the implementation of the United Nations
Convention against Corruption**

**Performance of the Mechanism for the Review of
Implementation of the United Nations Convention against
Corruption**

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present document contains an overview of the performance of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, including updated information on the conduct of country reviews during the first and second review cycles of the Mechanism, as well as other relevant information.

* [CAC/COSP/2021/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 8/2, the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption noted with appreciation the commitment of States parties to the country review process in their capacity as both States under review and reviewing States and urged them to adhere to the indicative timelines for country reviews, as contained in the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat in the conduct of country reviews, and to avoid, as much as possible, delays in the various stages of the review. Moreover, the Conference, *inter alia*, requested the Implementation Review Group to continue to collect, with the support of the secretariat, relevant information, including the views of States parties, pertaining to the performance of the Implementation Review Mechanism, with a view to continuing, at the appropriate time, its assessment of the performance of the Mechanism, as provided for in paragraph 48 of its terms of reference and its decision 5/1. The Conference also requested the secretariat to continue to provide to the Implementation Review Group analyses of the time frames associated with the crucial stages of the review process, including statistics on the number of country reviews that are behind schedule, with the aim of facilitating a more efficient process. Further, the Conference called upon States parties and the secretariat to continue to develop and promote the use of information and communications technologies in order to support the implementation of the Convention by the States parties and facilitate country reviews, in accordance with Conference resolution 6/7. In its decision 8/1, the Conference decided to extend the duration of the second cycle of the Mechanism until June 2024 to allow for the completion of country reviews under that cycle.

2. The present report contains an overview of the organization and conduct of country reviews during the first and second review cycles and a brief analysis of the functioning of the Mechanism. The report also contains an overview of the activities of the secretariat to develop and promote the use of information and communications technologies to facilitate country reviews. It should be considered in conjunction with the note by the Secretariat on the activities of the Implementation Review Group (CAC/COSP/2021/3) and the note by the Secretariat containing the views of States parties on the performance of the Implementation Review Mechanism (CAC/COSP/2021/4).

II. Organization and conduct of country reviews during the first review cycle and the first to fifth years of the second review cycle

A. Time frames established for the implementation review process

3. The first cycle of the Implementation Review Mechanism started in 2010, following the adoption of Conference resolution 3/1, entitled “Review mechanism”. The second cycle of the Mechanism was launched at the sixth session of the Conference, held in St. Petersburg, the Russian Federation, from 2 to 6 November 2015, through the adoption by the Conference of its resolution 6/1 on the continuation of the review of implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

4. Despite efforts to accelerate the pace of reviews, delays have occurred in the performance and progress of the second review cycle. Information on the specific elements of the process that have led to delays in the second cycle was included in the documentation made available to the Conference at its eighth session.¹

5. According to the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat in the conduct of country reviews, the State party under review should submit the self-assessment checklist within two months of being informed of the beginning of

¹ CAC/COSP/2019/12.

the conduct of the country review, and the full review should take no longer than six months to complete.² However, in practice, country reviews have not been completed within the requisite six months. There are a number of reasons for this, including delays in the nomination of focal points and governmental experts and delays in the submission of the self-assessment checklist by States parties under review, translation requirements, scheduling difficulties for the country visits and delays in the submission of additional information following the country visit, as well as the unexpected circumstances relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. In view of those delays, the Conference at its eighth session decided to extend the duration of the second cycle until June 2024 to allow for the completion of country reviews under that cycle.

B. Statistical overview

7. The data provided below shows the progress achieved in the conduct of the country reviews of 188 States parties³ during the first and second cycles of the Implementation Review Mechanism.

8. In the first cycle, at the time of writing,⁴ 186 focal points had been nominated, 183 responses to the self-assessment checklist had been received and 175 direct dialogues had been held (161 country visits and 14 joint meetings).⁵ Furthermore, 173 executive summaries and 161 country review reports had been completed and 88 States parties had made their full country review report available on the website of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

9. In the second cycle, a total of 178 focal points had been nominated, 133 responses to the self-assessment checklist had been received, 72 direct dialogues had been held (67 country visits and five joint meetings), and 57 executive summaries and 32 country review reports had been completed. In addition, 18 States parties for which the country reviews had been completed had made their full country review reports available on the UNODC website.

10. The statistical data provided in this report also include States parties and parties with reviews under the fourth year of the first cycle and fifth year of the second cycle, which commenced in 2021.

C. Drawing of lots

11. In accordance with paragraph 14 of the terms of reference of the Implementation Review Mechanism, the States parties participating in the review process in a given year of a review cycle are selected by a drawing of lots at the beginning of each cycle. Paragraph 19 of the terms of reference provides that the selection of the reviewing States parties shall be carried out by the drawing of lots at the beginning of each year of the cycle, with the understanding that States parties shall not undertake mutual reviews.

1. First review cycle

12. In accordance with these provisions, the reviewing States parties for the fourth year of the first cycle of the Mechanism were selected through a drawing of lots held at the fourth session of the Implementation Review Group. Sixty-two country reviews began on 1 July 2013, and further drawings of lots were conducted to select the

² The commencement of the reviews is the date when, in accordance with paragraph 12 of the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat in the conduct of country reviews, the secretariat officially informs the State party under review and the reviewing States parties of the date of the beginning of the conduct of the country review.

³ At the start of the first cycle, in 2010, there were 144 States parties to the Convention.

⁴ The statistical data contained in this report are as at 13 September 2021.

⁵ Two States parties had opted to conduct neither a country visit nor a joint meeting.

reviewing States parties for the States parties that had ratified or acceded to the Convention thereafter. Those additional drawings of lots took place at the resumed fourth, fifth, resumed fifth, sixth, resumed sixth, seventh, resumed seventh, eighth, resumed eighth, ninth, first resumed ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth and resumed twelfth sessions of the Group. Including the new accessions to and ratifications of the Convention, 84 States were under review in the fourth year.⁶

2. Second review cycle

13. In its resolution 6/1, the Conference requested the Group to proceed, at the beginning of its seventh session, to the selection of reviewed and reviewing States parties for the second review cycle by the drawing of lots in accordance with paragraphs 14 and 19 of the terms of reference of the Mechanism. The Conference also requested the Group to hold intersessional meetings open to all States parties for the purpose of the drawing of lots in accordance with paragraph 19 of the terms of reference of the Mechanism and without prejudice to the right of a State party to request that the drawing of lots be repeated at the Group's subsequent intersessional meeting or regular session.

14. At an intersessional meeting held on 17 June 2016 in Vienna, the drawing of lots was conducted for the scheduling of the country reviews in the second cycle. Subsequently, some States either volunteered to advance their reviews, deferred from a previous year of the second cycle in line with the terms of reference for the Mechanism, or became parties to the Convention, which resulted in the following distribution of the country reviews in the second cycle: year one – 29 States; year two – 48 States; year three – 36 States; year four – 37 States; and year five – 37 States.

15. The reviewing States parties for the first year of the second cycle of the Mechanism were selected through a drawing of lots at an intersessional meeting of the Implementation Review Group. Accordingly, year one of the second cycle began on 4 July 2016, and redraws were carried out at the request of States parties under review at the resumed seventh session of the Group.

16. Similarly, the reviewing States parties for the second, third, fourth and fifth years of the second cycle were selected through the drawing of lots at intersessional meetings of the Group, resulting in those years starting on 25 July 2017, 29 June 2018, 19 June 2019 and 10 July 2020, respectively. Redraws were carried out at the request of States parties under review at resumed sessions of the Group.

17. During the period under review, lots were drawn for the reviews under the first and second cycle of Somalia, Tonga and the European Union.

D. Schedule and conduct of country reviews

18. In its resolution 4/1, the Conference endorsed the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat in the conduct of country reviews, which had been finalized by the Implementation Review Group. The guidelines set out indicative timelines for country reviews in order to ensure the consistency and efficiency of the review process. Updated information is provided below on the schedule of country reviews conducted from the first to the fourth year of the first cycle of the Implementation Review Mechanism and on the country reviews conducted from the first to the fifth year of the second review cycle.

⁶ Other States became parties to the Convention by the time of the resumed twelfth session of the Group.

1. Appointment of a focal point to coordinate the participation of a State party under review

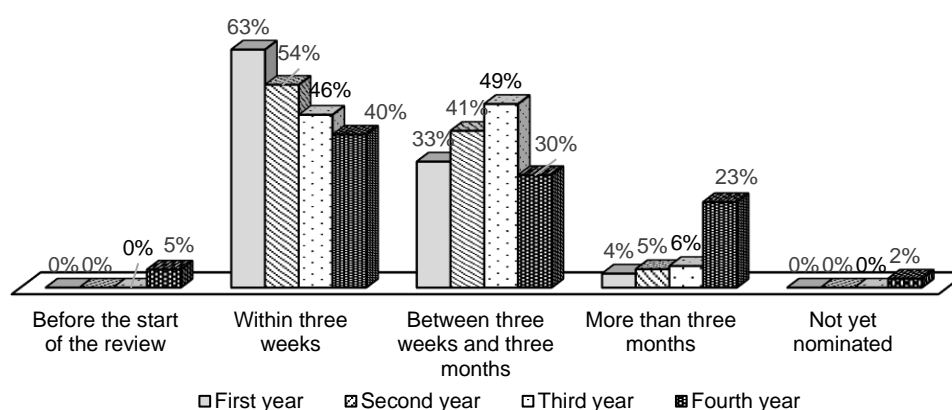
19. In accordance with paragraph 17 of the terms of reference and paragraph 13 of the guidelines, a State party under review is to appoint a focal point or focal points to coordinate its participation in the review within three weeks of officially being informed of the beginning of the conduct of the country review and is also to inform the secretariat accordingly. However, late nominations of focal points have caused considerable delays in country reviews in the past. In its resolution 4/1, the Conference urged States parties under review to ensure the timely nomination of their focal points in accordance with the guidelines.

First review cycle

20. At the time of writing, one State party under review in the fourth year had not yet officially nominated the focal point (see figure I), more than 20 per cent of the focal points had been nominated after more than three months, and several States parties had changed their focal points during the course of the review, which resulted in further delays.

Figure I

First review cycle: time taken to nominate focal points



Second review cycle

21. All States under review in the first and second years and 34 of the 36 States under review in the third year of the second cycle have nominated their focal points (see figure II).

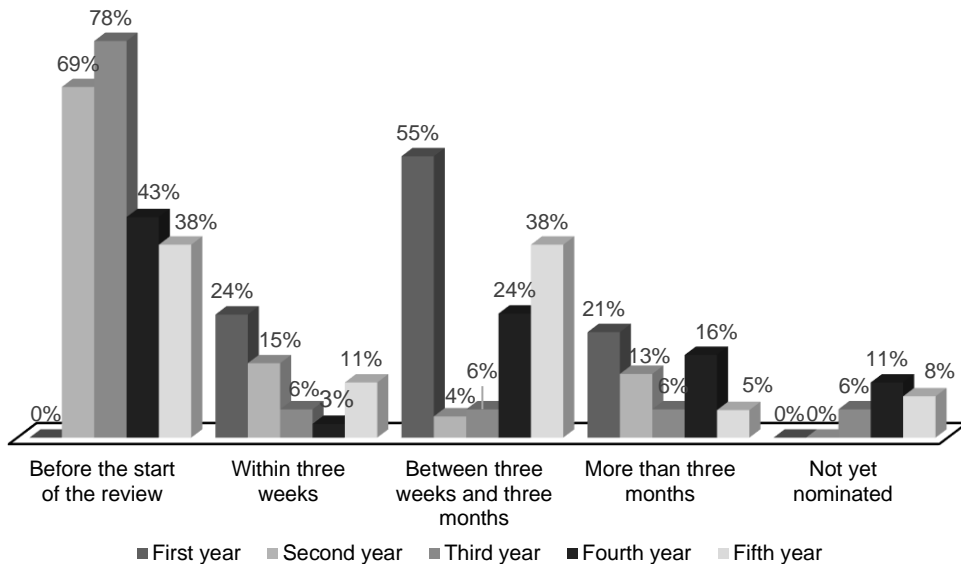
22. In the first year of the second cycle, most States nominated their focal points within three months of being officially informed of the start of the review.

23. In the second year of the second cycle, the vast majority of focal points (69 per cent) were nominated prior to the start of the review.

24. In the third year of the second cycle, 28 of the 36 States under review in that year (78 per cent) had already nominated their focal points prior to the start of that year.

25. In the fourth year of the second cycle, 33 of the 37 States under review have nominated their focal points. Thirty-four of the 37 parties under review in the fifth year of the second cycle have nominated their focal points and 14 parties (38 per cent) did so prior to the start of that year.

Figure II
First to fifth years of the second cycle: time taken to nominate focal points



2. Communication of contact details of governmental experts by reviewing States parties and organization of the initial teleconference

26. Paragraph 16 of the guidelines provides that a telephone conference or videoconference should be held within one month of the State party under review officially being informed of the beginning of the conduct of the country review. The teleconference involves the State party under review, the reviewing States parties and the secretariat staff assigned to the country review. With a view to organizing the initial teleconference, the secretariat requests reviewing States parties to designate contact persons from among their governmental experts and communicate the contact details of those persons to the secretariat.

27. In most reviews, the holding of the initial teleconference has continued to be subject to delays as a result of, inter alia, the late communication of the contact details of governmental experts or changes in reviewing experts after the beginning of the review. In some cases, the teleconference was delayed because of redraws of reviewing States parties. Where feasible, the secretariat continued to arrange introductions on the margins of the sessions of the Implementation Review Group and the Conference of the States Parties. Where time differences between the States did not allow for direct contact, teleconferences were replaced by an exchange of emails.

28. At the time of writing, 28 first teleconferences had been held for the 29 reviews in the first year of the second cycle.⁷

29. For the second year of the second cycle, 41 first teleconferences or equivalent contacts had taken place for the 48 reviews in that year.⁸ For the third year, 24 first teleconferences had taken place for the 36 reviews in that year,⁹ for the fourth year, 25 first teleconferences had taken place for the 37 reviews in that year,¹⁰ and for the fifth year, 15 first teleconferences had taken place for the 37 reviews in that year.

⁷ One State party under review in the first year of the second cycle waived the holding of a teleconference.

⁸ Two States parties under review in the second year of the second cycle waived the holding of a teleconference.

⁹ One State party under review in the third year of the second cycle waived the holding of a teleconference.

¹⁰ Two States parties under review in the fourth year of the second cycle waived the holding of a teleconference.

However, several reviewing parties had not yet designated their reviewing experts, thus delaying the first teleconference.

3. Self-assessment checklists

30. In accordance with paragraph 15 of the guidelines, the State party under review is to provide the secretariat with its response to the comprehensive self-assessment checklist within two months of being officially informed of the beginning of the conduct of the review. Analysis conducted by the secretariat to date, which has been made available to the Group at its previous sessions, shows that the submission of the checklist has remained an essential cornerstone of the review process and marks the point in time when the country review can start in earnest. As such, any delay in the submission of the checklist inevitably resulted in the delay of the country review as a whole.

31. Figure III below shows an overview of the time frames associated with the country reviews conducted in years one to four of the first review cycle, while figure IV shows an overview of the time frames associated with the country reviews for the second review cycle in the first to fifth years.

Figure III

Time taken for the submission self-assessment checklists by States under review in years one to four of the first review cycle

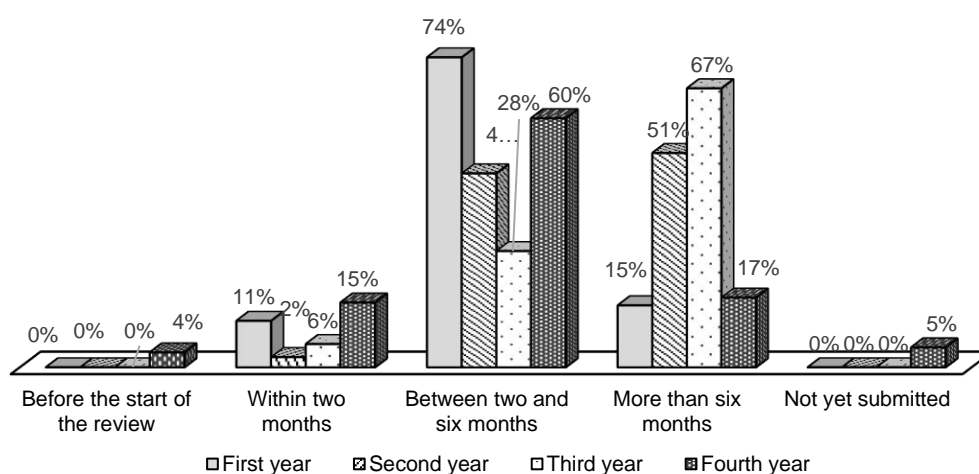
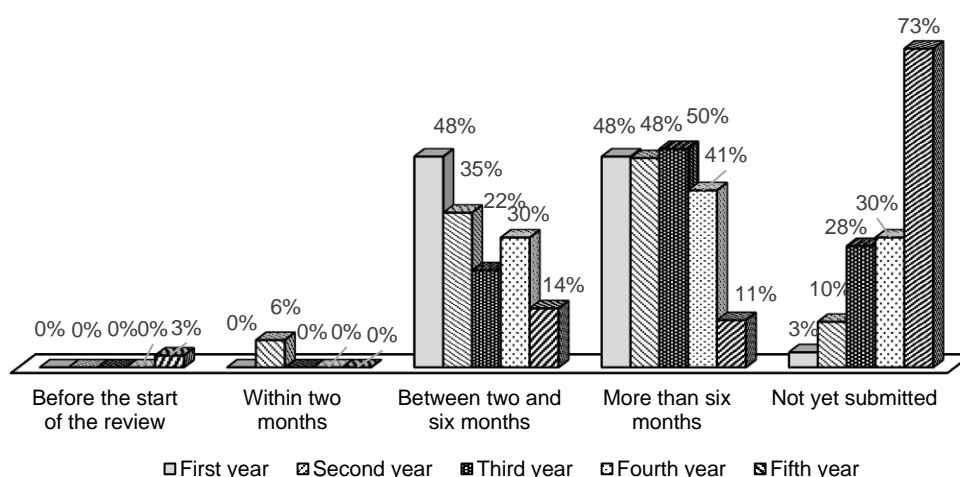


Figure IV

Time taken for the submission self-assessment checklists by States under review in years one to five of the second review cycle



32. A comparison of the information shown in figures III and IV shows the continued significant delays in the time required by States for the submission of their responses to the self-assessment checklists, despite the fact that the States under review were regularly informed by the secretariat about the status of their reviews.

33. During the first three review years of the second cycle a downward trend could be observed: in the first review year, nearly half of States parties submitted their checklists within six months of the review's start; only one fourth did so in the third review year. While a slight improvement can be noted for the fourth review year, nearly one third of self-assessment checklists for that year are yet to be submitted. For the fifth review year, only one fourth of self-assessment checklists had been submitted at the time of writing, that is, more than 14 months after the starting date of the review, which could be partly attributed to circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Desk review

34. In accordance with paragraph 21 of the guidelines, governmental experts are to submit to the secretariat the outcome of the desk review within one month after receiving the response to the comprehensive self-assessment checklist and any supplementary information provided by the State party under review.

First review cycle

35. For the fourth year of the first cycle, two desk reviews of the responses to the self-assessment checklist were pending at the time of writing, in part because of late submissions of information and translation difficulties.

Second review cycle

36. Several desk reviews of the responses to the self-assessment checklist for years one to five of the second cycle were still ongoing, due to, inter alia, the late submission of the responses to the self-assessment checklist, the time required for the translation of checklists in reviews where more than one language was used, and the time taken to review the checklists. For the fourth year of the second cycle, 18 desk reviews of the 26 responses to the self-assessment checklist were completed and eight desk reviews were pending at the time of writing. For the fifth year of the second cycle, all desk reviews of the 10 responses to the self-assessment checklist submitted were pending.

5. Further means of direct dialogue

37. In accordance with paragraph 24 of the guidelines and paragraph 29 of the terms of reference, if requested by the State party under review, the desk review is to be complemented by any further means of direct dialogue, such as a country visit or a joint meeting at the United Nations Office at Vienna. In accordance with paragraph 24 of the guidelines, a country visit is to be planned and organized by the State party under review. Focal points draft the agenda and submit it to the reviewers and the secretariat prior to the visit.

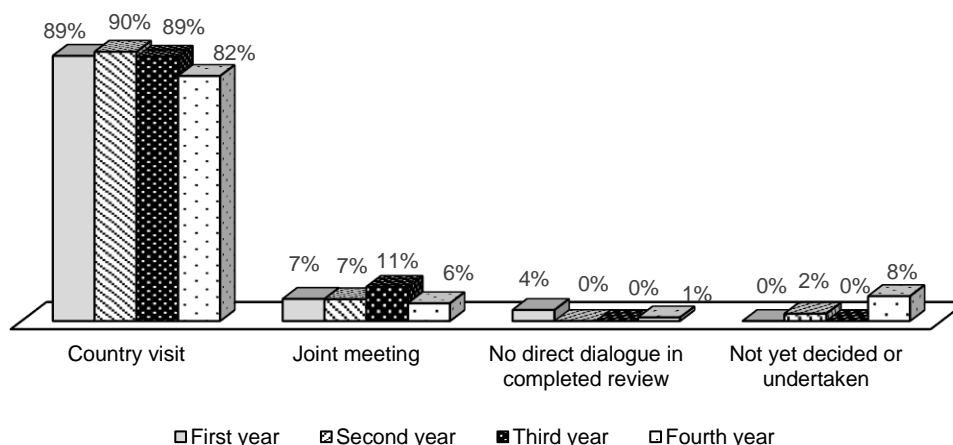
First review cycle

38. At the time of writing, of 187 countries under review, 175 countries had already availed themselves of further means of direct dialogue in the form of either a country visit or a joint meeting. For the 27 States parties under review in the first year, 24 country visits and two joint meetings took place. For the 41 States parties under review in the second year, 37 country visits and three joint meetings took place. For the 35 States parties under review in the third year, 31 country visits and 4 joint meetings took place. For 84 States under review in the fourth year, 69 country visits and 5 joint meetings took place (see figure V). A number of States had agreed to further means of direct dialogue, and such dialogues were in various stages of

planning. In other reviews, no decision had been taken yet. Only two States parties had not opted for either a country visit or a joint meeting.

Figure V

First review cycle: further means of direct dialogue between countries undertaken as part of a country review

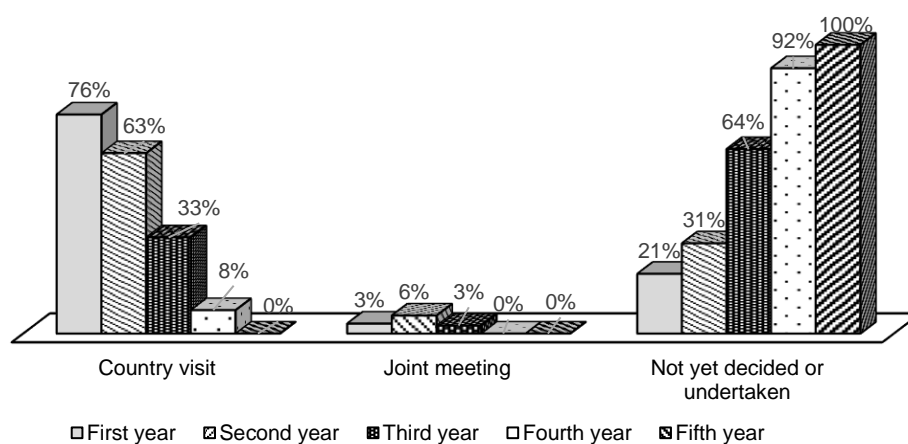


Second review cycle

39. Of 29 States parties under review in the first year of the second cycle, 22 States parties had hosted a country visit as a further means of direct dialogue, and one had opted for a joint meeting in Vienna. Of 48 States parties under review in the second year, 30 States parties had hosted a country visit and three joint meetings were held. In addition, during the review of one of those States parties, both a country visit and a joint meeting were held. Of 36 States parties under review in the third year of the second cycle, 12 country visits and one joint meeting were held. Of 37 States parties under review in the fourth year, four country visits were held in an online format due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. No country visits have been held for country reviews in the fifth year. At the time of writing, several other country visits for years one to five of the second cycle had been postponed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic or were in the process of being tentatively scheduled for the last quarter of 2021 (see figure VI).¹¹

Figure VI

Second review cycle: further means of direct dialogue between countries undertaken as part of a country review



¹¹ In the second year of the second cycle, for the review of one State party, both a country visit and a joint meeting were held; the joint meeting is not reflected in figure VI.

6. Engagement with other stakeholders during country visits

First review cycle

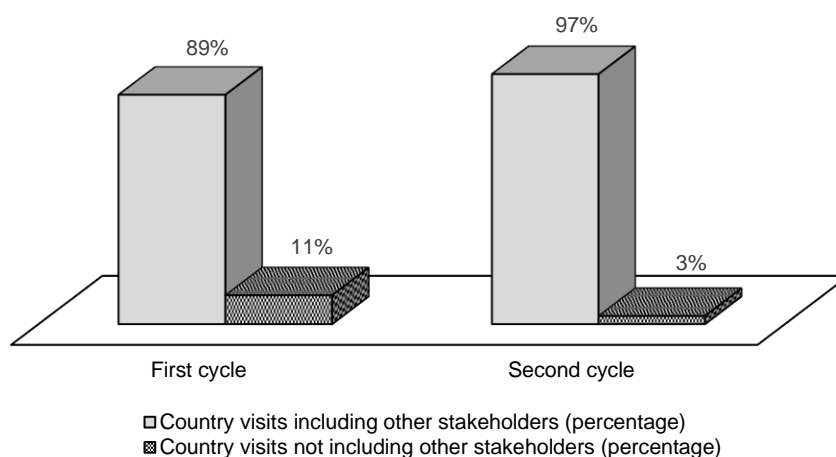
40. Of the country visits conducted during the first cycle, 89 per cent included meetings with other stakeholders (see figure VII), in accordance with paragraph 30 of the terms of reference. In some cases, those meetings took the form of panels that included representatives of civil society, the private sector, academia, trade associations and other national stakeholders. In other cases, States included national stakeholders such as representatives of academia, civil society and the private sector in the committees set up to coordinate and oversee the review process.

Second review cycle

41. At the time of writing, almost all the country visits (97 per cent) conducted in the first to fourth years of the second cycle had included meetings with other stakeholders, in accordance with paragraph 30 of the terms of reference (see figure VII).

Figure VII

Engagement with stakeholders during country visits, per review cycle



7. Outcome of the country review process, publication of the country review report and review languages

42. In accordance with paragraph 33 of the terms of reference and paragraph 30 of the guidelines, the reviewing governmental experts are to prepare a country review report and an executive summary of that report, in close cooperation and coordination with the State party under review and assisted by the secretariat. Successes, good practices and challenges should be identified in the report, and the report should contain observations on the implementation of the Convention. Where appropriate, technical assistance needs for the purpose of improving the implementation of the Convention should also be identified in the report.

First review cycle

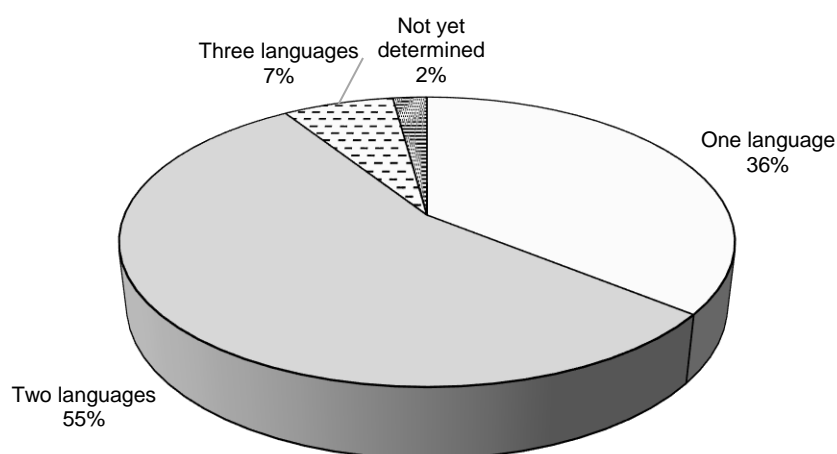
43. To date, 161 country reviews for the first cycle have been completed, with the remaining 26 country reviews being in various stages of finalization. It should be noted that, although the full reviews have not yet been completed, 12 executive summaries in relation to those 26 country reviews have nonetheless been completed (a total of 173 executive summaries for the first cycle). Twenty-seven executive summaries had been completed and made available to the Implementation Review Group for the reviews in the first year. For the second year, 40 executive summaries had been completed and made available to the Group. For the third year, 35 executive summaries had been completed and made available to the Group. For the fourth year, 71 executive summaries had been completed and made available, and several more were being finalized.

44. The executive summaries of the country review reports have been posted online on the page with documentation of the Implementation Review Group and on the country profile page (www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/country-profile/index.html). At the time of writing, 88 country review reports for the first cycle had been published on the UNODC website at the request of the States party under review. Depending on the language and the number of annexes, the length of the reports ranged from approximately 100 pages to over 500 pages.¹²

45. While in some cases governmental experts agreed to conduct the review in a language other than their preferred one, most reviews were conducted in more than one official language of the United Nations. Of 187 reviews, 67 were carried out in one official language, 103 were carried out in two official languages and 13 were carried out in three official languages. In four cases, the decision on which language or languages were to be used had not yet been taken (see figure VIII).

Figure VIII

First review cycle: number of official languages of the United Nations used in the country review



Second review cycle

46. Overall, during the second cycle, a total of 57 executive summaries and 32 country review reports had been completed. For the first year of the second cycle, 21 executive summaries and 15 country review reports had been completed, while for the second year of the second cycle, 29 executive summaries and 15 country review reports had been completed. Six executive summaries and one country review report had been completed for the third year of the second cycle. For the fourth year of the second cycle, one executive summary and one country report had been completed. Delays in the completion of executive summaries and country review reports in years one to four resulted in part from the delays incurred in the submission of the responses to the self-assessment checklist and the conduct of the country visits. No review reports and no executive summaries have been completed for the fifth year of the second cycle.

47. In the first year of the second review cycle, 11 reviews were carried out in one official language of the United Nations, 15 reviews in two official languages and 3 reviews in three official languages.

48. In the second year of the second review cycle, 16 reviews were carried out in one official language of the United Nations, 25 reviews in two official languages and

¹² For more details of the translation costs, see [CAC/COSP/IRG/2016/3](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/COSP/IRG/2016/3).

4 reviews in three official languages. For three reviews, the decision on the language of the review had not yet been taken.

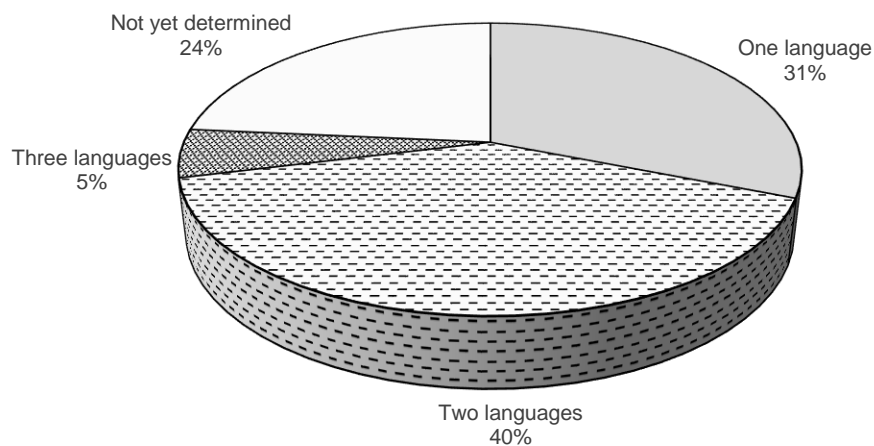
49. In the third year of the second review cycle, 16 reviews were carried out in one official language of the United Nations and 16 reviews in two official languages. For four reviews, the decision on the language of the review had not yet been taken.

50. In the fourth year of the second cycle, 9 reviews are being carried out in one official language of the United Nations, 12 reviews in two official languages and 2 reviews in three official languages. For 14 reviews, decisions on the language of the review had not yet been taken.

51. In the fifth year of the second cycle, six reviews are being carried out in one official language of the United Nations, seven in two official languages and one in three official languages. For 23 reviews, decisions on the languages of the review had not yet been taken. (see figure IX).

Figure IX

First to fifth years of the second review cycle: number of official languages of the United Nations used in the country review



E. Training courses for focal points and governmental experts participating in the Implementation Review Mechanism

52. In accordance with paragraph 32 of the terms of reference of the Mechanism and paragraph 11 of the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat in the conduct of country reviews, the secretariat organizes periodic training courses for focal points and governmental experts participating in the reviews. These training courses familiarize the focal points and experts with the guidelines in order to increase their capacity to participate in the review process.

First review cycle

53. To date, over 1,800 experts have been trained in the framework of the first review cycle, thus contributing to the creation of a global community of anti-corruption experts. National training courses and ad hoc assistance were provided to more than 40 States, and since June 2013, seven regional training courses have been organized.

Second review cycle

54. As of September 2021, nine regional training sessions and 14 global training sessions had been organized for the second review cycle. In particular, training sessions were being organized back-to-back with sessions of the Implementation

Review Group to save costs for both the States parties under review and the secretariat. In addition, targeted assistance was available to States parties under review in support of their reviews, in particular assistance provided by UNODC to States as regards the completion of their responses to the self-assessment checklists.

55. To date, over 1,500 focal points and governmental experts had been trained specifically on the Implementation Review Mechanism, including over 1,000 focal points and governmental experts who had participated in the regional and global training sessions for the second review cycle. Overall, additional support was provided in the framework of technical assistance to complete the responses by Governments to the self-assessment checklist, thus bringing the total number to over 1,800 individuals trained.

56. Owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, global and regional in-person training sessions could not be organized after February 2020. In order to supplement in-person training sessions on the Implementation Review Mechanism, pre-training videos have been made available through an online e-learning platform.¹³ A first online training session for more than 125 focal points and governmental experts from more than 40 States parties was held in September 2021.

III. The use of information and communications technologies in facilitating country reviews

57. In its resolution 6/7 on “Promoting the use of information and communications technologies for the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption”, the Conference invited the secretariat, within its existing mandate and resources, to further explore the adoption of different information and communications technology tools, including the use of open data resources, in order to further disseminate information on the development of its functions, information on the tools and resources contained in the anti-corruption knowledge platform and public reports presented to the Conference of the States Parties and its subsidiary bodies. Accordingly, specifically in reference to the Implementation Review Mechanism, the secretariat continued to maintain a country profiles page on its public website, which allows the user to search for information on specific country reviews. The website is expected to undergo an enhancement of its functionalities during the next reporting period.

58. In addition, to keep track of progress made in the different steps of the individual reviews, the secretariat has developed a number of tools for internal use, using information technology, in order to enable it to analyse and address delays in a more proactive manner.

59. Moreover, in view of the unprecedented delays and continued travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the secretariat has endeavoured to identify and analyse new methods and approaches to advancing country reviews, using information and communications technologies.

Country visits in an online format

60. During the period under review, in response to requests from States parties, the secretariat conducted four country visits in an online format, by telephone conference and videoconference, which are foreseen in the terms of reference of the Mechanism as some of the means of constructive dialogue, in addition to direct dialogues, such as country visits or joint meetings.

61. Although the online dialogues have allowed the experts to deepen their understanding of the implementation of the Convention by the State party under review, such dialogues have not fully succeeded in strengthening cooperation and

¹³ Available at <https://golearn.unodc.org/lms/login/index.php>.

information exchange, or peer learning, capacity-building and constructive collaboration among the parties involved.

62. A number of challenges have been identified, such as technical limitations, the scope of participation of relevant representatives of the State party under review and the reviewing States parties and the overall quality of the discussion.

63. More specifically, technical challenges identified by the secretariat in connection with country visits are, inter alia: (a) the limited number and the limitations of online platforms authorized by the United Nations for use in its meetings, in particular when interpretation is required; (b) limited or poor Internet connectivity in some countries, which may limit the format of participation of focal points or governmental experts in country visits; (c) connectivity/technical issues when larger groups of stakeholders at the national level are involved; (d) time differences; and (e) challenges related to the remote provision of interpretation services.

Country visits in a hybrid format

64. In view of continuing travel restrictions in some States parties, the secretariat has been exploring the possibility of facilitating country visits in a hybrid format, with secretariat staff present in person in the State party under review and with the remote, online participation of one or both reviewing States parties in the country visit.

65. During the period under review, UNODC facilitated one such country visit in a hybrid format, during which the reviewing experts joined discussions in virtual meeting rooms while secretariat staff were present in person.

66. The secretariat will continue its consideration of requests for the organization country visits in an online format.

IV. Analysis of the functioning of the Mechanism and the way forward

Continued delays in the finalization of country reviews

67. In order to allow for sufficient time for the completion of country reviews under the Implementation Review Mechanism, in its decision 8/1, the Conference: (a) decided to extend the duration of the second cycle of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption by three years, that is, until June 2024, to allow for the completion of country reviews under that cycle; and (b) called upon States parties to accelerate the completion of the second cycle.

68. In addition to unanticipated circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, analysis by the secretariat continues to show that reviews have encountered delays in several areas, namely, in the nomination of focal points and governmental experts, the submission of responses to the self-assessment checklist, fulfilling translation requirements and the submission of additional information following country visits, in addition to the impact of the regular budget freeze on the staffing of the secretariat. Further delays are expected because of the accession of additional States parties to the Convention, which have yet to be reviewed under both cycles of the Mechanism. Moreover, a number of States that were acting as reviewing States parties in the earlier years have since come under review themselves in later years, or vice versa, creating an increased workload for all involved. The spillover of these delays into subsequent years of the second cycle has already started to have a negative impact on the capacity of States, as well as on the secretariat, in carrying out both the delayed reviews and the subsequent years' reviews at the same time.

69. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the pace of reviews, in particular the country visits. While in some instances, it allowed for an

accelerated finalization of desk-based work, overall there have been noticeable delays in the preparation of self-assessment checklists, desk reviews and country reports as well as in the postponement of already scheduled country visits.

70. Very few States parties have availed themselves of the possibility of holding country visits in an online format, with several States having decided to postpone them due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is expected to result in a higher than average number of country visits per year in the coming years, which, in turn, will cause further delays.

71. During the period under review, the secretariat continued to inform the Implementation Review Group of all developments in this regard.

The way forward

72. Significant efforts will need to be undertaken by States parties and the secretariat to reverse the continuing slowdown in order to complete the second cycle within this extended time frame. Given the delays experienced in the submission of the self-assessment checklists and other steps of the review process, as well as the continuing delays caused by circumstances relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is reason for continued serious concern with regard to the duration of the individual country reviews in the second cycle and the resulting overall duration of the cycle.

73. The secretariat will continue to carefully monitor the overall progress in submission of the self-assessment checklists and other steps of the reviews, as well as the overall rate of the completion of reviews.

74. Among the measures undertaken by the secretariat to address the delays is the circulation of more regular reminders and of more frequent follow-up letters to States parties under review and reviewing States parties. The secretariat also informed the Implementation Review Group at its resumed twelfth session, held from 6 to 10 September 2021, that at future sessions it would provide the names of those States that had failed to nominate a focal point or reviewing experts, as well as of the names of those States that had not submitted their responses to the self-assessment checklist after receiving at least two follow-up letters reminding them to do so. Additionally, the secretariat will endeavour to facilitate as many country visits as possible, using all available formats, as soon as feasible.

75. The Conference may wish to consider ways to encourage all States parties to redouble their efforts to prevent any further delays, which put at risk the good performance of the Mechanism and its completion in due time.
