



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

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**Implementation Review Group**

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda\*

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

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Implementation of the United Nations Convention against  
Corruption**

**Note by the Secretariat**

*Summary*

The present document contains an updated analysis of the performance of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, in particular its second cycle. It also contains recommendations on the measures required for the completion of the second cycle.

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\* [CAC/COSP/IRG/2023/1](#).



## I. Introduction

1. In its decision 5/1, the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption decided that the Implementation Review Group should begin promptly to collect, with the support of the secretariat, and discuss relevant information in order to facilitate the assessment of performance of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in accordance with paragraph 48 of the terms of reference for the Mechanism, following the completion of the first cycle. The Conference also decided that the Implementation Review Group should include in its future sessions an agenda item allowing for the discussion of such information and further decided that the Group, in the collection of such information, should take into account future requirements for follow-up in accordance with paragraphs 40 and 41 of the terms of reference.

2. In its resolution 8/2, the Conference acknowledged that continuing the process of evaluation of the performance of the Implementation Review Mechanism before the completion of the second review cycle on the basis of the experiences gained in the first review cycle could significantly contribute to useful outcomes and that that process should be started without prejudice to any subsequent continuation of such work following the completion of the second review cycle. In the same resolution, the Conference 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 Mechanism, with a view to continuing, at the appropriate time, the Group's assessment of the performance of the Mechanism, as provided for in paragraph 48 of the terms of reference of the Mechanism and Conference decision 5/1, and in that regard to continue to report to the Conference on progress made, bearing in mind the request in paragraph 5 of Conference resolution 3/1 for the evaluation of the terms of reference at the conclusion of each review cycle.

3. Moreover, in the political declaration entitled "Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation", adopted by the General Assembly at its special session against corruption held in 2021, Member States and parties to the Convention, inter alia, welcomed the achievements of the Implementation Review Mechanism in furthering parties' efforts to fully implement their obligations under the Convention and urged parties to the Convention to complete their reviews under the Mechanism in a timely manner so as to conclude the first and second review cycles within their agreed period of performance. They also welcomed the efforts by the Conference to assess the performance of the Mechanism and adapt, where appropriate, procedures and requirements for the follow-up.

4. The present document contains an overview of the performance of the Implementation Review Mechanism, in particular the progress made to date during the second cycle, and also contains recommendations on the measures required for the completion of the country reviews under the second cycle. It should be read in conjunction with the note by the Secretariat on lessons learned and views on potential areas for improvement of the Mechanism ([CAC/COSP/IRG/2023/3](#)).

## II. Performance of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the Convention

5. The first cycle is now nearly complete, with 174 out of 188 executive summaries adopted. However, substantial delays continue to be faced at all stages of the reviews under the second cycle, with only 67 out of 188 executive summaries for that cycle having been completed at the time of preparation of the present document. In its decision 8/1, the Conference, taking note of the delays incurred during the second cycle of the Implementation Review Mechanism, decided to extend the duration of the second cycle until June 2024 to allow for the completion of country reviews and called upon States parties to accelerate the completion of the second cycle. Shortly after the

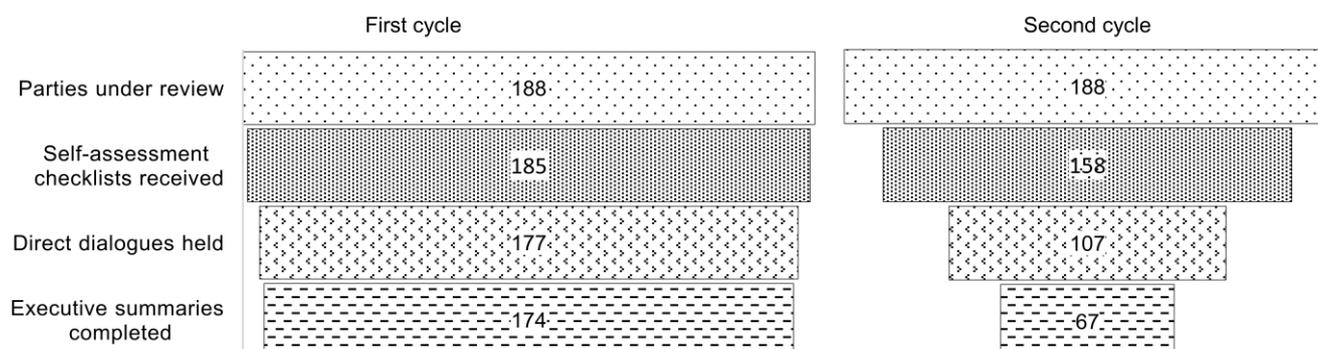
Conference decided to extend the second cycle, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic began, resulting in additional delays with respect to the completion of country reviews.

### A. Statistical overview of the first and second review cycles

6. The data provided in figure I show the overall progress achieved as at 28 February 2023 in the country reviews under the first and second cycles of the Implementation Review Mechanism.

Figure I

#### Overall progress achieved under the first and second review cycles



### B. Analysis of the time frames associated with the critical stages of the review process, with a focus on the second review cycle

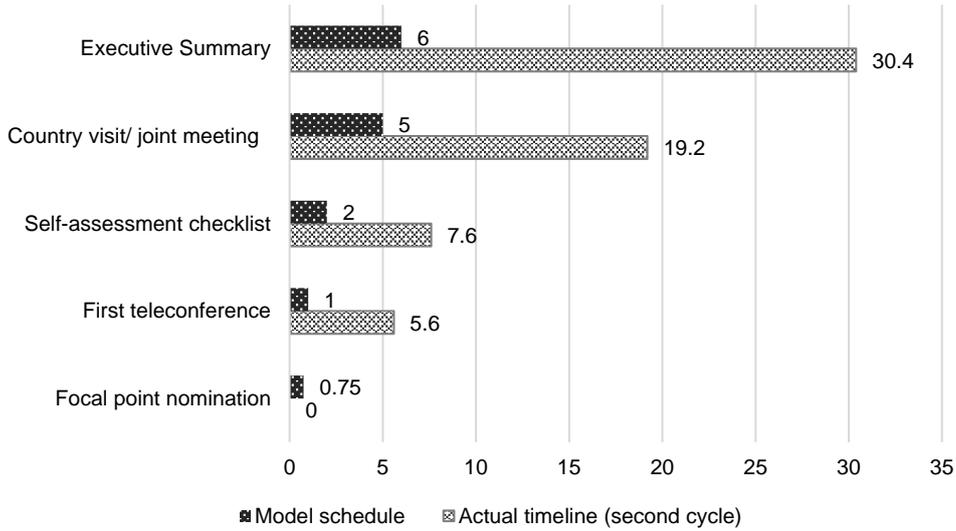
7. The delays in the completion of the country reviews under the Implementation Review Mechanism and the resulting backlog were analysed for the purpose of determining whether the second review cycle could be completed by June 2024, as foreseen by the Conference in its decision 8/1.

8. To that end, the timeline contained in the model schedule for country reviews,<sup>1</sup> which is based on the terms of reference of the Implementation Review Mechanism and the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat contained in the appendix to the terms of reference of the Mechanism, was compared with the actual timeline of reviews in both cycles.

9. Figure II below illustrates the overall comparison of progress in the second cycle reviews from the start of the country reviews. As shown in that figure, the actual timeline required for the preparation of executive summaries, submission of self-assessment checklists and organization of county visits substantially exceeds the timeline contained in the model schedule. Analysis of the individual stages of the review process is provided below.

<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Review-Mechanism/IRG\\_model\\_country\\_review\\_schedule.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Review-Mechanism/IRG_model_country_review_schedule.pdf).

**Figure II**  
**Median duration of country reviews: target timeline compared with actual timeline (months)**

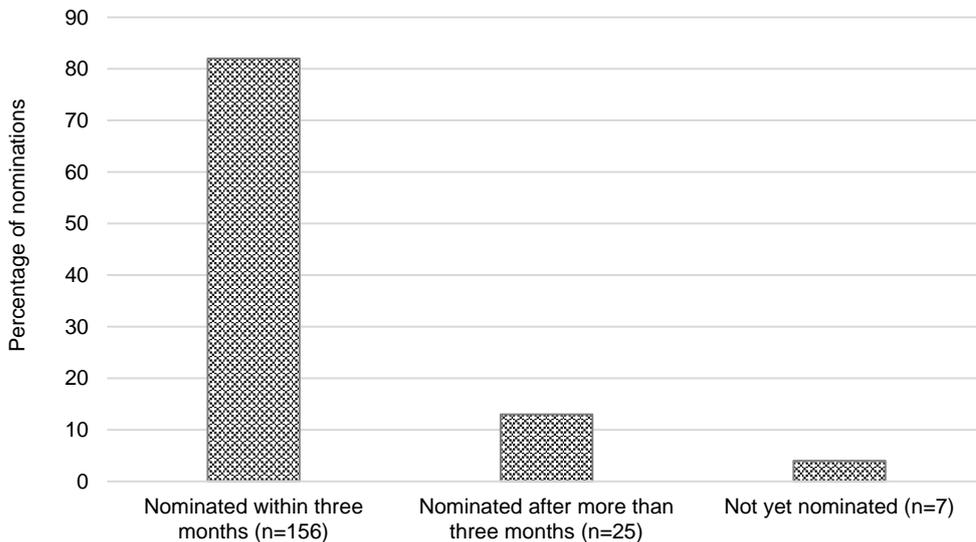


**1. Analysis of individual review steps**

**Delayed nominations of focal points**

10. Although it is noted in the terms of reference that the reviews should ideally be designed to take no longer than six months, the process is taking significantly longer. Currently, 182 of the 188 focal points for the second cycle have been nominated. This initial step of nominating focal points, which is due to take place within 21 days after the start date of a review, has seen some delays, with only 115 States parties having submitted their nominations with this timeline. More than 80 per cent of nominations were submitted within three months of the start date of the review, either within the model time frame of three weeks or even prior to that date. Despite this overall positive picture, the focal point nominations were delayed beyond three months in more than 10 per cent of reviews, and the nominations have still not been received in 3 per cent of reviews, thus delaying the reviews in the second cycle already, at this initial step (see figure III below).

**Figure III**  
**Second review cycle: time from the start of the review to the nomination of focal points**



### Delayed nominations of governmental experts

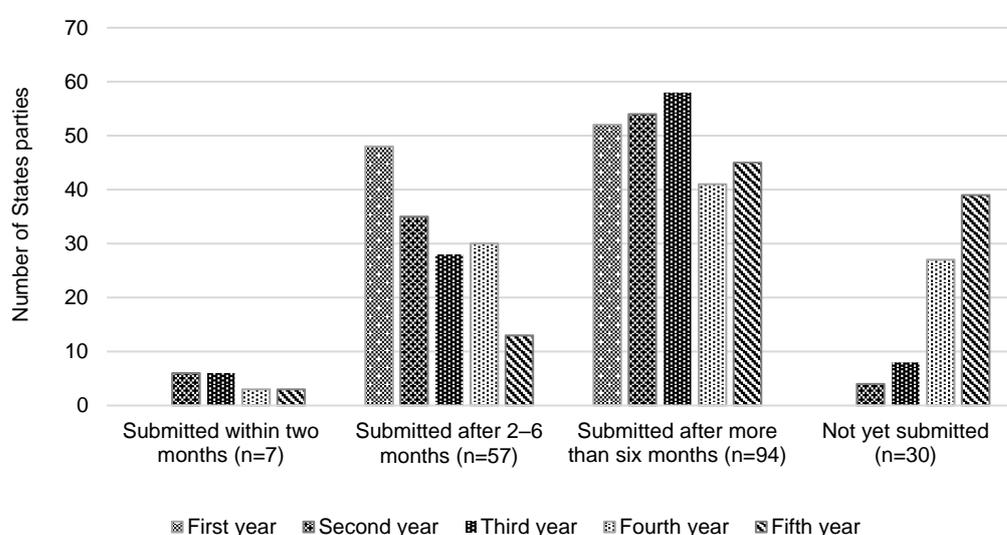
11. The nominations of governmental experts have been delayed even more frequently than the nominations of focal points. While the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat in the conduct of country reviews foresee that the first teleconference or videoconference should take place within one month of the start of the review, many country reviews were delayed because States parties had not yet nominated the governmental experts to carry out the reviews that they are assigned to, and several country reviews still cannot move forward for that reason. As at 28 February 2023, 35 expert nominations were pending. In several cases, nominations of experts were delayed for over one year or even for up to several years, meaning that the reviews could not progress, despite repeated reminders and delay letters sent by the secretariat. Late designations of governmental experts or changes in reviewing experts in the course of the reviews have had a significant impact on all subsequent stages of the review.

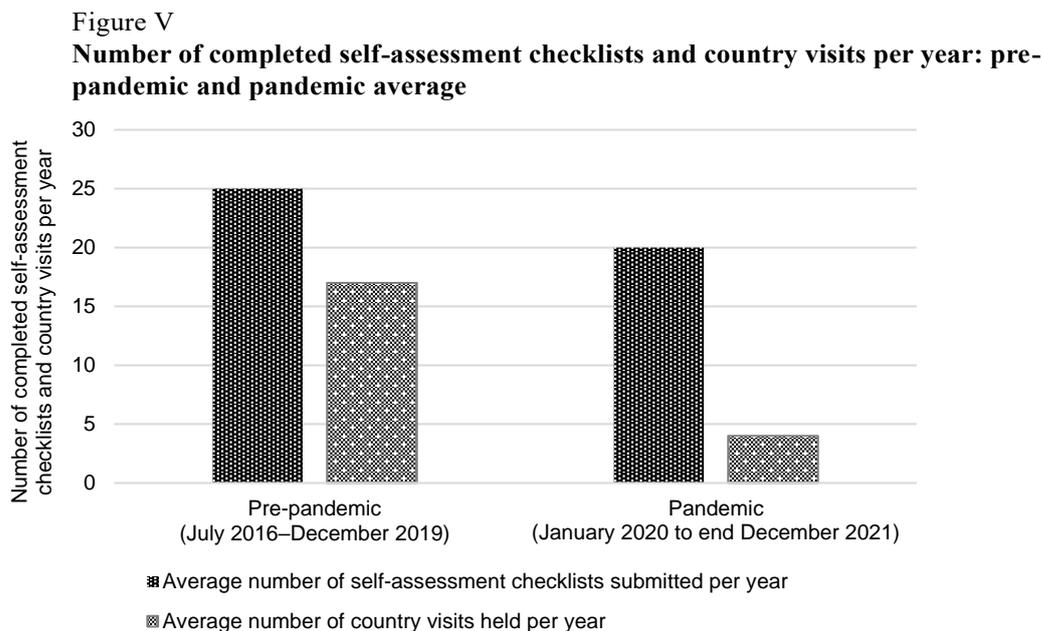
### Delayed submission of responses to the self-assessment checklist

12. The submission of the response to the self-assessment checklist is an essential cornerstone of the review and a prerequisite to beginning the review process. The model timeline foresees that the submission of the responses to the self-assessment checklist occurs within two months of the start date of the review. However, only 7 States parties submitted their responses to the self-assessment checklist within two months of the start date of their reviews, while 57 States parties submitted their responses within two to six months of the start date of the review (a delay of up to four months). Half (94) of the States parties submitted their responses more than six months after the start date of the review (a delay of more than four months), while 30 States parties have not yet submitted their responses (see figure IV below). As a result, 15 per cent of the country reviews cannot move forward at this stage. This means that, not counting the reviews of the new States parties to the Convention, these reviews have been delayed by approximately two to five years. The pandemic has caused further delays in the submission of responses to the self-assessment checklist, resulting in a reduction of the average number of submissions per year from 25 to 20 during the pandemic period (see figure V below).

Figure IV

#### Second review cycle: time from the start of the review to the submission of the self-assessment checklist





#### Delays in organizing country visits or joint meetings, particularly as a consequence of delays incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic

13. The model timeline foresees two months of direct dialogue, followed by the preparation of the draft country review report within approximately five months of the start of the review. While the number of country visits and joint meetings steadily increased in the first three years of the second cycle, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a visible impact on the pace of country reviews, leading to further delays in organizing country visits, in view of the resulting backlog and the cumulatively higher number of country visits that are being organized. During the period 30 March 2022–28 February 2023, 27 country visits were held in person (29 country visits were conducted in total in 2022). Some of those country visits had an online component.<sup>2</sup> Despite continued delays, during the period under review, there was a sharp increase in the number of country visits and joint meetings held. This was due largely to the lifting of travel restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Delays in approving executive summaries

14. With the large number of reviews now in the post-direct dialogue stage (see figure VI below), the number of completed executive summaries per year is expected to increase in 2023 (for the cumulative number of executive summaries completed during the second review cycle, see figure VII below). At the same time, the delays in scheduling country visits will, in turn, continue to affect the overall number of executive summaries and country review reports that will be completed. This situation will make it difficult, if not impossible, to complete all the outstanding reviews by June 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Information on the performance of the Implementation Review Mechanism is provided on a regular basis to the Implementation Review Group at its regular and/or resumed sessions. This information was last presented to the Group for its consideration at its thirteenth session (see [CAC/COSP/IRG/2022/2](#)) and at its second resumed thirteenth session (see [CASP/COSP/IRG/2022/9](#)).

Figure VI  
**Second review cycle: number of executive summaries completed and country visits or joint meetings held per year**

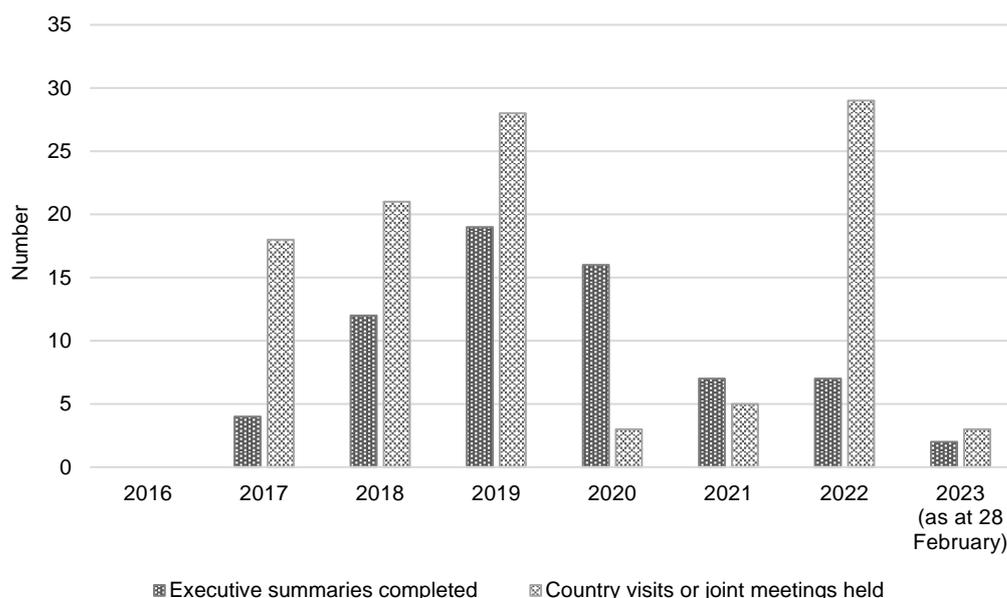
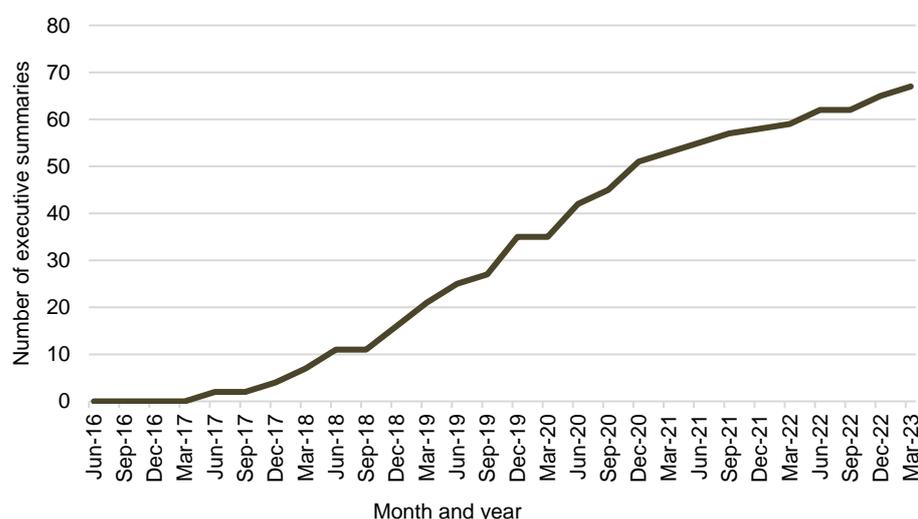


Figure VII  
**Second review cycle: number of executive summaries completed**



## 2. Reasons for delays in the finalization of country reviews

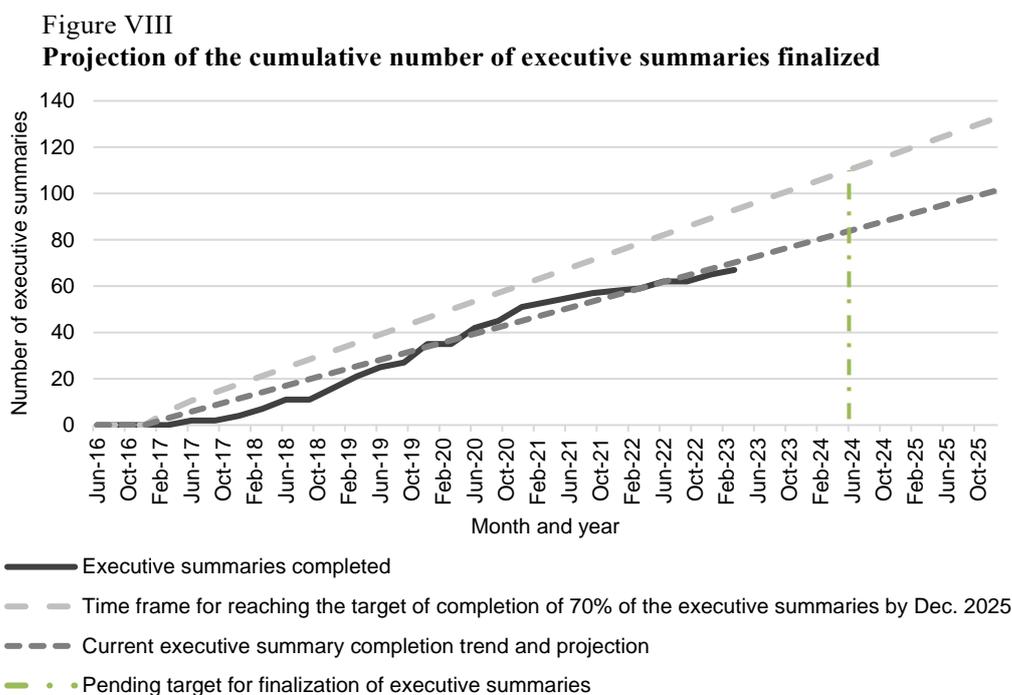
15. A number of reasons for delays in the completion of country reviews have been identified in documentation prepared previously by the secretariat. Those reasons remain valid, with the significant delays in the submission by parties of their responses to self-assessment checklists and the finalization of executive summaries and country review reports emerging as the two most critical stages. Other reasons for the overall delay continue to include: (a) delays in the nomination of focal points and governmental experts (see paras. 10 and 11 above); (b) the number of languages used for some reviews, as additional time is required for translation and the processing of the working documentation in those cases; (c) the scheduling of country visits, which has been a particular difficulty since March 2020, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a drastic drop in the number of country visits organized in 2020 and 2021 (see figures V and VI above) and compounded the existing backlog; and (d) the time required to reach consensus on the executive summaries and country review

reports among all the parties involved. Moreover, many States parties indicated that the complexity of chapter II of the Convention and the wide stakeholder consultations required for the two chapters under review in the second cycle were at the root of most of the delays.

16. In addition to the different stages of the review in which delays are encountered, it should be noted that the workload of governmental experts and the secretariat has expanded as a result of the following: (a) the increase in the number of new States parties since the launch of the first review cycle, when the Convention had only 144 States parties; and (b) the backlog of reviews from prior years. The delays, sometimes due to identified capacity issues, and the frequent unresponsiveness of States parties have increased the workload of the secretariat in terms of follow-up and have made scheduling and planning difficult. The delays have also affected governmental experts, as many States parties under review in the third, fourth and fifth years of the second cycle are also required to serve as reviewing States parties in delayed reviews of previous years or ongoing reviews of the same review year. Furthermore, delays in some cases also have resource implications for the participating States because of deviations from projected financial commitments from one budget year to another. This has been noted by several States parties. The need to carry out both the delayed reviews and the subsequent year's reviews at the same time has thus had a negative impact on the capacity of States parties and the secretariat.

### **3. Findings and projections**

17. The analysis has continued to show that delays accumulate throughout the review process at each of its stages, as well as throughout the review years, and that the impact of the pandemic has exacerbated the previously identified slowdown in the pace of reviews (see figures V and VI above). At the time of writing, for the second cycle, 121 executive summaries remain to be completed and 81 direct dialogues are outstanding. In the light of the lifting of travel and meeting restrictions, every effort is being made to conduct a higher-than-average number of country visits during the next 16 months; however, the total number of country visits that can be organized will remain limited by the availability and capacity of States parties, as well as the capacity of the secretariat to support all pending reviews. If reviews continue at the current pace, fewer than half of the reviews in the second cycle (84 reviews, or 45 per cent) will have been completed by the foreseen end date of the cycle, in June 2024. However, with the surge in the number of country visits in 2022, there are currently 40 executive summaries pending finalization. It is currently planned that those executive summaries will be finalized by June 2024 (see figure VIII below).



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

18. In accordance with paragraph 32 of the terms of reference of the Implementation Review 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.

#### 1. First review cycle

19. To date, more than 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 have been provided to more than 40 States and, since June 2013, seven regional training courses have been organized.

#### 2. Second review cycle

20. As of March 2023, 10 regional training sessions and 16 global training sessions had been organized for the second review cycle. Training sessions were organized back to back with or on the same dates as sessions of the Implementation Review Group to save costs for both the States parties under review and the secretariat. In addition, targeted assistance was made 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.

21. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, global and regional in-person training sessions could not be organized between February 2020 and October 2022. During that period, the secretariat used new approaches in order to advance country reviews and, in order to supplement in-person training on the Implementation Review Mechanism, training videos for focal points and governmental experts were made available through an online e-learning platform. To date, 158 individuals have registered for those training sessions.

22. The first in-person training session since the onset of the pandemic was organized in Vienna on 7, 9 and 10 November 2022, during the second resumed thirteenth session of the Implementation Review Group, the sixteenth meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Asset Recovery and the eleventh open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting to enhance international cooperation under the United Nations Convention against Corruption. A total of 28 experts and focal points from 14 States parties participated in the training.

23. At the time of writing, more than 1,860 focal points and governmental experts have received specific training on the Implementation Review Mechanism, including more than 970 focal points and governmental experts who participated in the regional and global training sessions for the second review cycle. Overall, additional technical assistance was provided to support Governments in completing their responses to the self-assessment checklist, thus bringing the total number of individuals who have received training to more than 2,000.

### **III. Recommendations and possible next steps**

24. As mentioned at previous sessions of the Implementation Review Group, to advance efforts to complete the second cycle in a timely manner, the secretariat has been sending more frequent reminders, as well as formal follow-up letters, to States parties under review and reviewing States parties that are failing to meet the timelines.

25. At the second resumed thirteenth session of the Implementation Review Group, held from 7 to 11 November 2022, a number of speakers referred to delays encountered in the country reviews, in particular in the nomination of governmental experts and the completion of the self-assessment, which had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some speakers noted that an extension would make it possible to complete ongoing reviews and at the same time ensure the continued high quality of reviews. In that regard, many speakers supported the suggestion that the Implementation Review Group propose to the Conference an extension of the Implementation Review Mechanism by 18 months, until December 2025. Several speakers noted that they supported an extension, but that it would be important to ensure that there were no additional extensions thereafter. In that respect, some speakers noted that 2025 might be too early given the current completion rate and suggested that States parties agree upon a threshold at which the second cycle would be considered to be concluded, such as the 70 per cent threshold set by the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto.

26. Should the currently pending 40 executive summaries be completed by June 2024, it would mean that, between June 2024 and December 2025, another 25 would need to be completed. Given the average time needed to finalize executive summaries prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this would make possible the completion of 70 per cent of executive summaries for the reviews of all States parties under review by the proposed date of December 2025.

27. The secretariat will continue to analyse progress made towards the completion of the second cycle and will inform the Implementation Review Group accordingly. It will provide further projections ahead of the tenth session of the Conference, to be held in December 2023. On the basis of updated projections to be prepared ahead of the tenth session of the Conference, the Group may wish to propose to the Conference at its tenth session that the Conference consider extending the duration of the second cycle of the Implementation Review Mechanism at least until the end of 2025.