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English only

Implementation Review Group**First resumed tenth session**

Vienna, 2–4 September 2019

Briefing for non-governmental organizations in accordance with resolution 4/6 of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption entitled “Non-governmental organizations and the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption”**Summary**

1. At its fourth session, the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption adopted resolution 4/6 entitled “Non-governmental organizations and the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption”. In that resolution, the Conference decided that briefings for non-governmental organizations would be convened on the margins of the sessions of the Implementation Review Group (hereinafter Group) on the outcomes of the review process, including technical assistance needs identified. The Conference also decided that those briefings would be conducted by the secretariat in cooperation with a member of the bureau and would be based on the reports of the Group, thematic implementation reports and regional supplementary addenda.
2. Moreover, in the same resolution, the Conference encouraged non-governmental organizations to report to it and/or the Group, as appropriate, individually or collectively, on their activities and contributions to the implementation of the recommendations and conclusions of the Group, including those related to meeting technical assistance needs and advancing capacity to effectively implement the Convention. The briefings would serve to further promote constructive dialogue with non-governmental organizations dealing with anti-corruption issues and help build confidence in the role and contributions that non-governmental organizations can make to the review process. The first briefing for non-governmental organizations, held in accordance with Conference resolution 4/6, took place in the margins of the third session of the Group on 20 June 2012. Since then, briefings have been held annually in the margins of the sessions of the Implementation Review Group.
3. The eighth briefing for non-governmental organizations was held in the margins of the first resumed tenth session of the Group on 3 September 2019 and was chaired by Maria Consuelo Porrás Argueta (Guatemala), President-designate of the Conference. The Chair delivered introductory remarks, welcoming the decision taken by the Conference to involve non-governmental organizations in the work of the Mechanism.



4. At the start of the briefing, the Secretary of the Conference recalled resolution 4/6 and reiterated the terms of the briefing for non-governmental organizations. The programme for the briefing was contained in document CAC/COSP/IRG/2019/CRP.9. Building on previous experience and following suggestions from the States parties and non-governmental organizations, and in order to allow for a more interactive discussion, the programme of the briefing was divided into two parts where the participants were invited to ask questions and make statements at the end of each part of the briefing.
5. During the first part of the briefing, a representative of the secretariat provided an update on the performance of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the Convention based on a note prepared by the Secretariat ([CAC/COSP/IRG/2019/2](#)).
6. At the outset of the ensuing discussion, speakers expressed their condolences on the passing of Mr. Dimitri Vlassis, the former Secretary of the Conference, and recalled his important role in and contributions to establishing the present forum. Speakers also commended the secretariat for organizing the briefing, which provided an opportunity to representatives of States parties and non-governmental organizations to exchange views on key issues related to the implementation of the Convention. They also expressed their appreciation to the secretariat for preparing a useful and insightful analysis of relevant information and statistics.
7. Many speakers emphasized the indispensable role of civil society in the fight against corruption, as foreseen in article 13 of the Convention, while a number of speakers also emphasized the need to engage civil society representatives in all stages of the review process and to ensure transparency, including by involving them in country visits.
8. A number of speakers stated that the practice and framework of engaging civil society in the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Conference should be reconsidered and that non-governmental organizations should be given observer status in their meetings. States parties and the bureau of the Conference were urged by one speaker to put in place transparent and accountable practices when considering the objections submitted by States to the participation of specific NGOs not in consultative status with ECOSOC. In this regard, it was proposed that rule 17 of the rules of procedure for the Conference be amended and that the established practice for the screening of written submissions and materials for display submitted by non-governmental organizations be replaced with alternative procedures. In this regard, States parties were called on to draw inspiration from the practice and rules of procedure of meetings of other United Nations bodies when considering possible changes. Speakers suggested that relevant resolutions could be proposed for consideration and adoption at the next session of the Conference.
9. In regard to possible changes to the modalities of participation of non-governmental organizations in the meetings of the Group, some speakers drew the attention of the briefing to the intergovernmental nature of the Mechanism, which informed, in part, the terms of Conference resolution 4/6. It was noted that opportunities for effective dialogue and engagement between civil society and States parties were available under the existing framework and that they had not yet been fully utilized, and that the briefing should focus on that aspect in the future.
10. The need for States parties to promptly discuss a formal follow-up process at the end of both review cycles was emphasized by some speakers.
11. Strong partnerships between governments and civil society in anti-corruption efforts were mentioned as essential prerequisites to achieving success in the fight against corruption. Specific challenges were also reported in the work of non-governmental organizations engaged in anti-corruption.
12. Several speakers shared specific examples of how the support of civil society was sought and utilized by their countries to educate the public on corruption risks, build capacity of anti-corruption institutions, develop relevant studies and conduct research. They mentioned that representatives of civil society regularly received

financial support from governments to attend the sessions of the Conference and were often part of their official delegations.

13. One speaker referred to the lack of trust in public institutions and initiatives, including in international instruments, such as the Convention, among citizens of countries that had experienced armed conflicts and political instability and stated that one way to overcome the issue was by providing sufficient space for civil society to share their views and concerns. Another speaker mentioned that a large number of journalists had been killed around the world, with many of them targeted for their work in investigating and uncovering corruption. Furthermore, speakers noted with concern the lack of resources of non-governmental organizations and of funded travel opportunities that prevent a wider participation of their representatives in civil society briefings. In that regard, the need to ensure the availability of funding for non-governmental organizations to carry out anti-corruption activities was mentioned and donors were encouraged to provide such funding.

14. In addition, one speaker called on States to take comprehensive measures to improve the transparency of beneficial ownership of companies and to protect whistle-blowers and suggested that the Conference consider adopting a resolution to this effect. Another speaker suggested that specific recommendations could be made to States parties in the course of reviews under the Implementation Review Mechanism. These included recommendations on transparency of financing political parties and donor information, as well as the adoption of Open Contracting Data standards in public procurement. In relation to political financing, it was proposed by one speaker that a recommendation be issued to publish information on donors to political campaigns.

15. A clarification was sought on the activities of the community of anti-corruption practitioners that had been formed as a result of numerous trainings of governmental experts, focal points and other stakeholders conducted by the secretariat over the years. A representative of the secretariat informed the briefing that, although there was no specific mechanism in place to track the post-training activities of those anti-corruption practitioners, pre- and post-training surveys and other data and observations had shown the positive impact on the subsequent professional development of training beneficiaries.

16. In the second part of the briefing, a representative of the secretariat provided an overview of the thematic reports on the implementation of chapters II and V of the Convention prepared by the secretariat ([CAC/COSP/IRG/2019/10](#) and [CAC/COSP/IRG/2019/4](#)). He also presented brief updates on technical assistance provided by UNODC in support of the implementation of the Convention and on recent and ongoing projects to simplify online access to information, resources and services related to the work of the Mechanism and enhance synergies with other review mechanisms in the field of anti-corruption.

17. In the ensuing discussion, one speaker noted that although the findings contained in the thematic reports were useful, they further highlighted the importance of publishing full country reports in order to enable more meaningful analyses of challenges in the implementation of the Convention and called on all States Parties to publish their reports. It was also mentioned that access to information principles reflected in articles 10 and 13 of the Convention were cornerstones in the fight against corruption and that many States parties had not yet adopted public information laws and should be urged to do so. In order to highlight particular challenges in obtaining access to information, one speaker shared sample figures of the number of persons killed, injured or harassed for requesting information from public bodies. A reference was also made to the recommendations made on achieving target 10 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 during the discussions at the High-Level Political Forum in July 2019. Finally, suggestions were made to consider linkages between access to information measures and other transparency provisions of the Convention, including on beneficial ownership and public procurement, in future updates to the thematic reports as well as in relevant guidelines. In this regard, one speaker proposed that a

central open register (in open data format) of the beneficial owners of all registered corporate entities, including foundations and partnerships, be created. It was also proposed, inter alia, that the registration of both domestic and foreign trusts be required, that the regulations clearly define beneficial owners, that mechanisms be established and funded to ensure the verification of such information and that national money-laundering risk assessments be undertaken. States parties were called on to adopt a resolution outlining such measures at the forthcoming eighth session of the Conference, as well as to place the issue of public registers of beneficial ownership on the agenda of the special session of the General Assembly against corruption.

18. In conclusion, the Chair welcomed all statements made by participants and noted with appreciation that the briefing provided another important opportunity to strengthen collaboration and dialogue between civil society and the States parties to the Convention.
