



Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

Distr.: General
2 July 2020

Original: English

Tenth session

Vienna, 12–16 October 2020

Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Technical assistance

Provision of technical assistance to States in the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto

Report of the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 8/4, entitled “Implementation of the provisions on technical assistance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime”, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime noted that technical assistance was a fundamental part of the work carried out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to assist States in the effective implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto, and welcomed the work of the Working Group of Government Experts on Technical Assistance.

2. The UNODC global, regional and country programmes provide technical assistance to Member States across a wide spectrum of forms of organized crime and within the broader framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The programmes cover organized and serious crime, money-laundering, trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime, maritime crime and wildlife and forest crime. They provide direct technical assistance to States in the implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto. The UNODC technical assistance activities advance progress towards the 2030 Agenda, in particular the achievement of Goals 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries), 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss) and 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels).

3. In the present report, UNODC provides Member States with an overview of the global programmes relating to the Convention and the Protocols thereto that have been implemented since the ninth session of the Conference, held in Vienna from 15 to 19 October 2018. The technical assistance activities covered in the report are

* [CTOC/COP/2020/1](#).



divided into activities implementing the Convention, those implementing the Protocols thereto and those concerning serious crime.

II. Technical assistance in the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

A. United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

4. After 10 years of unremitting efforts, the Conference established, through the adoption of resolution 9/1 at its ninth session, a mechanism for reviewing the implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto, which is funded through a mixture of existing resources and voluntary contributions. The Global Programme to Support the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, launched in February 2019 and currently designed to run until the end of 2030, was developed to support the smooth operation of the Mechanism and includes a peer review process lasting 12 years and the involvement of States parties and other stakeholders. The Global Programme is responsible for the development and maintenance of the main tools to be used during the review process, in particular an online database that will serve as the main communication tool among the actors involved in the review and will host the self-assessment questionnaires used to carry out country reviews, which is a new secure module on the Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC) knowledge management portal. The Programme will also support national experts in the preparation of the list of observations during the review and facilitate the exchange of good practices, challenges and solutions. Furthermore, it will support the identification of technical assistance needs, thereby helping relevant UNODC programmes to conduct tailor-made technical assistance and capacity-building activities. The operation of the Mechanism will substantively promote the implementation of the Convention and the three Protocols thereto and contribute to preventing and combating organized crime effectively.

5. The UNODC Global Programme of Support to the Work of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was evaluated in late 2019 and will come to an end in 2020. Under the Programme, the Convention achieved near universal adherence, with 190 States parties. A new programme is under development and will succeed the current programme at the end of 2020. The new programme will aim to support States in implementing the Convention by placing a focus on the observations emanating from the Implementation Review Mechanism. To do this, the new programme will pursue two interrelated outcomes. First, it will support States in adopting legislative and other related measures for implementing the Convention, with a focus on the observations emanating from the Mechanism. Second, it will support States in developing and implementing evidence-based plans and strategies to address transnational organized crime at the national and regional levels. Both outcomes will be implemented through four key strategies: developing and disseminating knowledge on transnational organized crime through SHERLOC; developing capacities among relevant State party authorities and other stakeholders; developing tools to support responses to transnational organized crime; and advocating awareness-raising and the development of networks of practitioners who address organized crime.

6. Through the new global programme, UNODC will continue to develop SHERLOC, which is freely accessible to the public at sherloc.unodc.org. SHERLOC gathers under one roof databases of legislation, case law, national and regional strategies, treaties and bibliographic data concerning organized crime and terrorism. The resources hosted on SHERLOC now cover 15 types of crime, namely, participation in an organized criminal group, corruption, counterfeiting, drug trafficking, money-laundering, obstruction of justice, cybercrime, piracy and

maritime crimes, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons, trafficking in cultural property, wildlife crimes (including forest and fisheries crime), falsified medical products, trafficking in firearms and terrorism. Materials on SHERLOC can be searched by keyword, country, type of crime and relevant cross-cutting issues. SHERLOC is accessible in each of the six United Nations languages and integrates a translation tool that allows users to browse in other languages. SHERLOC also hosts the restricted-access Directory of Competent National Authorities and a Legislative Guide for the implementation of the Convention. In 2019, SHERLOC had 338,000 visitors. The website offers users the opportunity to fill out a survey, and 78 per cent of the responders indicated that they considered SHERLOC as a leading resource at the international level for legal materials on organized crime and terrorism, while 80 per cent indicated that the portal contained information and resources that they would otherwise have difficulties in finding.

7. The Global Programme for Strengthening the Capacities of Member States to Prevent and Combat Organized and Serious Crime supports Member States in core and cross-cutting areas and the piloting of new initiatives. For example, on the issue of falsified medical products, it developed and launched, in collaboration with the Conference Support Section, a publication entitled *Combating Falsified Medical Product-Related Crime: A Guide to Good Legislative Practices*. In addition, it is one of the programmes involved in the three-year-long Law Enforcement Assistance Programme to Reduce Tropical Deforestation, which is further described in paragraph 29 below.

8. The Global Programme against Organized and Serious Crime has placed international cooperation at the centre of its activities and supported regional judicial cooperation networks of points of contact: the Judicial Cooperation Network for Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network and the West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors against Organized Crime. A new network was also supported in South-East Asia, the South-East Asia Justice Network, which comprises eight States, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam. The new network is open to other countries and will be implemented in cooperation with the secretariat of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Global Programme acts as an intermediary between points of contact, networks and competent authorities that may not belong to a network. The points of contact are officials responsible for handling requests for mutual legal assistance.

9. The networks assist in contacting competent authorities, facilitate bilateral meetings and provide advice with the drafting of requests for mutual legal assistance. Trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants are the most common offences included in such requests. In 2018, the Global Programme against Organized and Serious Crime created an email address (unodc-mla.facilitators@un.org) that authorized officials can use to request contact information in another jurisdiction in relation to a request for mutual legal assistance (33 requests were thus facilitated in 2018, and 31 in 2019). Bilateral meetings were facilitated between officials of the central authorities of Thailand and Uzbekistan to discuss cases of trafficking in persons. Bilateral meetings were also held between Malaysia and Thailand and between Turkey and Uzbekistan to improve regional judicial cooperation and launch the negotiation of bilateral agreements. In 2019, the West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors against Organized Crime assisted with the negotiation of treaties on mutual legal assistance, extradition and the transfer of prisoners between Italy and Mali and between Italy and the Niger. Training activities on international cooperation in criminal matters held through the networks reached at least 300 practitioners. In view of the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, information on extraordinary measures taken by central authorities for international cooperation in criminal matters during the pandemic was collected from more than 60 States, compiled in a document entitled "Communications from central authorities regarding working and emergency measures as a result of the health crisis caused by COVID-19" and disseminated to more than 150 central authorities.

B. Education

10. In order to enhance the provisions on education on organized crime-related issues, the Education for Justice (E4J) initiative, under the Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration, developed several innovative tools and materials. These tools include materials for use inside and outside the classroom and range from games to comic books, animated videos and lesson plans, as well as a series of university modules covering the UNODC mandated areas.

11. At the primary education level, the E4J initiative focuses on promoting and teaching such values as acceptance, fairness, integrity and respect. In addition, the E4J educational materials contribute to building the basic skills needed to provide a resilient response to crime and violence and to identify and resolve moral or ethical dilemmas. During the reporting period, the initiative developed several tools addressing organized crime and gender-based violence for primary school students, such as the “Zorbs” package, including educational animated videos, comic books, a dedicated book for children, colouring books, lesson plans to be used in the classroom, a comic creator tool that can be used by children on their own and several games. All those tools specifically address UNODC mandated areas, albeit in simple terms, and render the concepts that they address accessible to children.

12. At the secondary education level, the E4J initiative developed and disseminated practical and interactive educational materials focused on, inter alia, organized crime, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons and firearms. Educational videos and guides thereto were produced in relation to various organized crime-related mandates. In addition, a board game on trafficking in persons, entitled “Enredados”, was developed. Likewise, the San Servolo comic book series was created for a target audience of teenagers from 13 years of age. It features stories focusing on trafficking in persons, organized crime and other related issues.

13. In addition, pursuant to a partnership between UNODC and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the E4J initiative developed two handbooks for primary and secondary schools that include exercises, games and other activities addressing UNODC mandated areas, including organized crime.

14. The E4J initiative also aims to strengthen teaching on issues related to the rule of law at the tertiary education level. In collaboration with more than 600 academics and national experts from more than 550 universities in 114 countries, UNODC developed 117 university modules and teaching guides, including on organized crime, trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in firearms, wildlife crime and cybercrime. Those modules are available on the E4J initiative website and are aimed at enhancing teaching on thematic areas related to the rule of law and organized crime in higher education institutions worldwide. During the reporting period, some 700 academics participated in workshops to discuss how teaching on matters related to the rule of law, including organized crime, could be strengthened in tertiary education.

C. Laundering of proceeds of crime

15. The UNODC Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism continued to assist States in implementing the Convention. The mission of the Programme is to provide global leadership in policymaking and capacity-building in order to combat financial crime. As a well-known and respected technical assistance provider, the Programme assisted 102 countries in 2019 with tailor-made advice and training. Its flagship Mentor Programme continued, with the adviser for Central America and the Caribbean assisting beneficiary countries with trade-based money-laundering and ongoing mentoring on bulk cash smuggling. In Southern Africa, the Global Programme continued to assist beneficiary countries with asset forfeiture and management, while the advisers in the Balkans and West Africa assisted beneficiary countries with

enhancing their capacities to carry out financial investigations. In Central and South-East Asia and in Latin America, the goal was to build effective procedures to counter money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, while in Papua New Guinea and Peru, financial intelligence units and law enforcement agencies received assistance with dealing with illicit financial flows from forestry crimes.

16. The target audience of the Global Programme includes legislative drafters, parliamentarians, financial intelligence unit staff, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, magistrates, judges, customs and immigration officers, asset forfeiture unit personnel and relevant private sector actors. In 2020, the Programme is celebrating its twenty-second year of existence, and the vision of the Programme is to continue to provide state-of-the-art tailor-made advice and training to Member States in order to assist them in establishing robust and effective anti-money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism systems, and to continue to demonstrate its relevance in the international arena.

D. Law enforcement

17. The Global Programme on Strengthening Criminal Investigation and Criminal Justice Cooperation along Drug Trafficking Routes (CRIMJUST) directly supports the implementation of articles 13, 16, 18 to 20 and 27 to 30 of the Convention by facilitating interregional investigative forums; promoting post-seizure actions; delivering capacity-building for special investigative techniques, including controlled deliveries; sharing knowledge on cocaine trafficking production processes; and promoting formal and informal criminal justice cooperation through specialized drug prosecution networks.

18. CRIMJUST provides technical assistance to Member States and fosters interregional cooperation between criminal justice institutions to counter drug trafficking. Its focus lies specifically in enhancing criminal justice cooperation among countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, West Africa and the European Union to ensure that investigations into transnational drug trafficking crimes are pursued beyond interception activities. This entails providing tools, capacity development and technical assistance to facilitate collaboration among jurisdictions in pursuing investigations, prosecutions and matters related to proceeds of crime.

19. CRIMJUST interregional investigative case forums have been instrumental in promoting cross-border cooperation in criminal matters and providing post-seizure support to law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies. The activities that CRIMJUST has facilitated to date have brought together officials to discuss cocaine trafficking trends, study specific cocaine seizures cases and develop and agree on post-seizure actions to support prosecution. The investigative case forums provide an informal channel of communication to enable investigative and operational cooperation, facilitating intelligence-sharing and spurring open discussions. They serve to complement existing and forthcoming requests for mutual legal assistance by encouraging officials to discuss the challenges that they encounter and promoting best practices to investigate and prosecute transnational drug trafficking. The forums are facilitated in partnership with regional anti-drug prosecution networks.

20. In addition, CRIMJUST delivered technical assistance to Member States to enhance their use of special investigation techniques, including controlled deliveries, as defined in article 20 of the Convention, and the development of international cooperation manuals.

21. These CRIMJUST activities optimize criminal justice outcomes by ensuring that the focus of investigators goes beyond seizures and includes investigations, prosecution and the pursuing of assets obtained illegally by the organized crime groups responsible for trafficking in the seized illicit commodities.

22. Within the framework of the “Networking the Networks” initiative of the global programme entitled “Building Effective Networks against Transnational Organized

Crime”, UNODC continued to promote regional law enforcement cooperation through, inter alia, existing regional centres. Work is in progress on informal standard operating procedures for the exchange of information and the coordination of multilateral operations among existing regional and international centres, such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the African Police Cooperation Organization, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), the Association of Heads of Police of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Police Community of the Americas, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre, the South-East European Law Enforcement Centre, the Joint Planning Cell, the Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Asia-Pacific Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Drug Crimes and others.

23. In addition, UNODC worked with countries in Latin America, namely, Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru, to establish and support the Regional Counter-Narcotics Intelligence Centre. Support is provided by drafting institutional documents that cover issues related to the exchange of criminal intelligence and the coordination of multilateral operations. Furthermore, the Office held meetings with experts from those countries to address practical issues related to the exchange of criminal intelligence and the coordination of operations targeting illicit drug trafficking and related crime.

24. To strengthen cooperation among law enforcement training institutions, UNODC promoted the Law Enforcement Training Network, which serves as a platform for the exchange of training curricula, materials, methodologies, trainers and best practices among training and educational institutions in the field of law enforcement. In promoting the Network, the Office cooperates with INTERPOL, WCO, Europol, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training and national law enforcement education and training entities throughout the world. The Network currently comprises more than 400 institutions, and work is ongoing on developing a database and establishing a common web page to streamline and simplify access to training courses and information about institutions and other topics.

25. The UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme builds capacity in countries seeking to improve risk management, supply chain security and trade facilitation at seaports, airports and land border crossings in order to prevent the cross-border movement of illicit goods, such as drugs, weapons, illegal wildlife and forest products and precursor chemicals for drugs and explosives. A core element of the Programme is the establishment of port control units and air cargo control units comprising, ideally, front-line officers from various law enforcement agencies, to foster inter-agency cooperation. Following thorough theoretical and practical training, the units may also undergo advanced specialized training on such topics as strategic trade and export control, drugs and their precursors, and wildlife crime. The Programme supports activities in more than 60 Member States, with more than 119 port and air cargo control units across the Black Sea and Caucasus region, Central, South and South-East Asia, East and West Africa, the Gulf States, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, Oceania and South-East Europe.

26. The mandate of the Container Control Programme is primarily derived from article 29 of the Convention, in which States parties are encouraged to develop and enhance training and technical assistance for law enforcement personnel in order to, inter alia, detect and intercept the movements of illicit goods, especially as they relate to transnational organized crime.

27. The seizure results highlight the effectiveness and relevance of the Container Control Programme to Member States. In 2019 alone, port and air cargo control units around the world seized more than 77 tons of cocaine, 1.5 tons of heroin, 880 kg of cannabis, 120 kg of psychotropic substances, 37 tons of precursor chemicals, 100 kg of explosives, 100 firearms and other weapons, including grenades and rocket

launchers, 3,000 rounds of ammunition and numerous shipments of illicit wildlife goods (including the largest single ivory seizure ever recorded) and illicit waste. These seizures keep profits and dangerous goods out of the hands of organized criminal groups and non-State actors, while also enhancing the security and development of Member States.

28. As the Container Control Programme looks to the future, it will continue to adapt and respond to new and emerging cross-border challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the integral role played by the containerized trade supply chain for national economies and underlined the importance of efficient border controls that do not impede licit trade. The Programme is committed to continuing to support Member States in balancing the need to detect and intercept suspicious consignments with that for efficient legal trade.

29. The Law Enforcement Assistance Programme to Reduce Tropical Deforestation, funded by Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative, was launched in June 2018 and is implemented by a consortium consisting of UNODC, INTERPOL and the RHIPTO Norwegian Centre for Global Analyses. Within UNODC, the Programme is implemented by the Container Control Programme, the Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism and the Global Programme against Organized and Serious Crime.

30. UNODC has placed regional advisors in Indonesia, Peru and Viet Nam, undertaken assessments and delivered trainings and mentoring for law enforcement, including to customs and financial investigators and prosecutors. The consortium has delivered training on wood identification, risk indicators, document fraud, financial disruption, investigative tools on corporate crimes and prosecution methods and supported Container Control Programme-port control units in the identification of illegal shipments of timber. The training was delivered to participants from at least 66 different entities from 8 countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Peru, and Viet Nam). It was aimed at building investigative and operational capacity and resulted in improved inter-agency communication and cooperation. The consortium is directly supporting the development of national task forces in Papua New Guinea and Peru. The consortium represents a wide-ranging effort to bring together mentoring, targeted trainings, sharing of criminal intelligence, enforcement investigations, operations and judicial activities. Together with the evolving national task forces, it provides one of the broadest international efforts in place to combat transnational organized crime.

31. Similarly, the Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP) is a UNODC-WCO-INTERPOL initiative aimed at strengthening the capacity of airports to detect and intercept high-risk passengers and illicit goods in countries of origin, transit and destination. The Project is implemented through multi-agency and nationally owned joint airport interdiction task forces (JAITFs) based in international airports; real-time secured communication among those task forces through the WCO Customs Enforcement Network Communication Platform; connection to the INTERPOL I-24/7 Global Police Communications System and national databases; and regular training and mentoring activities.

32. AIRCOP contributes to the disruption of the flows of all types of drugs and illicit goods, the interception of foreign terrorist fighters and the detection of victims of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. The Project also supports information-sharing and trust-building among law enforcement agencies. Through its support for the efficient management of international airports and by virtue of the nexus existing between peace, security and development, AIRCOP also actively participates in the economic development of the regions in which it operates.

33. As of May 2020, AIRCOP was present in 41 international airports in 36 countries in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean and, since 2020, South-East Europe. Activities are also planned in South-East Asia in 2020.

34. In the coming years, Aircop is dedicated to developing the capacity of its JAITFs to analyse advance passenger information and passenger name records for the efficient targeting of known and unknown high-risk passengers. In most countries, support is needed for the development of legislation on the collection, use and analysis of such data, including data protection, as well as the development of capacity-building for JAITF officers.

35. Aircop will also aim to bridge the technological gap between Aircop JAITFs. The digital divide, particularly visible in Africa, hinders the development of strategies to combat transnational organized crime as well as the implementation of the Project. Limited computer knowledge, a lack of quality equipment and unstable Internet connections are all obstacles to the participation in e-learning courses and videoconferencing for the exchange of information and the planning of joint operations, and ultimately hinder the creation of a coordinated response to transnational organized crime and terrorism.

36. Aircop will continue to develop training to keep its JAITFs up to date with regard to emerging threats, new trafficked commodities and connected crimes. For example, as JAITF officers often have limited specialized knowledge of wildlife crime, Aircop will develop training modules and activities on risk analysis, profiling, wildlife specimen identification, investigation, evidence collection and the safe handling of live or dead animals after discovery. Similarly, post-seizure investigations and aspects relating to integrity will be central axes of development.

E. Data analysis

37. In order to further enhance knowledge of the patterns and trends of organized crime, especially in the Western Balkans, UNODC implemented a regional initiative aimed at developing a statistical and conceptual framework to measure organized crime under the project on measuring and assessing organized crime in the Western Balkans. In order to structure the analysis, the framework divided the concept of organized crime into five areas, namely, State response, activities of organized crime groups, structure of the groups, enablers of organized crime and economic value of the markets.

38. A quantitative data collection under the framework elicited more than 7,000 submissions from administrative authorities on 15 types of crime, including participation in an organized criminal group, trafficking in persons and trafficking in firearms, covering the period 2012–2018. The data collection sought both to compile data on investigations, prosecutions and convictions of crimes most commonly associated with organized crime, and to understand the number of cases that the criminal justice system treated as cases of criminal group involvement, in a legal sense. This allowed unique insights into the incidence of such involvement, as shown in the number of convictions, in crimes that are traditionally assumed to have high levels of criminal group involvement.

39. As quantitative data can never supply the full picture of crime phenomena, a qualitative data collection was also undertaken. This data collection consisted of more than 250 interviews with three populations: prisoners convicted of organized crime, expert practitioners and persons affected by organized crime (i.e., victims of trafficking in persons and smuggled migrants). Lastly, a case law analysis was undertaken that included 127 prominent organized crime cases from the region.

40. When analysed, the vast amount of data elicited important findings regarding the level of criminal group involvement in several crimes, as well as the capacity of the criminal justice system to investigate and prosecute organized crime. The results, due to be published in a report in 2020, also pointed to important patterns within the structures and modus operandi of the organized criminal groups operating in the Western Balkans, which seemed to vary by market. It is hoped that such a framework to measure and monitor organized crime can provide a standardized set of indicators based on internationally agreed upon legal instruments and definitions. Collecting and

analysing this information can allow countries and regions to have a very clear understanding of the trends and patterns of organized crime. In addition, the evidence produced can point to concrete technical assistance needs, which can be precisely assessed and tracked against baseline data. Lastly, the analysis of trends and patterns can lead to the creation of better, more targeted policy interventions at the regional and national levels.

III. Technical assistance in the implementation of the Protocols

A. Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants

41. The Global Programme against Trafficking in Persons, the Global Programme against the Smuggling of Migrants and the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants of UNODC provide technical assistance with the implementation of the Protocols to the Convention. The core objective of those programmes is to support Member States and practitioners with the prevention and prosecution of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, the protection of the rights of people who fall prey to the criminals who commit those crimes and the promotion of cooperation among Member States in that regard.

42. In 2019 alone, the aforementioned global programmes trained 2,149 criminal justice practitioners, governmental officials and civil society representatives (699 women, 1,054 men and 396 individuals in meetings for which no breakdown by gender was available). The programmes reached 17 countries with targeted technical cooperation activities at the national level, of which 6 were provided with legislative assistance to align their laws on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants with the Protocols to the Convention and international standards. In total, 64 countries were represented in technical cooperation activities on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants conducted at the national and regional levels.

43. Hundreds of victims of trafficking in persons were rescued as a result of the support provided by the global programmes, for example in Malawi. Under the Global Programme against Trafficking in Persons, UNODC established two inter-agency coordination bodies that identified 228 victims (61 men, 16 women and 151 children) in 2019. In addition, police officers trained by the Office rescued Nepalese victims in Lilongwe and Blantyre, Malawi, carried out investigations and coordinated with UNODC and social protection services to bring the victims to safety. In February 2019, the Malawi Police Service rescued three Nepalese women in Lilongwe believed to have been trafficked by Indian nationals. In November 2019, the Service also rescued six Nepalese men in Blantyre. After the rescue, the police first responders applied the standard operating procedures and the National Referral Mechanism, developed with UNODC support, to coordinate their action with the Office and the social services and bring the presumed victims to safety in shelters before they were able to return to Nepal.

44. Furthermore, the Global Programme against the Smuggling of Migrants and the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants supported a joint INTERPOL-UNODC operation against the smuggling of migrants conducted through the Americas in November 2019 (Operation Turquesa). Authorities in 20 countries across three continents acted on leads and carried out nearly one million checks at air, land and sea borders in order to disrupt the organized crime groups behind key smuggling routes to Canada and the United States of America. Operation Turquesa led to the detention of 152 persons, of whom 97 were arrested for smuggling migrants, 31 for trafficking in persons and 24 for other related offences, and the identification of 775 vulnerable migrants, many of whom had been smuggled or were victims of rape, trafficking or other violent crimes. A major outcome was the arrest of a 32-year old man from Bangladesh believed to be behind one of the largest migrant smuggling networks into the United States. Brazilian

authorities dismantled his entire network, which is believed to have facilitated the illegal passage of more than 200 people from South Asia.

45. Similarly, the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, a joint initiative by the European Union and UNODC implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, transitioned during the reporting period from its first phase of implementation, covering the period from 2015 to 2019 and 13 partner countries across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, to its second phase, now covering Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan (Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants in Asia and the Middle East), as well as Bangladesh through a parallel project (Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants in Bangladesh).

46. During the reporting period, the Global Action initiative conducted more than 100 technical assistance activities in 16 partnering countries. Domains covered included national policy development, legislative assistance, capacity-building and regional cooperation. The initiative also trained a total of 1,004 judges, practitioners, law enforcement officers, media officials, hotline respondents and social workers (225 women, 455 men and 324 persons not aggregated by gender). With the support of the Global Action initiative, countries investigated or prosecuted more than 1,000 cases of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, including a case where an investigation led by an Egyptian Global Action trainer led to the dismantling of a major smuggling network in Alexandria, Egypt, in July 2019. In another case, a truck driver transporting 22 Malawian children was arrested by South African immigration officials who had attended a training organized by the initiative in December 2018.

47. As regards the Protocols to the Convention, the Global Action initiative supported Bangladesh in the accession process to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and Bangladesh acceded to the Protocol on 12 September 2019. Throughout its first phase, the Global Action initiative, together with the Global Programme against Trafficking in Persons, also played a major role in supporting Nepal in the accession process to the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, and Nepal acceded on 16 June 2020.

48. This flagship project is driving forward innovative solutions in the fight against human trafficking. To ensure that the Global Action initiative is able to assist its partner countries in delivering targeted, innovative, demand-driven and, above all, sustainable interventions, UNODC proactively engages in the continuous development of a “global community of practice”. The Global Action initiative convened a “community of practice” workshop during the twenty-eighth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Vienna from 20 to 24 May 2019, to share good practices and lessons learned from the first phase of the initiative (not only with the Global Action team but also with government counterparts, implementing partners and the project donor) and learn more about national contexts, challenges and solutions.

49. In addition, the Global Action initiative in Asia and the Middle East is developing a women’s network of gender champions among partner countries to promote and foster the participation of women professionals in building effective responses to trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. The initiative aims to identify female officials and male champions of women’s rights working in policymaking, the justice sector, law enforcement, civil society and other relevant entities, with a view to shifting the paradigm from “women as victims” to “women as powerful agents of change”.

B. Trafficking in firearms

50. Through its Global Firearms Programme, UNODC continues to promote the ratification and implementation of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

51. The work of UNODC under this Programme follows an integrated approach based on five pillars, each covering a specific area. They constitute jointly the basis for a comprehensive framework for action against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, as well as for the advancement and monitoring of target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime).

52. Under the first pillar of the Programme, UNODC supports regional legislative harmonization efforts and the development and enhancement of national policies and normative frameworks through awareness-raising and legislative assistance by holding drafting workshops and providing gap analysis and specialized tools designed to support the ratification of, accession to and implementation of the Firearms Protocol.

53. In order to support the implementation of preventive and security measures, which is the second pillar, UNODC continues its support for the marking and registration of firearms by providing marking machines and record-keeping tools that allow for better accountability and increase the capacities of national authorities to trace firearms. The Programme also assists countries in establishing effective transfer control regimes and increased border-control capacities to improve the transparency of licit arms flows and combat illicit arms trafficking. To prevent and reduce the diversion of firearms and ammunition, the Office implements activities aimed at enhancing the security and safety of stockpiles and provides support for the design and implementation of comprehensive national arms collection and destruction activities.

54. Strengthening the criminal justice response of Member States constitutes the third pillar, with targeted training activities focused on the investigation and prosecution of complex domestic and transnational cases of firearms trafficking and their links to organized crime and terrorist activities. Furthermore, UNODC seeks to promote South-South cooperation among countries and to partner with relevant actors on the ground, including INTERPOL, international and regional organizations and civil society organizations.

55. Under the fourth pillar, UNODC fosters international cooperation and the exchange of information to address the transnational dimension of illicit trafficking in firearms and related issues at both the judicial and law enforcement levels and, through its community of practitioners, actively promotes the transfer of knowledge, good practices and lessons learned.

56. Lastly, the Office focuses on research and analysis to enhance intelligence on and the overall understanding of trafficking in firearms and its criminal context for the development of evidence-based policies on illicit arms flows. The UNODC Monitoring Illicit Arms Flows Initiative supports the global monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.4.2 (Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments) and the launch of the 2020 *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking*.

IV. Technical assistance concerning serious crime

A. Cybercrime

57. UNODC continued to provide holistic support to Member States for preventing, detecting, investigating and prosecuting cybercrime in all its forms, with due regard for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the use of information and communications technology. The objectives of the Global Programme on Cybercrime include making the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of cybercrime offences more efficient and effective, especially where those offences relate to the online sexual exploitation and abuse of children, while upholding human rights and contributing to progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Cybercrime mentors based in Vienna and in El Salvador, Guatemala, Kenya, Senegal and Thailand continued to support countries in the corresponding regions to counter cyberdependent and cyberenabled crimes and handle and exchange electronic evidence.

58. Moreover, UNODC capacity-building efforts continued to address the needs of developing countries, focusing on their self-identified vulnerabilities in order to provide tailor-made technical assistance and promote the exchange of the latest information. This approach provides Member State law enforcement officers with the tactical and operational planning advice that they need to make a real impact on local, regional and international cases. To that end, UNODC trained more than 1,800 criminal justice practitioners from 36 countries in the following areas: countering of online child sexual exploitation; use of specialized hardware and software; handling of digital evidence, digital forensic analysis; use of open source intelligence tools; international cooperation; cybercrime law; cyberthreat intelligence; cryptocurrencies; darknet investigations; wildlife crime online investigations; cyberthreat intelligence in countering terrorist operations; and malware investigation.

59. UNODC supported the ministries of education of El Salvador and Guatemala in designing, adopting and implementing a prevention strategy on cybercrime in State schools. In addition, the Office designed and launched permanent exhibitions at the children museums in both countries with a view to promoting and teaching the rights of children on the Internet.

B. Wildlife crime

60. Once an emerging threat, wildlife, forest and fisheries crime is now considered a serious, transnational organized criminal activity. Through its Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime, UNODC continues to apply a “crime scene to court” approach, providing support to Member States to prevent, identify, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate this crime more effectively. The Office works in close coordination with national authorities, ranging from law enforcement and criminal justice agencies to wildlife, forest and fisheries management authorities, providing direct support to improve responses. In 2019, training courses reached more than 1,600 criminal justice personnel across 30 countries and included tools provided by the Convention, such as mutual legal assistance, extradition and joint investigations.

61. UNODC developed a series of resource tools to build Member State capacity to prevent corruption and conduct parallel financial investigations aimed at following the money linked to wildlife, forest and fisheries crime. The Office engaged in significant awareness-raising work and continued to conduct research and analyses at the national, regional and international levels, collecting information on patterns and flows of illicit trafficking in natural resources and waste, as well as other crimes that have an impact on the environment.

62. UNODC promoted regional and international cooperation, for example, by supporting wildlife enforcement networks and the African Wildlife Forensics Network and by hosting wildlife interregional enforcement meetings. The Office

provided normative guidance to Member States, assisting with the development of new legislation and encouraging authorities to criminalize offences and recognize wildlife, forest and fisheries crime as a serious crime in order to be able to implement the provisions of the Convention regarding international cooperation.

63. Transnational organized wildlife, forest and fisheries crime affects the air that people breathe, the water that they drink and the oceans that they depend on to survive. UNODC is raising the awareness and capacity of Member States necessary to safeguard the world's natural heritage and respond to the interlinked challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, crime and insecurity.

64. 2020 has been termed a biodiversity “super year” by the United Nations, placing biodiversity at the forefront of the sustainable development agenda. UNODC will use this opportunity to advocate the incorporation of criminal justice issues into the biodiversity agenda, changing the relationship with nature by criminalizing related offences. Doing so will increase the chances of meeting the ambitious goals and targets on biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation, while at the same time addressing major criminal justice challenges linked to the exploitation of natural resources, thereby supporting the Convention.

65. UNODC has been supporting Member States in the fight against wildlife and forest crime for more than 10 years and has witnessed its evolution into serious transnational organized criminal activities, involving organized criminal groups, corruption and money-laundering.

C. Maritime crime

66. The UNODC Global Maritime Crime Programme has continued to support Member States in combating piracy and maritime crime by assisting criminal justice systems, providing operational support and building capacity in maritime law enforcement. Benefiting from the strong trust of Member States, international organizations and seafarers, the Programme team is present in courtrooms, prosecution offices, ports and prisons and onboard coastguard vessels of Member States around the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans and the Caribbean and Red Seas. Through this hands-on approach to technical assistance, the Programme has contributed to the work of the United Nations at the national, regional and global levels of reducing the impact of transnational organized crime and security threats, thereby removing impediments to sustainable development and peace.

67. The Programme supported States in improving their understanding of maritime crime prosecution, in legal framework reviews and in mutual legal assistance through the running of the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime Prosecutors' Network, which has been operational since 2016. The Forum framework consists of four pillars: the Southern Route Partnership, the charcoal pillar, the law enforcement task force to address piracy and the Prosecutor's Network. The Southern Route Partnership targets the trafficking in Afghan heroin originating from the Makran Coast in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and bound for East and Southern Africa. The successful coordination through the Partnership of heads of anti-narcotics departments was marked by an increase in heroin seizures by national drug enforcement agencies.

68. As part of the work of the Programme to facilitate both skills development for maritime law enforcers and relationship-building between coastal States, a visit, board, search and seizure training centre was established in Seychelles and another in Sri Lanka, where it is hosted by the Sri Lankan Navy at its base in Trincomalee.

69. The Programme also supported the implementation of Security Council resolution [2498 \(2019\)](#) through the development of maritime situational awareness capability to disrupt illicit trade in charcoal and other goods from Somalia. The Programme has a dedicated team that engages with other international partners, such as the Combined Maritime Forces and the European Union Naval Force, to counter those crimes jointly.

70. In the Pacific Ocean, the Programme led efforts to counter maritime crime in the Sulu and Celebes Seas by convening a trilateral contact group. Furthermore, the Programme promoted maritime diplomacy through the establishment of the Maritime Law Enforcement Dialogue and the development of a non-binding document on common practices for engagement at sea between maritime law enforcement agencies in the South-East Asia region.

71. In the Atlantic Ocean, the Programme supported the member States of the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States in the national implementation of international maritime legal frameworks. The publication of the second edition of the UNODC *Maritime Crime: A Manual for Criminal Justice Practitioners* supports criminal justice practitioners in improving their capacities and helps to bring the different States in line with relevant international conventions.

72. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Programme delivered training on the smuggling of migrants at sea, vessels without nationality and article 17 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. Working in close cooperation with the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security of the Caribbean Community, the Programme supported cooperative maritime law enforcement in subregions through tabletop exercises. UNODC interventions were aimed at enhancing national inter-agency coordination and regional cooperation to strengthen the capacity of Member States to ensure maritime governance. In 2020, the Programme aims to identify and analyse new maritime crime trends and linkages to enable Member States to develop informed responses through initiatives, such as the newly launched Caribbean Forum on Maritime Crime.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

73. The technical assistance that UNODC provides to States to implement the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto is embedded in the targets of multiple Sustainable Development Goals. However, as development is a long-term process, so too is the fight against organized crime.

74. Universal adherence to the Convention is a goal within reach. The challenges lie in the implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto. The launch of the Implementation Review Mechanism creates an opportunity to enhance their implementation by pursuing a strategic approach. To support States in their efforts to fully implement the observations emanating from the Mechanism and to move from theory to practice, UNODC will launch a new global programme dedicated to supporting States in adopting legislative and other related measures, as well as strategies for implementing the Convention, with a focus on the aforementioned observations.

75. Recognizing that any treaty or legislation is only as good as its implementation, UNODC continued to provide a broad range of technical assistance through its existing global, regional and country programmes, covering a wide thematic portfolio to combat transnational organized crime in all its forms and manifestations.

76. In preparation for the launch of the Implementation Review Mechanism, the Conference of the Parties may wish to request States to submit to the Secretariat not only legislation but also case law and policy documents on combating organized crime, trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in firearms, by email (unodc-sherloc@un.org).

77. The Conference may also wish to consider inviting States parties to increase the level of financial contributions provided to UNODC in order to facilitate the implementation of the observations emanating from the Implementation Review Mechanism, to enhance the implementation of the Convention and the Protocols thereto.