

**Draft Statement on behalf of the African Group to the 10th
Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against
transnational organized crime**

Version to be submitted to the Secretariat

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Mohamed MEZGHANI, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tunisia, 12 October 2020

Mr. President

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.
2. Allow me to extend our sincere congratulations on your election as the President of the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). The Group also extends its congratulations to the members of the Bureau and assure of its full cooperation.
3. The Africa Group aligns itself with the statement delivered, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
4. The Group joins in celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 55/25, on the adoption of the Convention and the Protocols thereto, and hopes that this milestone would strengthen our efforts to prevent and combat Transnational Organized Crime.

Mr. President

5. Transnational organized crime constitutes a serious challenge to the international community by undermining economic, social, cultural and political development of societies and fueling instability around the world. In this regard, the efforts to overcome this challenge should not only focus on its effects but also the root causes with a view to enhance the sustainable development of our countries in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
6. The Group welcomes the adoption of the review mechanism and remind that it shall be a tool to assist States parties in identifying specific needs to promote and facilitate the provision of technical assistance in order to strengthen international cooperation. To this end, the Group call for sufficient funding of the review mechanism.

7. The African Group stresses the important role that the Convention and its protocols play in assisting State Parties to overcome Transnational Organized Crime and would like to recall its strong commitment to implement the Convention which is attested to by the exceptionally high number of ratifications by African countries.
8. The Group believes that the fight against transnational organized crime, including its root causes, is a common and shared responsibility. In this regard, the African Group reaffirms that the provision of technical assistance, including legal advisory training of criminal justice practitioners, legislative drafting, capacity-building and equipment is fundamental in order to build the capacities of our countries to effectively combat terrorism and organized crime and to better implement relevant instruments. The Group calls upon UNODC to continue the provision of adequate and sustainable technical assistance, including equipment, based on the specific needs of requesting countries.

Mr. President

9. The African Union Commission has developed and implemented the three Plans of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention since 1998, in response to emerging challenges relating to drugs and crime. The Group underscores the work being carried out by the Commission of the African Union on the same plan for the period of 2013-2018 and calls upon State Parties, the UNODC and development partners to work collaboratively with the African Union to support the implementation of this revised Plan of Action, to the benefit of African State Parties.
10. The Group would like to reiterate the key role of AFRIPOL, as the main African Union Mechanism in combating transnational organized crime. In this regard, the African Group welcomes the holding of the 1st General Assembly on 15 and 16 May 2017 in Algiers, Headquarter of AFRIPOL, and its adopted three-year Action Plan (2017 - 2019).
11. We highlight other initiatives in the African continent aimed at countering illicit activities and transnational organized crime including terrorism. Such initiatives include, inter alia, the work carried out by the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF) co-chaired by the Kingdom of Morocco in the field of counter-terrorism, the "Sharm El Sheikh Declaration" of the Ministerial Defense Council of CEN-SAD, which highlights the importance of strengthening border security between member countries as well

as the ongoing efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force and its regional intelligence fusion unit carried out by four countries in Lake Chad Basin, namely Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

12. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been one of the major challenges that the Continent is facing as it is threatening peace and human security. Thus, the Group emphasizes the importance of strengthening international cooperation for the purpose of decreasing the spread of illicit weapons and reducing their harmful impact on individuals and communities.

Mr. President

13. The African Group encourages countries to enhance cooperation in a continuous and comprehensive manner to develop effective measures to prevent the smuggling of migrants while ensuring the protection of their rights, including access to justice regardless of their immigration status, nationality, gender, ethnicity, age or religion, as well as ensuring their non-criminalization in accordance with parties obligations under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.
14. The African Group reiterates its strong condemnation over the violence against migrants, migrant workers and their families motivated by racism, racial discrimination, stigmatization and hate crimes, xenophobia, and other related forms of intolerance. In particular, the practice of mandatory detention of irregular migrants, their criminalization and treatment in the context of border control, is inconsistent with international human rights laws and must therefore be ceased. In this context the Group encourages States to take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety of all people in their territories and to bring perpetrators of such violence and crime to justice. Additionally, the Group looks forwards for the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration during the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact on Migration which will take place in Marrakesh on the 10th and 11th December 2018.
15. In that regard, the Group calls on the UNODC to assist requesting Governments, to support and allocate appropriate

resources for programs aimed at strengthening preventive actions and providing appropriate assistance to the victims.

16. The African Group welcomes the ongoing efforts by His Majesty the King Mohamed VI of Morocco, who was appointed by the Chairperson of the African Union as leader on the Migration Issue. In this regard, the Group takes note of the proposed African Agenda on Migration submitted by His Majesty the King Mohamed VI during the 30th Summit of the African Union. We also welcome the decision to create in Rabat the African Observatory for migration and the adoption of the Observatory's statute during the 33rd AU Summit, held in February 2020.

Mr. President

17. The African Group remains concerned with the continuous and unabated illicit trafficking in cultural property. We stress and reiterate the urgent need to enhance international cooperation to counter the illicit trafficking in cultural property, as it represents a very serious form of organized crime, and a violation of the cultural heritage of all peoples of the world. In this regard, we call upon States to fully implement the International Guidelines for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Responses with Respect to Trafficking in Cultural Property and other Related Offences, which were adopted by the General Assembly in 2014. We also underscore the need to develop an international legally-binding instrument within the framework of the United Nations to address illicit trafficking in cultural property, and to strengthen international commitment to tackle this crime.
18. In view of the increasing challenge posed by cybercrime, the Group would like to reiterate that cybercrime requires a comprehensive response that goes beyond the provision of technical assistance and the scope of existing instruments governing transnational organized crime. While welcoming the work done by the open-ended intergovernmental working group on cybercrime as well as the comprehensive study on cybercrime, the Group stresses the urgent need for all UN Member States to elaborate and adopt a legally-binding instrument on cybercrime in order to enhance international cooperation and to effectively address this global challenge. In this regard, the Group welcomes the First African Forum on Cybercrime held in Addis Ababa from 16 to 18 October 2018.

19. Terrorism continues to be one of the major threats to peace and stability within Africa like other regions in the world. We reiterate our unequivocal condemnation and serious concern about the rise in terrorism and terrorist acts in all parts of the world and stress the necessity of tracking the perpetrators of these acts and bringing them to justice, while respecting human rights. The Group once again emphasizes, that terrorism should not, and must not, be associated with any religion, civilization and nationality. We therefore call on all Member States to strengthen cooperation at the international, regional and sub-regional levels to combat the threat posed by terrorism including foreign terrorist fighters and to enhance timely information sharing, logistical support and capacity-building activities as provided by the UNODC upon request by Member States in this regard.
20. The African Group expresses its serious concern regarding the challenges posed by the increasing links between terrorism and other forms of transnational organized crime including drug trafficking, corruption, cybercrime, trafficking in persons, firearms and cultural property, as well as money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism.
21. We further express our deep concern at the increase in incidents of kidnapping and hostage-taking committed by terrorist groups, for any purpose, including the aim of raising funds or gaining political concessions. In that regard, we call on Member States to enhance international cooperation to prevent terrorists from benefiting from ransom payments.

Mr. President

22. The Group takes note with appreciation the first 2016 World Wildlife Crime Report and further underscores the challenges posed by emerging forms of crime, such as illegal mining in precious metals, smuggling of petroleum and its derivatives, wildlife poaching and forest crimes and fisheries related crimes that have a significant impact on the environment and the development of the States. Although, environmental issues are dealt with in different intergovernmental forums, crimes related to the protection of the environment need to receive proper attention from this conference while avoiding institutional overlap and duplication of work. And, in that sense, the Group recalls the central role of the Convention on international trade in endangered species. We look forward to a productive discussion that responds to the call of the

Doha Declaration for Member States to adopt measures for preventing and addressing effectively, cases of such emerging forms of crime.

24. In conclusion, Mr. President, let me assure you, once again, of the full support of the Group and I look forward to the deliberations and successful conclusion of this session under your guidance and leadership.

25. I thank you.