



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

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**Review of the implementation of the United Nations
Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
and the Protocols thereto: United Nations Convention
against Transnational Organized Crime**

Specific efficiency and cost-saving measures for the consideration of working groups and the Conference of the Parties

Report of the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The present note has been prepared pursuant to resolution 7/1 of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, entitled “Strengthening the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto”, in which the Conference requested the Secretariat to prepare, within existing resources, a report for the working groups, setting out specific efficiency and cost-saving measures that the Conference may consider adopting.
2. The following working groups, established by the Conference, have ongoing mandates: Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, Working Group on the Smuggling of Migrants, Working Group on Firearms, Working Group of Government Experts on Technical Assistance and Working Group on International Cooperation. The following subsidiary body, established by the Conference, also met during the reporting period: open-ended intergovernmental meeting to explore all options regarding an appropriate and effective review mechanism for the Organized Crime Convention and the Protocols thereto.
3. The regular budget entitlements for the Conference of the Parties and its working groups for the biennium 2016-2017 consist of 26 days (52 meetings) with

* CTOC/COP/2016/1.



full conference services, including interpretation into the six official languages of the United Nations, and 64 parliamentary documents (see A/70/6 (Sect. 16)). The Conference decides on the allocation of that entitlement, as it deems appropriate and in consultation with the Secretariat, for the meetings of its working groups.

4. In its resolution 7/1, the Conference of the Parties decided that the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, the Working Group on the Smuggling of Migrants and the Working Group on Firearms would be constant elements of the Conference of the Parties, forwarding their reports and recommendations to the Conference. The Conference also encouraged those working groups and the Working Group on International Cooperation and the Working Group of Government Experts on Technical Assistance to consider meeting on an annual basis, as needed, and to hold their meetings consecutively, in order to ensure the effective use of resources.

II. Cost-saving measures

5. The Conference may wish to continue holding back-to-back meetings of the working groups, and meetings in parallel with the regular sessions of the Conference, as cost-saving measures. There are precedents for doing so. The working groups on technical assistance and international cooperation have traditionally been held consecutively and in parallel with the regular sessions of the Conference.¹ In addition, on two occasions, meetings of the working groups on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants were held consecutively. The practice of holding back-to-back meetings and/or meetings in parallel with the Conference seems to have facilitated the participation of relevant experts in the working groups and in the Conference. Furthermore, the holding of consecutive meetings may lower costs for Member States in relation to the travel of participants.

6. In the past, however, the same delegates did not always participate in the consecutive working group meetings, perhaps owing to the fact that the agenda items of the working groups are often technical in nature, and a single national expert may not have the expertise required for effective participation in both working groups, even where they are held back to back.

7. In practice, even within a single working group, an expert may not have relevant expertise related to all agenda items. Therefore, in order to improve cost-saving measures related to travel of expert participants to consecutive meetings of the working groups, focused agendas could be prepared, which would facilitate the attendance of participants with similar expertise. For instance, the topics could relate to the work of one competent authority, thereby facilitating the participation of a single expert who could cover all topics. Furthermore, the working groups could hold joint deliberations on selected agenda items. For example, a joint

¹ In addition, the Working Group on International Cooperation met consecutively with the open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting to enhance international cooperation under the United Nations Convention against Corruption, convened in accordance with resolution 4/2 of the Conference of the States Parties to that Convention. For more information, please see CTOC/COP/WG.3/2016/2. The question of whether the working group and intergovernmental expert meeting to enhance international cooperation under the United Nations Convention against Corruption could hold meetings jointly or consecutively would have to be decided by the two Conferences.

discussion on cultural property by the Working Group on Technical Assistance and the Working Group on International Cooperation was held on 18 October 2012 (see CTOC/COP/WG.2/2012/4), in parallel with the sixth session of the Conference.

8. The logistical demands and strains that consecutive and parallel meetings place on small permanent missions and the Secretariat should also be taken into consideration by the Conference. Planning and organization of meetings of the working groups should therefore take place well in advance and in close consultation between all Member States and the Secretariat.

9. Further cost-saving measures could include the merging of different reporting mandates into single reports, the submission of documents as conference room papers in English only and the presentation of oral reports by the Secretariat rather than the production of written reports. In the case of oral reporting, the principle of multilingualism would still be respected through simultaneous interpretation in all official languages of the United Nations.

III. Efficiency

10. With regard to efficiency, several working groups have considered the development of multi-year workplans. For example, at its eighth meeting, the Working Group on Technical Assistance recommended the development of a multi-year workplan focused on considering the status of responses to requests for information by the Conference and the identification of technical assistance needs and good practices relating to the following articles:

- (a) Article 5, on criminalization of participation in an organized criminal group;
- (b) Article 6, on criminalization of the laundering of proceeds of crime;
- (c) Article 7, on measures to combat money-laundering;
- (d) Article 10, on liability of legal persons;
- (e) Article 23, on criminalization of obstruction of justice.

This recommendation was endorsed by the Conference in its resolution 7/3. Furthermore, the Working Group on Firearms, at its fourth meeting, recommended that the Conference encourage the Working Group to develop a comprehensive multi-year workplan in order to facilitate greater participation of experts and competent authorities (CTOC/COP/WG.6/2016/3).

11. During various working group meetings, States have also emphasized the need to avoid making duplicate or even contradictory recommendations over the course of different meetings and to follow up on and assess the implementation of existing recommendations. For instance, the Working Group on Firearms, also at its fourth meeting, adopted a recommendation stating that the Conference may wish to recommend that the Working Group discuss, at a future meeting, the follow-up to previously adopted recommendations and take those into account before making future recommendations (see CTOC/COP/WG.6/2016/3). Such a follow-up and assessment of the implementation of recommendations emanating from the working groups could be undertaken by the working groups or by the Conference itself under

relevant items on its agenda. This would also serve to strengthen the linkages between the work of the working groups and the Conference.

12. Moreover, the determination of a multi-year workplan for the working groups could facilitate systematic information-gathering efforts, as the Conference, States and the Secretariat would be able to plan and focus such efforts on specific, selected items. The knowledge base on those selected items would consequently be strengthened, and the Secretariat would be in a better position to prepare relevant background documentation for the working groups. Predictability in the agendas would also expedite the involvement and nomination of subject-matter experts as panellists and delegates at the working groups.

13. With regard to the travel of participants to meetings of the working groups, for many experts, in particular those from the least developed countries, travel costs are often a hurdle to overcome. In this sense, the establishment of a fund, derived from voluntary contributions, could support the participation of experts at the Conference and its working groups.

14. Finally, the work of the working groups could benefit from previous information-gathering efforts and the knowledge that is available in the knowledge management portal known as Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC) of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.² In addition, the gathering of information would be greatly facilitated through the designation of national focal points for this purpose, as reflected in resolution 7/1, in which the Conference called upon each State party to designate a focal point for the purpose of information-gathering and to provide the Secretariat with the contact details of that focal point.

IV. Conclusions

15. In the light of the above, the Conference may wish to agree to the development of multi-year workplans for the existing working groups, which would enhance the effective planning and organization of working group sessions.

16. Similarly, the Conference may decide to prepare the agendas of each working group in a thematic and coordinated way that would encourage and facilitate the participation of persons with similar expertise, possibly falling under the same competent authority. This would facilitate the greater participation of subject-matter experts and competent authorities in the discussions of all agenda items of a working group meeting.

17. The Conference may wish to include an item on its agenda to examine and follow up on the implementation of existing recommendations emanating from the working groups. Alternatively, the Conference may wish to include such an item on the agenda of each working group.

18. The Conference may wish to decide that each working group should make reference to its existing recommendations before drafting and adopting new ones that may duplicate or even contradict previously formulated recommendations.

² See www.sherloc.unodc.org.

19. To further facilitate the work of the working groups, the Conference may wish to decide that existing tools such as SHERLOC should be used as a basis for the systematic gathering, dissemination and analysis of information, which would then form the basis of parliamentary documentation for the working groups. Such analysis could follow the multi-year workplan for each working group.

20. The Conference may wish to reiterate its call to States parties to designate a national focal point for the purpose of communicating with the Secretariat in compliance with article 32 of the Convention and to provide the Secretariat with the contact details of that focal point.

21. The Conference may wish to recommend the establishment of a fund to support the participation of experts from the least developed countries in the working groups of the Conference, as well as for the regular sessions of the Conference.

22. Finally, the Conference may wish to consider encouraging the working groups to hold informal consultations to discuss and set out specific efficiency and cost-saving measures, in consultation with the Secretariat.
