INFORMATION NOTE FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. Meetings arrangements

The Extended Bureau approved via the silence procedure with the deadline of Wednesday, 19 August 2020, the proposal by the President of the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on the organization of work for the seventh meeting of the Working Group on Smuggling of Migrants, to be held 8 and 9 September 2020, in view of COVID-19 restrictions.

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the seventh meeting of the Working Group of Smuggling of Migrants (8 and 9 September 2020) cannot be held in its usual total in-person format. For indoor meetings, health and safety measures, such as a minimum distancing between participants, continue to be required. As the conference rooms in the C Building of the VIC are not large enough to comply with these requirements and no other rooms in the VIC are available, the only option to accommodate a limited number of delegate to be physically present in the meeting is the one outlined below.

2. Hybrid/in-person format

This format enables the participation of one delegate per delegation, to be physically present, on a voluntary basis, in the conference room. In addition, the Chair (if feasible), Secretary and Secretariat staff will be present in the Conference room. The interpreters and technicians will also be in the VIC. All other participants will be connected remotely using the Interprefy platform.

As the available conference room, Board room D, will only allow the physical participation of approx. 80 persons due to the minimum distancing requirements, a second meeting room in the C Building of the Vienna International Center will be made available should more than 80 delegates register to attend. Delegates in both rooms will be able to participate equally. This option seeks to accommodate the request that all Member States should be granted the opportunity to access and fully participate in all meetings organized by UNODC on an equal basis. Kindly note that a larger conference room is not available.

3. Meeting times

Each morning and afternoon meeting has been reduced from 3 to 2 hours. The morning meeting will be held from 11:00 to 13:00 hrs. and the afternoon meeting from 15:00 to 17:00 hrs., local time Vienna. A revised proposed schedule/organization of work based on these meeting times is available on the website of the working group (https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/working-group-on-the-smuggling-of-migrants-2020.html) and communicated upon discussion with the Chairs.

4. Interpretation

In accordance with rules 34 and 35 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference, interpretation into the six official and working languages of the Conference will be provided. The United Nations
Secretariat entered into a contract with an online interpretation platform, Interprefy, which can facilitate translation into all six official United Nations languages.

5. **Speakers**

The Interprefy platform only allows a maximum number of 300 links/connections with speaking functions. This concerns the participants which will join remotely. Additional links/connections are possible but only have a listening function. The speaking and listening links/connections are linked to the individual emails of the registered participants.

Thus, **two speaking links/connections will be available to each delegation and one speaking link/connection for each observer delegation**. This calculation is based on the number of registered delegations at past meetings. The delegations are requested to clearly inform the Secretariat which members of its delegation will have the speaking link/connection when registering the delegation through a Note Verbale. Delegations which include a panelist need to ensure that the panelist is given one of the speaking links/connections.

If delegations do not take the full allocation of speaking links/connections available to them or if there is a positive balance available (which is likely), those speaking links/connections would either be distributed equally so that all delegations receive an additional speaking link/connection or, if the balance is not large enough to allow an even distribution of one additional link/connection per delegation, the leftover would be distributed to the panelists.

If on the contrary, the number of delegations registering for the meetings is so high as to result in a total of more than 300 speaking links/connections, the number of speaking links/connections per delegation would be reduced to one for each delegation. The remaining members of each delegation would be granted listening links/connections (without the possibility to use this connection to speak). Further instructions on the use of Interprefy will be sent to the registered participants shortly before the meeting and also made available on the website of the meeting.

6. **Registration of participants**

All relevant information of delegates (full name, title and up-to-date personal email address) will need to be submitted to the Secretariat in due time, indicating the distribution of speakers and listeners links/connections as outlined above.

7. **Meeting documentation**

Pre-session documents of the meetings will be issued electronically. Insession documentation (i.e. the parts of the report for adoption) will also be made available electronically through ODS. A link to the documents will be shared in the meeting chat on Interprefy. The revised organizational arrangements and schedule of work of the meetings will be reflected in the final reports of the meetings.
8. Statements

Participants are encouraged to send their general statements in written format, which will be made available on the public website of the meeting. No general statements should be made during the meeting due to the time constraints. Statements will have a maximum duration of 3 minutes. Panellist presentations will have a maximum duration that will be communicated by the Secretariat directly to the panellists.

9. Proposed organization of work and adoption of the report

As the hybrid/in-person meeting format enables the physical presence of one participant per delegation in addition to connecting other delegates via Interprefy, every effort will be made for the recommendations to be agreed upon by the working group during the meeting, as per usual practice.

The summary of deliberations will be a summary of the Chair. This should free up time to enable the working group to discuss and negotiate the recommendations which would become a part of the report to be adopted.

The recommendations will be drafted by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair and presented by the Chair as soon as possible after the discussion on the agenda item is completed.

Panellists and all speakers are requested to very clearly and explicitly state that they are making a recommendation for inclusion in the report when doing so. Recommendations should be concise, and consideration should be given to limiting the overall number of recommendations, where feasible. If possible, the panellists should include their recommendations in their presentations, which will be submitted in advance and published on the website of the relevant meeting, unless instructed otherwise.

The report (including the Chair’s summary) will be submitted to the COP as part of the official documentation.

10. Preventive Measures within the VIC

Delegates are reminded to adhere to and practice the following measures, subject at all times to the advice and guidance by VMS, to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Frequent and correct handwashing with soap and water or hand disinfection as an alternative;
- Maintain physical distancing of one meter as much as possible (see Section G);
- Wear face masks in public areas (see section i);
- Practice good coughing etiquette (such as coughing in the elbow);
- Avoid shaking hands and touching your face;
- Inform VMS of symptoms and seek appropriate guidance before coming to the office;
- Stay home when sick with fever and/or respiratory symptoms; and
- Delegates are responsible for following COVID-19 related requirements.
a) Physical Distancing in the VIC

Physical distancing measures should be followed in the VIC. Individuals should avoid close contact and keep a distance of a minimum of one meter from other individuals and should not be in close contact of less than one meter for longer than 15 minutes.

b) Entering and Exiting the VIC

All persons entering/exiting the VIC should adhere to physical distancing measures and are required to wear face masks when accessing/exiting security checkpoints (pedestrian and vehicular). These occupational safety measures also apply during any interaction with security staff inside the VIC.

c) Doors

Delegates are advised to limit the touching of doorknobs, e.g. keeping all office doors open, using elbows, etc.

d) Elevators

Use of elevators will be subject to physical distancing guidelines and will be limited to a maximum of 4 passengers at any one time. Queues are anticipated, and staff and other personnel are encouraged to consider staggering arrival and departure times. Staff are reminded of One Up – Two Down use of stairs, and are encouraged to consider using the stairs more frequently.

e) Hallways

Most hallways in the VIC are wide enough to maintain a distance of one meter for two directional flow. Narrower hallways, for example around elevator bays, will be marked for flow in one direction only.

f) Stairwells

Stairwells in the VIC are wide enough to maintain a distance of one meter while passing another individual. In the case of narrower stairwells, staff must make the necessary room to pass without touching and must pass as quickly as possible.

g) Services

Physical distancing and wearing of face masks must be followed when queuing for and availing of service such as the Cafeteria, pharmacy, Commissary and other VIC commercial services.

h) Distance Markings and Signage

Distance markings of floors in all common areas (i.e. all ground floors in buildings A, B, C, D, E, F, G, M, as well as 2nd and 4th floors of building C) have been prepared.
Delegates should pay attention to markings to maintain physical distancing. Markings throughout the VIC may be displayed on the floor, walls, or signage pillars according to the location and surface materials (e.g. floor markings cannot be easily placed on carpeting).

i) Face Masks

In keeping with the most recent regulations and advice from the Austrian authorities, face masks will be required at the VIC in the following settings:

- When entering and exiting all perimeter gates as well as any contact with UNDSS Security Officers;
- At the Pharmacy and VIC Medical Service premises
- Where one-metre physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- While no longer a requirement in most settings, anyone may continue to wear a face mask in the VIC, if they wish to do so;
- Delegates are advised to have their own masks and are reminded that homemade cloth masks are adequate. In addition, masks may be procured in the pharmacy.

11. Useful References:

- COVID-19 website for all UN system personnel;
- Latest information from WHO;
- General Guidelines for VIC return