



European Union

**EU Statement at the
Working Group of Government Experts on Technical Assistance**

**UN Convention against Transnational Organised crime (UNTOC)
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

Vienna, 29 and 30 May 2023

Distinguished Chair, dear colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Ukraine*, Republic of Moldova*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Georgia and Iceland.

Mr Chair, in this statement, I would like to address a few issues under agenda items 2 and 3, namely the technical assistance provided by the EU, the functioning of the review mechanism, gender mainstreaming, and national strategies to address transnational organised crime. Let me start, however, by underlining that the on-going Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn in strongest possible terms, severely hampers international co-operation, and diminishes the trust that is indispensable for effective and meaningful technical assistance.

Firstly, concerning technical assistance:

The EU and its Member States collectively contribute around 35% to UNODC's budget, which translates into around 120m USD per year. The EU Commission alone has almost 50 on-going projects with UNODC, representing a total contribution of more than 230m EUR. Many of these projects are technical assistance projects to counter organised crime. To name but a few:

- CRIMJUST: Disrupting criminal networks operating along illicit trafficking routes, now in its 3rd phase;
- AIRCOP: Airport Communication Project - Phase VI;
- GLO.ACT: Global action to prevent and address trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in Asia and the Middle East;

* Candidate Countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as potential Candidate Country Georgia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

- Port Security and Safety of Navigation; and Cross-Regional Wildlife Conservation in Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean.

All these projects demonstrate the high importance the EU places on providing and supporting technical assistance in the field of transnational organised crime, and we will continue to support them.

Second, on the UNTOC Review Mechanism:

The UNTOC Implementation Review Mechanism is a crucial process to support Parties to the Convention and the Protocols in the effective implementation of these instruments, and to help them to identify and substantiate specific needs for technical assistance and to promote international cooperation. Technical assistance and the review process are thus closely linked.

Unfortunately, only six Parties are donors to the Global Programme for the Review Mechanism: three of them EU Member States [DE, FR, IT] plus the EU itself. We have been hearing from the Secretariat that the Review Mechanism is facing serious delays. We believe that these delays are at least partially due to a lack of funding: Indeed, with only 4 staff members, the Secretariat cannot provide the assistance that is needed to keep a peer-review mechanism running. A comparison with the UNCAC Review Mechanism makes this very obvious. Therefore, we would appeal to other Parties to consider funding the Review Mechanism, possibly in a “soft earmarked” way, i.e. for the general functioning of the Review Mechanism. In this context, we also regret, again, that the Procedures and Rules of the Review Mechanism do not provide a basis to adequately deal with objections.

Third, on mainstreaming gender and human rights:

We recall resolution 26/3 that calls on member states to mainstream a gender perspective into crime prevention and criminal justice policies and programmes and into efforts to prevent and combat transnational organised crime, also contributing to achieving the goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Indeed, to effectively prevent and counter transnational organised crime, it is vital to strengthen cooperation, share best practices and develop technical assistance. Gender mainstreaming is critical in this regard. Crime prevention approaches need to take into account the different needs of men and women, girls and boys and consider the different implications they may have. By adopting a gender lens when analysing, planning, and implementing law enforcement interventions, we can enhance our possibilities to combat transnational organized crime. To develop more effective and evidence-based preventive approaches, we must also ensure that all individual data provided is sex-disaggregated throughout preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This facilitates a gender impact assessment of actions undertaken. Therefore, we welcome the efforts by UNODC, to mainstream gender and human rights in programmes and projects.

Finally, on strategies:

In April 2021, the European Commission adopted the first [EU Strategy to tackle organised crime for the period 2021-2025](#). The Strategy highlights the crucial importance of boosting law enforcement and judicial cooperation, disrupting organised crime structures and tackling high priority crimes, eliminating the profits generated by organised crime and making law enforcement and the judiciary fit for the digital age. The Strategy aims to tackle not only individual crimes, but also dismantle the organised criminal groups behind those crimes, and destroy their business model, notably through confiscation, asset recovery and anti-money laundering.

Mr Chair,

We believe that this Strategy will not only benefit the EU and its Member States but could also be useful for other Parties as a model to develop their own strategies to address transnational organised crime. The EU and its Member States stand ready to assist them in their efforts to counter this scourge.

Thank you, Mr Chair.