Implementation Review Group
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Performance of the Mechanism for the Review of
Implementation of the United Nations Convention
against Corruption

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Implementation of the United Nations Convention against
Corruption

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present document contains an updated analysis of the performance of the
Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention
against Corruption, in particular its second cycle, as at 10 March 2024. It also
contains recommendations on the measures required for the completion of the second
cycle.

* CAC/COSP/IRG/2024/1.
I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 8/2, the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption acknowledged that continuing the process of evaluation of the performance of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption before the completion of the second review cycle on the basis of the experiences gained in the first review cycle could significantly contribute to useful outcomes and that that process should be started without prejudice to any subsequent continuation of such work following the completion of the second review cycle.

2. In the same resolution, the Conference encouraged States parties, with the help of the secretariat, to voluntarily share their views in the Implementation Review Group, without prejudice to the existing mandates of the Group and the terms of reference of the Mechanism, on the possible ways forward following the end of the first review phase, and requested that the Group submit its report to the Conference at its tenth session. Also in the same resolution, the Conference requested the Implementation Review Group to continue to collect, with the support of the secretariat, relevant information, including the views of States parties, pertaining to the performance of the Mechanism, with a view to continuing, at the appropriate time, the Group’s assessment of the performance of the Mechanism, as provided for in paragraph 48 of the terms of reference of the Mechanism and Conference decision 5/1, and in that regard to continue to report to the Conference on progress made, bearing in mind the request in paragraph 5 of Conference resolution 3/1 for the evaluation of the terms of reference at the conclusion of each review cycle.

3. In the political declaration entitled “Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation”, adopted by the General Assembly at its special session against corruption, held in June 2021, Member States and parties to the Convention welcomed the achievements of the Mechanism in furthering parties’ efforts to fully implement their obligations under the Convention and urged parties to the Convention to complete their reviews under the Mechanism in a timely manner so as to conclude the first and second review cycles within their agreed period of performance. Member States also welcomed the efforts by the Conference to assess the performance of the Mechanism and adapt, where appropriate, procedures and requirements for the follow-up.

4. Furthermore, in its decision 10/2, the Conference decided, inter alia, to extend the duration of the second cycle of the Mechanism until June 2026 and called upon States parties to the Convention to remain engaged in the review process and to accelerate the completion of the second cycle, with a view to completing at least 70 per cent of reviews of States parties by June 2026 without prejudice to the quality of those country reviews. In addition, the Conference decided that the Implementation Review Group was to dedicate the time necessary to continue its discussions on assessing the performance of the Mechanism, as well as on the scope, thematic sequence and details of the next review phase, including through additional resumed sessions of the Group, if possible, back-to-back with sessions of the Group, within existing resources or subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, to submit recommendations to the Conference at its eleventh session in that regard and to endeavour to launch the next phase as soon as possible.

5. The present document provides an overview of the performance of the Mechanism, in particular the progress made to date during the second cycle, and contains recommendations on the measures required to complete the country reviews under the second cycle. It should be read in conjunction with the note by the Secretariat on the workplan for the implementation of Conference decision 10/2 on the further extension of the second cycle of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (CAC/COSP/IRG/2024/2) and the note by the Secretariat containing a summary of views and deliberations on the scope and thematic sequence of the next phase of the
II. Performance of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the Convention

6. The first cycle is now nearly complete, with 177 out of 189 executive summaries adopted. The second cycle, however, faced substantial delays at all stages of the reviews, with 88 out of 189 executive summaries for the second cycle having been completed at the time of preparation of the present document. In its decision 8/1, the Conference, taking note of the delays incurred during the second cycle of the Implementation Review Mechanism, decided to extend the duration of the second cycle until June 2024 to allow for the completion of country reviews and called upon States parties to accelerate the completion of the second cycle. Shortly after the Conference decided to extend the second cycle, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic began, resulting in additional delays with respect to the completion of country reviews. The pandemic has had an ongoing impact on the pace of the completion of reviews. Subsequently, in its decision 10/2, the Conference decided, inter alia, to extend the duration of the second cycle of the Mechanism until June 2026 and called upon States parties to accelerate the completion of the second cycle, with a view to completing at least 70 per cent of reviews of States parties by June 2026 without prejudice to the quality of those country reviews. In the light of those delays, an updated analysis of the performance of the Mechanism is presented, with special emphasis on measures necessary for the completion of the second cycle.

A. Statistical overview of the first and second review cycles

7. The data provided in figure I below show the overall progress achieved as at 10 March 2024 in the country reviews under the first and second cycles of the Implementation Review Mechanism.

Figure I

Overall progress achieved under the first and second review cycles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First cycle</th>
<th>Second cycle</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>States to reviewed</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment checklists</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>165</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct dialogues</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive summaries</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Analysis of the time frames associated with the critical stages of the review process, with a focus on the second review cycle

8. The delays in the completion of the country reviews and the resulting backlog were analysed to determine whether the second review cycle could be completed by June 2026, as foreseen by the Conference in its decision 10/2. To that end, the
indicative timelines in the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat\(^1\) were compared with the actual timeline of reviews in both cycles.

9. Figure II below illustrates the overall comparison of progress in first- and second-cycle reviews from the start of the country reviews; the analysis of the individual stages is discussed below.

Figure II
**Median duration of country reviews: target timeline versus reality**

![Graph showing median duration of country reviews](image)

1. **Analysis of individual review steps**

(a) **Delayed nominations of focal points**

10. Although it is noted in the terms of reference that the reviews should ideally be designed to take no longer than six months, the process is taking significantly longer. The initial step of nominating focal points, which is scheduled to take place within three weeks after the start of a review, has already seen some delays. Currently, 184 of the 189 focal points for the second cycle have been nominated. Over 80 per cent of the nominations were submitted within three months of the start of the review. Despite the overall positive picture that this presents, the nominations were delayed beyond three months in over 10 per cent of reviews, and five nominations are still outstanding (see figure III below).

Figure III
**Second review cycle: time from the start of the review to the nomination of focal points**

![Graph showing time from start of review to nomination of focal points](image)

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(b) Delayed nominations of governmental experts

11. The nominations of governmental experts have been delayed even more frequently than the nominations of focal points. While the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat foresee that the first teleconference or videoconference should be held within one month of the start of the review, a number of country reviews have been delayed because States parties have not yet nominated their governmental experts. As at 10 March 2024, the nomination of reviewing experts was pending for 20 reviews. In several cases, nominations of experts were delayed for over one year or even for up to several years, meaning that the reviews could not progress, despite repeated reminders and delay letters sent by the secretariat. Late designations of governmental experts or changes in reviewing experts in the course of the reviews have an impact on all subsequent stages of the review.

(c) Delayed submission of responses to the self-assessment checklist

12. The submission of the response to the self-assessment checklist is a prerequisite for progressing with the review process. The model timeline foresees the submission of the response within two months of the start date of the review. More than half (98) of the States parties under review had delays of over four months in submitting their responses, while 24 States parties have not yet submitted their responses. As a result, 13 per cent of the country reviews cannot move forward at this stage. This means that, not counting the reviews of the new States parties to the Convention, these reviews have been delayed by approximately three to five years (see figure IV below).

Figure IV
Second review cycle: time from the start of the review to the submission of responses to the self-assessment checklist

(d) Delays in organizing country visits or joint meetings

13. The model schedule for country reviews foresees that the State party under review organizes further means of direct dialogue, facilitated by the secretariat within five months from the start of the review. While the number of country visits and joint meetings increased steadily in the first three years of the second cycle, the COVID-19 pandemic led to significant delays in the organization of country visits.

14. As the number of country visits or joint meetings held decreased drastically in 2020 and 2021, this resulted in a backlog of visits that had to be scheduled from 2022 onwards. In turn, the delays in the scheduling of country visits affected the overall number of executive summaries and country review reports that could be completed (see paras. 16–19 below). Although a record number of country visits were conducted
in 2022 and the target for country visits in 2023 was met, earlier delays have made it impossible to complete all outstanding reviews by June 2024 (see figures V–VII below).

Figure V
Second review cycle: number of country visits or joint meetings held per year

* For 48 reviews, no country visit or joint meeting has been planned or held yet.

(e) Delays in approving executive summaries

15. For the purposes of the present analysis, the completion of the executive summary is considered to be the end of the country review, as the country review reports are usually completed at a later stage. While the number of executive summaries approved during the COVID-19 pandemic was lower than in the years prior to the pandemic, there then followed a notable acceleration in the completion of executive summaries from 2022 to 2023. Specifically, a total of 26 executive summaries were finalized during the period 2022–2023 (see figure VI).

Figure VI
Second review cycle: number of executive summaries completed and country visits or joint meetings held per year

16. Figure VII shows the overall increase in the number of executive summaries completed during the second review cycle, despite the decline in the number of country visits held and executive summaries completed during the pandemic.
2. Reasons for and consequences of delays in the completion of country reviews

17. Various reasons for delays in the completion of country reviews have been identified, with the significant delays in the submission by States parties of their responses to the self-assessment checklist and the finalization of executive summaries and country review reports emerging as the most critical obstacles. Other reasons are: (a) delays in the nomination of focal points and governmental experts (see paras. 10 and 11 above); (b) the number of languages used for some reviews, as additional time is required for translation and the processing of the working documentation; (c) difficulties in scheduling country visits; and (d) the time required to reach consensus on or receive approval for the executive summaries and country review reports among all the parties involved. Moreover, many States parties indicated that the complexity of chapter II of the Convention and the wide stakeholder consultations required for the two chapters under review in the second cycle were at the root of most delays.

18. In addition to the different review stages in which delays are encountered, the workload of governmental experts and the secretariat has expanded as a result of the following: (a) the increase in the number of States parties since the launch of the first review cycle, when the Convention had only 144 States parties; and (b) the backlog of reviews from prior years. The delays and frequent unresponsiveness of States parties have increased the workload of the secretariat in terms of follow-up and made scheduling and planning difficult. The delays have also affected governmental experts, as many States parties under review in the third to fifth years of the second cycle are also required to serve as reviewing States parties in other delayed reviews or ongoing reviews in the same review year. Furthermore, delays in some cases also have resource implications for the participating States because of deviations from projected financial commitments from one budget year to another. The need to carry out both the delayed reviews and the subsequent years’ reviews at the same time has had a negative impact on the capacity of reviewing States parties and the secretariat. To advance efforts to complete the second cycle in a timely manner, the secretariat has been sending more frequent reminders to States parties that are failing to adhere to the timelines.

3. Findings and projections

19. The analysis has shown that delays accumulate throughout the review process and throughout the review years, and that the impact of the pandemic exacerbated the slowdown in the pace of reviews. Once travel and meeting restrictions had been lifted,
every effort was made to conduct a higher-than-average number of country visits; however, the total number of country visits that can be organized remains limited by the capacity of the secretariat to support all pending reviews. At the time of writing, for the second cycle, 101 executive summaries remain to be completed and 64 direct dialogues are outstanding.

20. The figures presented in the report to the Conference in 2019 outlined possibilities for an extension of the second cycle, in which a completion rate of 44 per cent (81 States parties out of 184 at that time) by June 2024 was projected given the pace of reviews at that time (CAC/COSP/2019/12, para. 17 (b)). If reviews continue at the average pace thus far, 60 per cent of the reviews in the second cycle (113 out of 189 reviews) will have been completed by the foreseen end date of the cycle, in June 2026. However, following the surge in the number of country visits in 2022 and 2023, there are currently 37 country reviews for which country visits have taken place and for which executive summaries are pending finalization. As shown in figure VIII, the adoption of 26 of these executive summaries, which are currently pending with States parties, would bring the total number of completed executive summaries to 114, a number that is in line with the projected time frame for completion of the second cycle. The finalization of all 37 pending executive summaries by December 2024 would result in a total of 125 completed executive summaries, which would mean that the overall target of completing 70 per cent of the executive summaries by June 2026 could even be potentially exceeded. The cooperation of States parties is required to achieve that target, in particular in cases where more than one year has elapsed since the country visit and the information needed to complete the executive summary has not been provided, or where the approval of the executive summary is pending with the State party under review.

21. In addition, reference is made to the deteriorating financial situation of the United Nations regular budget, which has resulted in a freeze on the recruitment of several regular budget posts allocated to the Implementation Review Mechanism. This will have an impact on the extent of secretariat support to the functioning of the Mechanism and the completion of the second cycle. Moreover, there will be restrictions in connection with the volume of documentation presented to the subsidiary bodies of the Conference, including the Implementation Review Group, and the technical servicing of meetings.

Figure VIII
Projection of the cumulative number of executive summaries finalized
C. Training courses for focal points and governmental experts participating in the Implementation Review Mechanism

22. In accordance with paragraph 32 of the terms of reference of the Implementation Review Mechanism and paragraph 11 of the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat in the conduct of country reviews, the secretariat organizes periodic training courses for focal points and governmental experts participating in the reviews. These training courses familiarize the focal points and experts with the guidelines in order to increase their capacity to participate in the review process.

1. First review cycle

23. To date, more than 1,800 experts have been trained in the framework of the first review cycle, thus contributing to the creation of a global community of anti-corruption experts. National training courses and ad hoc assistance have been provided to more than 40 States and, since June 2013, seven regional training courses have been organized.

2. Second review cycle

24. As of March 2024, 10 regional training sessions and 17 global training sessions had been organized for the second review cycle. Training sessions were organized back-to-back with or on the same dates as sessions of the Implementation Review Group to save costs for both the States parties under review and the secretariat. In addition, targeted assistance was made available to States parties under review in support of their reviews, in particular assistance provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to States as regards the completion of their responses to the self-assessment checklists.

25. In order to supplement in-person training on the Implementation Review Mechanism, training videos for focal points and governmental experts were made available through an online e-learning platform. To date, 200 individuals have registered for those training sessions.

26. At the time of writing, more than 1,860 focal points and governmental experts have received specific training on the Implementation Review Mechanism, including more than 1,000 focal points and governmental experts who participated in the regional and global training sessions for the second review cycle. Overall, additional technical assistance was provided to support Governments in completing their responses to the self-assessment checklists, thus bringing the total number of individuals who have received training to more than 2,000.

III. Recommendations and possible next steps

27. As mentioned at previous sessions of the Implementation Review Group, in order to advance efforts to complete the second cycle in a timely manner, the secretariat has been sending more frequent reminders, as well as formal follow-up letters, to States parties under review and reviewing States parties that are failing to meet the timelines.

28. At the fourteenth session of the Implementation Review Group, held from 12 to 16 June 2023, several speakers expressed concern at the delays in the second cycle reviews, challenges related to the translation of documents and the workload for experts and the secretariat. The importance of adequate training for focal points and experts, including online training, and the provision of technical assistance were emphasized.

29. In line with the findings and projections in section II.B.3 above, the States parties under review and reviewing States parties are encouraged to expedite the adoption of 26 executive summaries, which are pending their approval in order to
achieve the target set in Conference decision 10/2 for the completion of the second cycle.

30. The secretariat will continue to analyse progress made towards the completion of the second cycle and will inform the Implementation Review Group accordingly. It will continue to provide projections at the next sessions of the Group, as well as any other information required by the Group with regard to the next review phase of the Mechanism.

31. Furthermore, on 23 February 2024, the Bureau of the Conference approved a workplan for the subsidiary bodies of the Conference for the period 2024–2025, which contains, inter alia, a schedule for the deliberations of the Implementation Review Group on various aspects of the next review phase. Moreover, in accordance with Conference decision 10/2 on the further extension of the second cycle of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the secretariat prepared a workplan on the implementation of that decision. The workplan, if adopted by the Implementation Review Group at its fifteenth session, will chart the path towards the launch of the next review phase of the Mechanism.