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to the United Nations
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Agenda item 2

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

**Next phase of the Mechanism for the Review of
Implementation of the United Nations Convention
against Corruption: drawing of lots, direct dialogue,
information-gathering and use of technology**

Discussion paper by the Secretariat

Summary

The present discussion paper has been prepared to facilitate the deliberations of the Implementation Review Group on the topics of drawing of lots, direct dialogue, information-gathering and use of technology. Based on the views shared by parties to date, it sets out the status quo, needs assessment and potential issues for discussion regarding these topics.



I. Introduction

1. The purpose of the present discussion paper is to inform the deliberations of the Implementation Review Group regarding the next phase of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, specifically on the topics of drawing of lots, direct dialogue, information-gathering and use of technological tools, as per the workplan for the implementation of decision 10/2 of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption on the further extension of the second cycle of the Implementation Review Mechanism, which was adopted by the Group at its fifteenth session.
2. Based on the views shared by States during sessions of the Group and the Conference and in response to the questionnaires circulated by the secretariat on the next phase of the Implementation Review Mechanism, possible options and questions that States may wish to discuss in relation to the aforementioned topics are outlined below. Under each topic, the status quo under the current first phase is described, followed by an assessment of which improvements could potentially be considered during the next phase and issues the Group may wish to discuss.
3. The present paper should be read in conjunction with the note by the Secretariat containing an updated analysis of the views of States parties on the next phase of the Implementation Review Mechanism ([CAC/COSP/IRG/2024/9](#)), which includes views shared by States parties.

II. Drawing of lots

4. In the current phase, lots are drawn at the beginning of each review cycle to determine in which year States parties will be reviewed. In addition, at the beginning of each review year, lots are drawn to select the reviewing States for States parties under review in that year. The system is paper-based and manual, with paper lots being drawn from boxes. The drawing is held on the margins of the meetings of the Implementation Review Group or at intersessional meetings for the purpose of the drawing of lots. In accordance with the terms of reference, one reviewing State is drawn from the same regional group and the other is drawn from a global box. At first, only States parties that have only conducted one or no reviews to date are added to the box in order to satisfy the requirement contained in paragraph 20 of the terms of reference concerning the number of reviews to be performed by each State party in a review cycle. Based on the same paragraph, a secretariat team simultaneously monitors the process to determine if the drawing of lots needs to be repeated or if provisional redraws are warranted. If there are reasons to repeat the drawing in line with the terms of reference, additional States parties can gradually be added to the box.
5. While the drawing process in the Implementation Review Group is fairly efficient, the preparation of the process and the printing and manual sorting of the lots for each State party under review in line with the terms of reference is labour-intensive.
6. With regard to the drawing of lots, parties may wish to consider the following possibilities.
7. For the first review cycle in 2010 and for the second review cycle in 2016, lots were drawn at the beginning of the cycle to establish which States parties were to be reviewed in each year of the cycle. For the next phase, options include the following:
 - (a) Conducting a new drawing of lots at the beginning of the next cycle to determine which States parties will be reviewed in which year;
 - (b) Keeping the order of years and States parties from the previous phase in order to keep the timespan between the start date of the reviews even;

(c) Beginning with the reviews of those States parties whose executive summaries date back the furthest in order to minimize time elapsed between reviews.¹

8. In terms of the selection of the reviewing States parties, in the first phase, lots were drawn at the beginning of each year to select the reviewing States parties. For the next phase, the options include the following:

(a) Keeping the reviewers from the previous phase;²

(b) Drawing lots to select new reviewers, which could be done at the beginning of each year or at the beginning of a cycle.

Manual or electronic drawing of lots

9. In the current phase, lots have been drawn manually, using a paper-based system. For the next phase, the system could either be maintained or an automated tool could be used to draw the lots for purposes of efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

10. The use of an automated tool could follow the practice of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. Under that Mechanism, four instruments with different adherence levels are reviewed, which makes the pairing of States parties under review and their reviewing States parties more complicated than under the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and a manual drawing of lots is not feasible. The secretariat of the Review Mechanism of the Organized Crime Convention, therefore, developed software to carry out the drawing of lots in close consultation with the States parties to the Organized Crime Convention. The software is based on a mathematical algorithm and functions by prompting the name of a party under review and specifying whether it is an initial draw or a redraw. The algorithm then calculates the result based on the pre-established criteria pursuant to the terms of reference, e.g. parties' different adherence to the four instruments under review; regional groups; or the number of reviews conducted by the State party. The software was developed by a consultant who has also revised the software slightly, on an as-needed basis. Based on the experience thus far, the software functions accurately and reliably.

11. For the drawing of lots for the Implementation Review Mechanism of the Convention against Corruption, an algorithm would be simpler than the one used for the Review Mechanism of the Organized Crime Convention. This is because under the Convention against Corruption the implementation of a single instrument is reviewed, resulting in fewer requirements for a drawing of lots. The advantages of using an automated tool for the drawing of lots would be that significantly less time and secretariat resources would be required.

12. If the Conference decides to use software to draw lots, the development or adaptation of the algorithm would be carried out by a consultant. Once the scope and modalities of the next review phase are determined, it will be possible to estimate the exact costs of engaging a consultant. In addition, the need for further adaptations might arise in the future during the use of the system.

III. Direct dialogue

13. In the vast majority of reviews, the State parties under review opted to conduct the direct dialogue through a country visit; in a few cases, the direct dialogue was

¹ The options to keep the order of years and States parties from the previous phase and to begin with the reviews of those States parties whose executive summaries date back the furthest are unlikely to be covered by the existing terms of reference of the Implementation Review Mechanism.

² The option to keep the reviewing States parties from the last phase is unlikely to be covered by the existing terms of reference of the Mechanism.

carried out through a joint meeting, in line with paragraph 29 of the terms of reference. These meetings provide an opportunity for the reviewing States and the secretariat to engage with experts from the State party under review. Country visits typically last two and a half or three days.

14. In response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, virtual or hybrid country visits became an option where desired and technically feasible. This option allowed for the participation of additional experts and presented a solution in situations where travel to the State party under review was not feasible. However, it was considered less desirable.

15. With regard to country visits and possible joint meetings in Vienna, delegations have to date expressed the opinion that the direct dialogue is a key part of the review process that facilitates the exchange of information and lessons learned and provides an opportunity to supplement the desk review, obtain updated information and clarify any open issues.

16. Suggestions were received on how to improve the country visits and joint meetings in the next phase. They included the following:

(a) Providing requests for the possibility of longer country visits, as necessary;

(b) Publishing a calendar containing all upcoming country visits to be made available on the UNODC website for increased transparency.

IV. Information-gathering and use of technology

17. During the current first phase, States use the Omnibus software to prepare responses to the self-assessment checklist. This offline programme is specifically designed for information-gathering by the State party under review. Focal points then transmit the collected information to the secretariat. Utilizing an administrator version of the software, the secretariat can generate a draft report with standardized sections available in all official United Nations languages.

18. In the light of rapid technological developments, Omnibus is no longer up-to-date and has several technical issues that should be addressed in a future tool, namely the following:

(a) *Installation issues.* Due to the set up around the MySQL database, installation support has been needed frequently and several Governments have been unable to install the software altogether due to security concerns;

(b) *Limited customization.* Omnibus does not offer customization options to meet the specific needs and requirements of different States parties, and it does not allow for efficient data entry;

(c) *Reporting and analysis.* Limited analysis and follow-up capabilities make it challenging to use information for any purpose beyond information-gathering;

(d) *Coordination and collaboration.* Omnibus does not distinguish between users, nor does it offer a track-changes mode or allow for the saving of a version history. Different users can thus override each other's information, which can affect the quality of the information-gathering and submission.

19. In addition, although Omnibus facilitates the completion of the self-assessment checklist, it does not allow for collaboration beyond that or offer a workflow to facilitate additional steps of the review.

20. When Omnibus has posed technical challenges, some States have opted to submit the responses to the self-assessment checklist in a word document. For the next review phase, States may wish to mandate the secretariat to explore the development of a new tool to facilitate information-gathering and the review process in general. The new software should provide States parties with an option to work

directly in the information technology tool or in a word document (an option requested by several States parties in order to ease internal sharing).

A. Possible elements of an information technology solution

21. If an information technology tool is to be used to facilitate the review process, it should constitute a comprehensive, user-friendly and secure platform. A new tool would ideally address all the above-mentioned issues by offering an online-based collaborative platform that allows for cooperation and coordination across agencies and countries, while ensuring the security of information, thereby improving both information-gathering and the overall workflow of the review. To ease the burden on States parties and streamline the review process, an information technology tool could automatically incorporate the information and findings from previous review phases to allow States parties to focus on verifying and updating information.

22. Elements that could be featured in a new information technology tool include the following:

- (a) A flexible information-gathering process for filling in the self-assessment checklist and compiling multiple inputs from different experts;
- (b) The ability to tag and assign different experts to different provisions and to track input by different experts;
- (c) A workflow that helps facilitate the review process as a whole in order to streamline reviews and avoid delays;
- (d) Availability in all official languages of the United Nations, ideally through the integration of existing artificial intelligence translation systems;
- (e) The ability to produce an outcome document in all official languages of the United Nations.

23. By incorporating the features and modules summarized below, an updated information technology tool could streamline the review process; enhance collaboration between States parties under review and reviewing States parties; improve data accuracy and security; and ultimately contribute to more effective and transparent assessments of implementation of the Convention and progress made since the previous review.

24. Subject to technical feasibility and the availability of resources, States parties may wish to consider if the following options should be integrated into an information-gathering tool.

1. Self-assessment stage

25. The first feature of the tool could be the information collection stage, in which States parties under review gather and insert the relevant information in relation to the provisions under review by assigning different authorities to different provisions of the Convention. Such a feature should be secure, customizable, user-friendly and easy to use, and it should provide an overview of the overall progress of work. It could contain the following elements:

- (a) *Customizable templates for the inputting of information.* The tool could offer the possibility of customizable templates for each provision under review, which would be uniform for all States parties. The templates could be set up to contain information and findings from previous reviews. Subject to the Conference's decision on the scope and thematic sequence of the next phase, the findings and recommendations from the previous review phase could thereby form the starting point for the next review, and States could verify or update the pre-inserted observations from the previous review and input information on developments and measures taken since;

(b) *Assignments*. The tool could offer the possibility for focal points to provide access and assign tasks to different agencies such as tagging relevant ministries and agencies to provide input under different provisions (e.g. tagging the central authority to provide input on international cooperation);

(c) *Document upload*. A secure file upload feature could be included, which would allow States parties to upload relevant documents;

(d) *Progress tracker*. The tool could feature a dashboard so that the user can track the completion status of submitted information and documents;

(e) *Other resources*. Users could have the option of accessing additional information or resources on the topics or provisions under review, such as guidance materials.

26. Following the completion of the information collection by the State party under review, focal points could send the information to the secretariat with a view to sharing it with the reviewers. Potentially, customizable template messages could be included in the tool to limit the workload of States parties.

2. Review stage

27. Unlike Omnibus, a new information technology tool could help to facilitate additional steps of the review process beyond the self-assessment checklist, including the desk review by the reviewing States parties. An information technology tool could contain options to make collaboration more efficient in this regard. These could include the following:

(a) *Handover*. The secretariat would have the option of checking data inputs and handing them over to reviewers;

(b) *Prioritization and assignment system*. The tool could feature a system to allow for the sorting or grouping of fields or provisions of the Convention by priority and for the assigning of articles to reviewers;

(c) *Reviewer dashboard*. An interface could be provided to allow reviewers to access assigned tasks or provisions, review submitted information and provide feedback;

(d) *Annotation and commenting tools*. A box or field would be provided to allow reviewers to annotate information or documents and provide their feedback.

28. Following this stage, the reviewers could hand the review back over to the secretariat, possibly using customizable template messages included in the system.

29. Tools could also be included to enable the experts involved in the review to communicate with each other, possibly incorporating an online translation software.

3. Outcome documents

30. Another element of any information technology tool should be the ability to generate a draft report based on the information provided by the State party under review and the reviewers (e.g. a consolidated word document) as a basis for the direct dialogue. Ideally, such a draft report could be downloaded in several languages and in a formatted state.

B. Additional aspects of the review that an information technology tool could address

31. Beyond information-gathering and facilitating the review process as a whole, an information technology tool could address different aspects of the next phase of the Mechanism, namely the following:

(a) *Follow-up to recommendations*. By using customizable templates and interfaces to organize the different provisions of the Convention according to the

needs of the State party under review, an information technology tool could help ensure that reviews are streamlined and efficient, in line with the defined scope of the next review phase, for example, by prioritizing measures taken to address the recommendations and findings from the last phase;

(b) *Inclusion of individuals and groups outside the public sector.* Such a tool could potentially feature an optional section that States parties could share, on a voluntary basis, with selected representatives from civil society, academia or the private sector in order to allow those representatives to add input;

(c) *Monitoring the implementation of recommendations.* The tool could facilitate the follow-up to the findings of a review by providing support and monitoring implementation after a review has been concluded. In this regard, States may wish to consider including the following:

(i) *Recommendation tracker.* A system to track recommendations, technical assistance needs and action taken by States under review;

(ii) *Action plan templates.* Customizable action plan templates for States parties to outline steps taken or planned in response to recommendations;

(iii) *Follow-up reminders.* Automated reminders for States parties to provide updates to the Implementation Review Group on the implementation of recommendations.

(d) *Analysis of review outcomes as a whole.* By containing the recommendations, technical assistance needs and good practices from all completed reviews, the tool could help to support the analysis of horizontal review outcomes, such as of global or regional trends. It could potentially link to a dashboard of review outcomes to allow for an overview of common trends and challenges;

(e) *Data visualization.* Such a tool could be used to create interactive charts, graphs and maps to visualize data and trends, making the information easier to understand and interpret.

C. Existing software solutions

32. Should States decide to mandate the secretariat to explore the use of an information technology tool to facilitate information-gathering and, potentially, the review as a whole, the secretariat could explore the possibility of using or adapting existing solutions, with a view to making an efficient use of resources.

33. Three solutions already in use³ that could potentially be adapted include planner-type software or similar software (e.g. so-called “kanban board style” software). The other information technology tool in use is “RevMod”, the software used by the Review Mechanism of the Organized Crime Convention to facilitate those reviews. In addition, the National Recommendations Tracking Database is a tool developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that allows States to have an overview over all recommendations issued under the universal periodic review process.

1. Planner-type software

34. Planner-type software is a tool designed to facilitate collaboration in different teams. The benefits of planner-type software (or similar, so-called “kanban board style” software) include the ability to add useful functions that are tailored to its intended use. It also allows for the flexible and customizable use of tiles and fields to collect and review information added by different users. The workflow function allows for the assignment of different tasks (e.g. the assigning of article 5 of the Convention to the anti-corruption agency by the focal point), the completion of tasks

³ Most other review mechanisms collect information through the sharing of word documents rather than electronic tools.

(e.g. the inputting of information by the anti-corruption agency), the review of tasks (e.g. the review by the reviewing States parties of the information provided) and the tracking of progress. On the negative side, there is currently no feature for downloading an outcome document such as a report based on different tasks.

2. RevMod

35. Designed to facilitate the Review Mechanism of the Organized Crime Convention, RevMod possesses several features that could be of use for the Implementation Review Mechanism of the Convention against Corruption, including the following:

(a) *Information-gathering and review capabilities.* For each provision under review, fields are provided for the inputting of information and for the review of the information provided. There is also an option to upload supporting documents such as legislation;

(b) *Resources, guidelines and experts.* Background information, training resources and other materials can be accessed from any screen of the review process. In addition, contact details of governmental experts are available;

(c) *Choice of languages.* The user interface, the provisions of the Convention and questions, among others, are available in all official languages of the United Nations and users can switch between languages;

(d) *Notifications.* Experts are notified by email when a step is completed;

(e) *Deadlines.* Agreed timelines are visible on the first screen of the review process and can be adjusted by the three States parties involved;

(f) *Download of the outcome document.* RevMod allows the user to download the responses to the self-assessment checklist or the draft report at any step of the process. In its current format, RevMod might not fulfil all the requirements needed for the Implementation Review Mechanism, but certain features could be customized, subject to the availability of resources. Since the programme was developed by the United Nations Information Technology Service, it can be customized and maintained in-house.

3. National Recommendations Tracking Database

36. The National Recommendations Tracking Database, which is used in the universal periodic review process and by the other human rights monitoring bodies of the United Nations, is a web-based tool that is aimed at providing States with an overview of all recommendations addressed to them. The Database is helpful in the planning and coordination, on a national level, of activities to implement recommendations and to track progress, involving the various ministries and institutions participating in the process at the domestic level. Moreover, the tool can be used to prepare reports for the relevant human rights mechanisms. It is intended to enhance the capacity of States to submit timely and complete reporting to United Nations mechanisms. As a result, it is part of the capacity-building programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

37. This system or a similar one could potentially be integrated into an information technology tool used to facilitate reviews of implementation of the Convention, with a view to facilitating follow-up to recommendations and a horizontal analysis of review outcomes. Development of any such tool would be subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources.

38. Alternatively, a new tool could be designed. One benefit of doing so would be that it would be fully customizable to the needs of the Implementation Review Mechanism. However, it could potentially have greater resource implications.

D. Technological aspects and training

39. Once States have decided whether an information technology solution is desirable, and subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources for its development, States parties may wish to consider the technological aspects of that solution. Such aspects include those relating to the following:

(a) *Security and compliance.* Important aspects include data encryption to protect data and communications and ensure confidentiality; role-based access control based on nominations of experts by States parties; and detailed logs to track all activities and changes within the system to avoid losing data;

(b) *Mobile accessibility.* Examples include the accessibility of the platform from devices such as tablets and mobile phones; and the use of mobile notifications to alert users about deadlines or tasks.

40. User training and support should be available, for example, in the form of guides, tutorials or video demonstrations, to help users navigate the platform and its features. In addition, a help desk should be available to assist users with technical issues, questions or concerns.

V. Outlook

41. The issues outlined above are meant to stimulate the deliberations of the Implementation Review Group with the aim of gathering the views of States, which in turn will inform future analysis and discussions.
