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Strategic management, budgetary and administrative questions: work of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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Strategic management, budgetary and administrative questions: work of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Work of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

The present note has been prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council decision 2017/236, in which the Council decided to renew the mandate of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime until the part of the sessions of the Commissions to be held in the first half of 2021, as well as Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 52/13, 54/10, 54/17, 56/11, 58/1, 60/3 and 62/9 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolutions 18/3, 20/1, 20/9, 22/2, 24/1, 26/1 and 28/4. It covers the work of the working group from 20 January to 7 September 2020. Information on the work of the working group during the preceding period can be found in document [E/CN.7/2020/3-E/CN.15/2020/3](#).

* E/CN.15/2020/1/Add.1.



I. Deliberations

1. In the period from 20 January to 7 September 2020, the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) held three informal meetings and one formal meeting. It continued to consider issues under the items on the agenda approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2017/236, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in its resolution 52/13 and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in its resolution 18/3, and in accordance with the terms of reference annexed to those resolutions and provisions contained in Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 54/10, 54/17, 56/11, 58/1, 60/3 and 62/9 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolutions 20/1, 20/9, 22/2, 24/1, 26/1 and 28/4.

2. At its meeting held on 20 January, the working group discussed the draft provisional programme of work of the working group for the period January–December 2020. At the same meeting, the Secretariat provided an update to delegations on the United Nations management and development system reform and its implications for UNODC. The representative of the Secretariat stated that the Office had been monitoring the development of new United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks and coordinating assistance within UNODC to ensure that field offices could meaningfully participate in the process. At the request of Member States, the Secretariat also briefed the meeting on the work of the Global Task Force on Corruption, which was established with a view to harnessing and synergizing United Nations system-wide efforts to help Member States reduce corruption effectively by 2030 and was co-chaired by UNODC, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme. A representative of the Human Resources Management Service provided an overview of the current practices and the implementation of the Organization's policy for addressing and tackling prohibited conduct. The Secretariat also provided an update on the accomplishments of the Human Resources Management Service in 2019 with regard to gender equality, geographical representation and organizational culture, as well as on the priorities for 2020. Two presentations were made: on the implementation and future activities of the UNODC Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime, and on the evaluations carried out in 2019 and ongoing in-depth evaluations. Finally, the Secretariat provided an update on the activities of the UNODC Global *Programme on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*.

3. At its meeting held on 4 February, the working group approved the provisional programme of work of the working group for the period January–December 2020. At the same meeting, the Secretariat briefed the meeting participants on technical assistance provided by UNODC related to counter-terrorism, including capacity-building activities to ensure implementation of the United Nations counter-terrorism conventions. A briefing was also provided on the UNODC Urban Safety and Good Governance Initiative and the expanded cooperation between UNODC and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

4. At its meeting held on 2 June, the working group received an update on the involvement of UNODC in the implementation of the United Nations development system reform, including the enhanced synergies and effectiveness, achievements, challenges, cost-savings and benefits. The representative of the Secretariat stated that UNODC had been actively engaged in the drafting of several cooperation frameworks, including those implemented in Colombia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Iraq, Liberia, Mali, Mexico, Paraguay, Sierra Leone and South Africa. According to a survey by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of 116 locations, UNODC had signed and had its mandates reflected in 72.4 per cent of the United Nations cooperation frameworks for sustainable development in those locations. UNODC was also an active member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, which was similar in scope to entities such as the Joint United Nations Programme on

HIV/AIDS, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Environment Programme. It was also highlighted that UNODC had achieved significant operational success in the course of 2019 through the deployment of surge capacity to areas of high priority, in particular in the field. The surge capacity had contributed to enhanced recognition, by the United Nations and government partners, of the role of UNODC as it facilitated interagency coordination and information exchange. The Secretariat briefed the meeting on the current use and allocation of programme support cost funds. In particular, it was noted that the review of the programme support cost budget and its use had been started and that proposals were being developed to use programme support cost funds more flexibly and effectively at headquarters and in the field. The Director of the Division for Management explained that, owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation, UNODC was expecting a decrease in programme implementation in 2020, which would have a direct impact on the income generated by programme support costs in 2020. At the same meeting, the Secretariat informed the meeting that UNODC, in support of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/266 B, had been working in the following areas: an improved system for the delegation of authority, the adoption of a statement of internal control, strengthened results-based management, and enterprise-risk management. Participants also received an overview of the activities implemented to promote systematic gender mainstreaming and to strengthen institutional capacity, as well as information on COVID-19-related activities and interagency coordination initiatives with regard to gender. During the discussion on human resources management at UNODC, the Secretariat made a presentation on the Geographical Diversity Strategy of the United Nations, the UNODC Geography Action Plan and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and provided an overview of all reported cases of prohibited conduct received by UNODC from January 2018 to June 2020. The final presentation was on the UNODC evaluations carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. At its meeting held on 17 June, the working group was addressed by the Executive Director of UNODC, who highlighted that, from the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the United Nations Office at Vienna and UNODC had taken action to ensure staff safety and business continuity. A number of policy briefs, research papers and data visualizations, produced by the dedicated task teams (launched at the start of the pandemic) with a view to assessing the impact of COVID-19 on the finances and programmes of UNODC, had been posted on a dedicated web page of the UNODC website. The Office had also been providing targeted assistance on the ground, through its field offices, at the request of Member States. The participants in the meeting were informed that UNODC would continue to strengthen its efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, with an emphasis on innovation, evaluation and continuous learning and with a commitment to gender equality, geographical diversity and an inclusive, enabling workplace that attracted and retained quality staff. The Executive Director also presented the outline of the draft 10-year strategy for the period 2021–2030, which envisioned the development of two five-year action plans. The strategy's objectives were listed and the commitment of UNODC to strengthening the link between normative policy development, integrated technical cooperation and research policy analysis was highlighted. In addition, the Executive Director gave a presentation on the strategic enablers of positive change that would be applied in all thematic pillars of the Office.

6. At the same meeting of 17 June, meeting participants discussed the proposals of UNODC for addressing the relevant recommendations described in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions ([E/CN.7/2019/16-E/CN.15/2019/18](#)), as applicable and subject to the provisions of Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 62/9 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 28/4 and other General Assembly resolutions; those proposals had been shared with Member States in advance of the meeting. The Secretariat then provided participants with an overview of the activities and initiatives undertaken by the Office in response to the request, contained in those two resolutions of the respective Commissions, to continue to ensure respect for multilingualism in the work

of the intergovernmental bodies. The Secretariat also provided an update on work undertaken by the Office to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the intergovernmental meetings. A preliminary summary briefing was also provided on the report of the Executive Director on the implementation of the consolidated budget for the biennium 2020–2021 for UNODC (E/CN.7/2020/16-E/CN.15/2020/16). The Secretariat noted that, in order to mitigate the decrease in the income from programme support costs, the dedicated UNODC task force on the financial impact of COVID-19 had already identified savings on the expenditure side of the programme support cost budget, while field offices had also identified savings in the full cost recovery budgets to avoid an adverse impact on the full cost recovery rates of the decrease in programme implementation. The meeting also received an update on planned UNODC research activities and publications and a briefing on the Office's project activities in the field of the use of new technologies for criminal purposes.

7. At its meeting held on 7 September, the working group received an update on UNODC efforts to support implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/266 B on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations. The Secretariat noted that the Office was monitoring the delegations of authority issued and their compliance with policy guidelines issued by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance. To support the implementation and annual issuance of a statement of internal control, UNODC was testing and implementing an evidence-based self-assessment checklist and an assurance statement. To strengthen the implementation of results-based management, UNODC had stepped up its efforts for mainstreaming adherence to the principles of results-based management; the proactive identification and management of risks; and adaptive programme management. It was also mentioned that UNODC, through the Independent Evaluation Section, had further invested in metasynthesis reviews, using aggregate results from oversight and independent evaluations, thereby providing information drawn from the synthesis reviews for the strategic decisions taken by senior management and Member States. Finally, following the process at the level of the United Nations Secretariat, UNODC had started a review of its enterprise risk management framework to update it and align it with the new institutional strategy to be developed by the Executive Director. An update was then provided on the United Nations development system reform and its implications for UNODC. In particular, the representative of the Secretariat remarked that the Office continued to be actively involved in the wider coordination framework of the United Nations development system reform, in particular with regard to its operationalization in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. The Office had contributed to the development of the United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19. UNODC had also contributed to developing and implementing socioeconomic response plans in 46 countries, as part of the United Nations country teams. A number of policy briefs providing guidance on the immediate response to COVID-19 in different areas, both geographical and thematic, had been developed. The meeting participants were briefed on how the different mandates stemming from Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 62/9 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 28/4 had been implemented by UNODC. A table containing an overview of the status of implementation of the relevant resolutions as at 20 August 2020 was shared with Member States in advance of the meeting and referred to during the meeting.

8. At the same meeting, on 7 September, the Secretariat provided an update on the report of the Executive Director on the implementation of the consolidated budget for the biennium 2020–2021 for UNODC (E/CN.7/2020/16-E/CN.15/2020/16). The meeting participants were given an overall picture of the regular budget liquidity crisis and an overview of the special-purpose, general-purpose and programme support cost funds for the period 2020–2021. The Director of the Division for Management provided an update on the funding model of the Office, which was under review. The results of the review would be presented to Member States in 2021. A presentation was made by the Secretariat on the enhanced UNODC Geography Action Plan and the latest activities to strengthen geographical diversity. The Chief of the

Human Resources Management Service shared an overview of UNODC international staff by regional group and provided a briefing on the statistics on gender balance over the period 2016–2020. Participants were informed about the activities undertaken by the Independent Evaluation Section in response to the COVID-19 crisis and received information about finalized and ongoing in-depth evaluations. In addition, the Secretariat conducted a briefing on UNODC activities to build the capacity of countries to prevent the cross-border movement of illicit goods. Finally, the working group discussed the review of the functioning of the working group in the light of a possible extension of the mandate of the working group beyond the first half of 2021.

II. Organizational and administrative matters

9. Under the guidance of the Co-Chairs, the working group held five meetings: the sixteenth informal meeting on 20 January, the resumed sixteenth informal meeting on 4 February, the seventeenth informal meeting on 2 June, the eighteenth informal meeting on 7 September and the third formal meeting on 17 June 2020. Further meetings were scheduled for 5 October, 13 November and 24 November 2020.

10. The Secretariat continued to provide documents and information to the working group by electronic means and in hard copy, including through a web page accessible to the public (www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/FINGOV/FINGOV-index.html) and a secure web page for Member States (www.unodc.org/missions/en/wggf/index.html), established and maintained by the Secretariat for the use of the working group.
