



Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

**Thematic discussion on addressing corruption
involving organized criminal groups**

Good practices and conclusions for strengthening international cooperation against corruption involving organized criminal groups

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note contains a collection of good practices and conclusions for strengthening international cooperation to effectively prevent, identify, investigate and prosecute corruption involving organized criminal groups, including the transnational nature of those crimes, for consideration by the open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting to enhance international cooperation under the United Nations Convention against Corruption, in line with resolution 10/5 of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, entitled “Measures to address corruption involving organized criminal groups”. It builds on information submitted by 56 States Parties as analysed in the report by the secretariat entitled “Challenges and good practices in addressing corruption involving organized criminal groups” ([CAC/COSP/2025/21](#)).

The note focuses on transferable operational practices concerning domestic coordination, institutional integrity and confidentiality as prerequisites for effective international cooperation; proactive strategic and intelligence cooperation; formal and informal cooperation channels; coordinated cross-border investigations; the protection of witnesses and insiders; financial investigations and asset recovery; and opportunities and challenges posed by modern technologies.

* [CAC/COSP/EG.1/2026/1](#).



I. Background

1. In its resolution 10/5, entitled “Measures to address corruption involving organized criminal groups”, the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption directed the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption and the open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting to enhance international cooperation under the United Nations Convention against Corruption to hold, in 2025, thematic discussions on corruption involving organized criminal groups, including the transnational nature of those crimes. The Conference further directed the expert meeting to collect and analyse, with the support of the secretariat, information on best practices and challenges provided by States Parties on a voluntary basis, with a view to developing a collection of good practices and conclusions for strengthening international cooperation to effectively prevent, identify, investigate and prosecute corruption involving organized criminal groups, including the transnational nature of those crimes.
2. To inform the discussions, in 2025, the secretariat presented complementary analytical reports to the Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption¹ and the expert meeting,² based on information submitted by States Parties in response to two notes verbales and questionnaires circulated by the secretariat. The two reports were later consolidated, for the eleventh session of the Conference, into a joint report entitled “Challenges and good practices in addressing corruption involving organized criminal groups”.³ The reports summarized challenges and good practices in understanding, preventing, detecting, investigating and prosecuting corruption involving organized criminal groups and on international cooperation in that regard.
3. Building on the analysis of submissions contained in the 2025 reports, on the thematic discussions held by the Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption and the expert meeting to enhance international cooperation in 2025, as well as on recommendations for strengthening international cooperation to effectively prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute organized criminal groups making use of corruption adopted in 2025 by the Working Group on International Cooperation established by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,⁴ the present collection seeks to identify practices that may be transferable across jurisdictions and distil broader conclusions that have emerged across the submissions, for the consideration of the expert meeting.

II. Collection of conclusions and good practices

4. The proposed collection of conclusions and good practices (see annex) distils the experiences and challenges shared by States Parties in the written submissions and during the discussions in the intergovernmental meetings into eight conclusions centred on domestic coordination, institutional integrity and confidentiality as prerequisites for effective international cooperation; proactive strategic and intelligence cooperation; formal and informal cooperation channels; coordinated cross-border investigations; the protection of witnesses and insiders; financial

¹ [CAC/COSP/WG.4/2025/2/Rev.1](#).

² [CAC/COSP/EG.1/2025/4](#).

³ [CAC/COSP/2025/21](#). The consolidated report provided an analysis of information shared by 56 States Parties in response to two notes verbales and questionnaires circulated on 28 January 2025 and on 25 April 2025. The following States Parties responded: Albania, Angola, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Czechia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, European Union, France, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Malaysia, Micronesia (Federated States of), Morocco, Myanmar, Niger, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Türkiye, Tuvalu, Uruguay and Yemen.

⁴ [CTOC/COP/WG.3/2025/5](#).

investigations and asset recovery; and opportunities and challenges posed by modern technologies.

5. For the purposes of the collection, international cooperation is not understood as limited to formal cross-border law enforcement or judicial cooperation, but as a wider continuum of coordination between States. The conclusions reflect broader lessons emerging across the submissions and serve as thematic headings under which related good practices are grouped. A good practice is understood as a concrete approach reported by one or more States Parties that responds to an operational challenge and that may be adapted, subject to national law and enabling conditions, by other States Parties.

6. Notably, there is no single model applicable to all jurisdictions. Institutional structures, legal systems, available resources and the nature of organized criminal threats vary substantially between States. The practices in the present collection are therefore intended to support adaptation rather than uniformity. The recurring objective is to establish mechanisms that are sufficiently trusted, flexible and operational to connect relevant authorities across both institutional and national borders.

III. Way forward

7. The collection of conclusions and good practices contained in the annex is presented to the expert meeting for its consideration. It is intended to guide discussions among States Parties and may be further developed through continued exchanges, particularly information on demonstrated results of individual measures, obstacles encountered and the legal, institutional and resource conditions required for their successful adaptation in other jurisdictions.

Annex

Collection of good practices and conclusions for strengthening international cooperation against corruption involving organized criminal groups

1. Corruption and organized crime are mutually reinforcing. Organized criminal groups use corruption to facilitate illicit activities, obtain access to information, secure protection from investigation and prosecution and conceal or launder the proceeds of their crimes. In turn, the corruption and infiltration of institutions by organized criminal groups erodes States' capacity to prevent and combat organized crime and to uphold good governance and the rule of law.

2. In line with resolution 10/5 of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, entitled "Measures to address corruption involving organized criminal groups", and based on information shared by States Parties to the Convention through written submissions and discussions in intergovernmental meetings, the present collection contains conclusions and good practices relating to domestic coordination, institutional integrity and confidentiality as prerequisites for effective international cooperation; proactive strategic and intelligence cooperation; formal and informal cooperation channels; coordinated cross-border investigations; the protection of witnesses and insiders; financial investigations and asset recovery; and opportunities and challenges posed by modern technologies.

Conclusion 1: international cooperation is only as effective as the domestic investigation and coordination behind it

3. In particular because corruption is used to shield organized crime, it is difficult to detect and investigate. This is further complicated by the fact that such investigations require multiple angles and agencies. An organized crime investigation may fail to expose the mechanisms that enable a criminal group to operate if investigators do not examine possible corruption, while an investigation focused narrowly on individual acts of corruption may not identify an organized criminal structure that initiated, financed or benefited from them.

4. Investigations should thus systematically examine possible corrupt facilitation in serious and organized crime investigations. In practice, however, responses showed that organized crime investigations did not always systematically extend to potential corruption and that relevant information in complex cases might be dispersed among police, prosecutors, anti-corruption bodies, financial intelligence units, customs, border authorities and other specialized agencies. Without effective coordination among those bodies, international cooperation may be delayed, even where appropriate legal mechanisms are available, and several States Parties noted that weak coordination among their own authorities undermined their ability to react to foreign requests or to engage effectively in cross-border investigations.

5. The responses suggested that multidisciplinary coordination structures could help overcome such fragmentation. Some States Parties reported having successful models that involved specialized agencies with mandates on both corruption and organized crime, dedicated financial investigation capacity and legal authority for international cooperation that allowed direct contact with counterpart authorities, the informal exchange of information, participation in joint investigative teams and the deployment of liaison prosecutors. Other States Parties reported having permanent and ad hoc task forces, real-time information-sharing arrangements and platforms that connected police, prosecutors, customs, local authorities and other relevant entities having mandates related to corruption and organized crime. Early prosecutorial

involvement was also highlighted as important to ensuring that evidence was admissible and that no delays arose due to later-stage internal coordination.

6. Good practices identified include:

(a) Systematically examining possible corruption in organized crime cases and potential links to organized crime when investigating serious or systemic corruption, and developing indicators, red flags or other guidance for investigators;

(b) Creating standing or case-specific mechanisms, such as specialized units, task forces or networks, through which domestic authorities in charge of anti-corruption, organized crime, financial intelligence and related areas can exchange information;

(c) Establishing procedures for identifying foreign dimensions of corruption and organized crime cases at the outset and identifying, at an early stage, which domestic authority will coordinate the international dimension of an investigation;

(d) Appointing clearly identifiable focal points for cases involving corruption linked to organized crime, ensuring that national focal points for international cooperation can rapidly obtain information from all relevant domestic authorities and, where appropriate, establishing 24/7 arrangements for urgent action.

Conclusion 2: institutional integrity, confidentiality and trust are operational prerequisites for international cooperation

7. Corruption linked to organized crime presents a particular challenge because the institutions in charge of investigations or receiving sensitive information may themselves be corrupted or infiltrated by organized criminal groups. With law enforcement agencies frequently being systematically targeted by organized criminal groups to buy protection from detection and prosecution, many States Parties expressed concerns that those heightened corruption risks could weaken both domestic investigations and the confidence of foreign counterparts.

8. States therefore need mechanisms in place to continue investigations when the competent authority may be compromised. Specialized anti-corruption or organized crime bodies are sometimes structurally separate from general law enforcement agencies or operate under prosecutorial oversight. Moreover, many countries permit the transfer of an investigation to another competent authority, prosecutor, court or jurisdiction where conflicts of interests or credible suspicions of corruption arise.

9. In addition, safeguarding investigative information and the integrity of an investigation can have a direct bearing on the ability and willingness of States to cooperate internationally and share sensitive intelligence with foreign counterparts. Communication integrity measures reported in this regard include vetting and security clearances, need-to-know protocols and tiered access levels, encryption and authentication systems, logging and audit trails and specialized internal affairs structures. Where investigators, prosecutors or other officials involved in sensitive cases face threats or intimidation from organized criminal groups, appropriate measures for their physical security may also be necessary to safeguard the continuity, independence and integrity of investigations and related international cooperation.

10. Good practices identified include:

(a) Providing legal bases and mechanisms for transferring or reassigning investigations to a non-compromised institution or jurisdiction, where an actual or potential conflict of interest or concern of organized crime involvement arises;

(b) Assigning independent or specialized bodies to cases of corruption linked to organized crime or enabling the use of mixed task forces or personnel from outside the compromised hierarchy;

(c) Conducting appropriate pre-employment and periodic security and, subject to national law, integrity checks for personnel handling particularly sensitive investigations, and providing regular confidentiality training;

(d) Limiting sensitive information to personnel with an operational need to know and use secure and permission-based access controls, and maintaining logs and audit trails showing who has accessed or transmitted sensitive data;

(e) Using encrypted or otherwise secure communication channels for international exchanges, and establishing alternative channels where there is a credible risk that communication channels have or the investigation has become compromised;

(f) Agreeing with foreign counterparts on dissemination and confidentiality restrictions before sharing highly sensitive information.

Conclusion 3: international cooperation should be used as a strategic preventive tool to anticipate risks and tailor responses

11. Organized criminal groups frequently operate across jurisdictions. Increasingly, trafficking supply chains are not managed by a single criminal group, but by several groups in different regions who form decentralized networks of service providers that coordinate and profit from their role in the chain. Separate networks can use the same routes for different forms of crime, such as to traffic human beings, drugs or firearms.¹ Acts of corruption to facilitate these crimes and ensure protection from law enforcement can be replicated in different countries. In order to design and tailor effective preventive and repressive responses to corruption linked to organized crime, States require a systematic understanding of vulnerabilities, routes, actors and typologies. However, the submissions showed that many States lacked reliable data and systematic information collection, which limited their understanding of risks of corruption linked to organized crime in their domestic territory and of potential new risks from abroad. In their submissions, States Parties identified a need for better mapping of transnational networks and cross-border financial flows, as well as for comparative information on the methods used by organized criminal groups to corrupt and infiltrate public sector institutions. States Parties also identified knowledge gaps concerning the use of intermediaries and professional service providers, financial mechanisms and digital technologies, as well as concerning the sectors and institutions most vulnerable to infiltration.

12. A third conclusion is therefore that international cooperation should be used as a preventive tool that helps States gain a thorough understanding of how corruption and organized crime are linked. The exchange of information on criminal methods, sectoral risks, institutional vulnerabilities and practical experiences can help authorities anticipate risks that have materialized in other jurisdictions and adapt their preventive and investigative responses accordingly. The exchange of intelligence analysis could help States reveal patterns, relationships and financial flows that are not visible from individual cases. Such exchanges could be particularly relevant between regions subject to transnational criminal activity or among countries along a common trafficking supply chain; they could also be valuable in sectors, processes and institutions with significant cross-border dimensions or high vulnerability to corruption linked to organized crime, such as ports and logistics, customs and border management, migration, public procurement and other areas exposed to transnational organized crime. For investigations, early exchanges can allow authorities to coordinate investigative steps in separate jurisdictions and determine whether formal assistance may be required.

¹ See www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/Brief_2026/Transnational_Organized_Crime_Brief_2026.pdf.

13. Good practices identified include:

- (a) Considering international cooperation as a proactive, rather than a purely reactive, process;
- (b) Systematically including corruption risks in serious and organized crime threat assessments and other national or regional risk assessments and sharing them with other relevant jurisdictions;
- (c) Establishing regular exchanges between competent counterpart authorities on typologies, red flags, methods used to corrupt public officials and sectors, functions and geographical locations that are particularly exposed to criminal infiltration;
- (d) Exchanging operational intelligence with partner countries at the earliest stage permitted by domestic law and promptly alerting foreign counterparts when evidence, suspects or assets may be located abroad.

Conclusion 4: formal and informal channels should be used in a complementary manner

14. Where States require evidence for use in judicial proceedings, coercive measures or other forms of assistance requiring a formal legal basis, mutual legal assistance, extradition and other formal mechanisms remain indispensable. At the same time, formal cooperation is continuously described as slow, burdensome and bureaucratic, and States regularly emphasize the practical value and speed brought by direct contact and informal communication between competent authorities.

15. Informal communication can precede, accompany and support formal cooperation. It can help identify the competent counterpart authority, clarify legal and evidentiary requirements, determine if and what information may already be available, identify a possible legal basis for mutual legal assistance and allow for the discussion of formal requests prior to dispatch to ensure that they meet the formal and substantive requirements and that they are enforceable. In cases involving corruption and organized criminal groups, direct contacts may be particularly important because relevant information may be held by different types of authorities and because concerns regarding confidentiality or institutional compromise may affect the channels through which information can safely be exchanged.

16. One challenge that hinders formal, and especially informal, cooperation can be a lack of trust in foreign counterparts. Establishing stable and trusting relationships between practitioners can therefore be vital. To build direct contacts, States can, for example, make use of liaison prosecutor arrangements, police attachés or practitioner networks such as the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities and its secure communication platform, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), regional police organizations, asset recovery inter-agency networks and networks of central authorities and prosecutors.

17. Good practices identified include:

- (a) Actively using regional and international networks to identify and build relationships with operational counterparts and facilitate concrete case cooperation;
- (b) Using liaison prosecutors, police attachés and similar arrangements to facilitate direct contact even before a need for assistance arises;
- (c) Providing practical guidance to foreign and domestic authorities on the preparation and execution of mutual legal assistance requests;
- (d) Establishing direct practitioner-to-practitioner contact before transmitting complex requests;
- (e) Consulting the requested authority on legal and evidentiary requirements before formal transmission, where useful, sharing a draft request for informal review

before submission, and maintaining direct contact while a request is being executed so any deficiencies can be resolved quickly;

(f) Where permitted under applicable legal frameworks, making use of spontaneous transmission of information where it may assist another State Party in initiating or carrying out inquiries, investigations or proceedings or lead to a formal request for assistance;

(g) Making complementary use of the Convention against Corruption, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and other applicable multilateral, regional or bilateral instruments when identifying the legal basis for cooperation.

Conclusion 5: joint or coordinated investigations can be more effective than relying solely on sequential mutual legal assistance

18. In transnational cases, coordinated, joint or parallel investigations may be more strategic and effective than a domestic investigation that relies on sequential requests for mutual legal assistance. Coordinated investigations can be particularly useful where authorities in one jurisdiction are primarily investigating the organized criminal activity, while authorities elsewhere hold evidence concerning public officials connected to the same network, or in cases of foreign public officials being bribed by an organized criminal group.

19. Coordinated or joint law enforcement action can allow States to agree on investigative priorities and a division of tasks; coordinate interviews, arrests, searches, freezing and seizure and other time-sensitive actions; establish arrangements for regular information exchange and coordination; and address questions concerning admissibility of evidence, confidentiality and jurisdiction before major operational steps are taken.

20. Many States Parties highlighted successful bilateral or multilateral law enforcement cooperation, including action coordinated by the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) and INTERPOL, noting that coordinated operational action was particularly valuable where criminal groups were active in several jurisdictions or had counterparts abroad and could rapidly move assets, intimidate or harm witnesses or relocate members once enforcement action became apparent.

21. Good practices identified include:

(a) Assessing the usefulness of joint or parallel investigations versus mutual legal assistance at an early stage of the investigation;

(b) Coordinating at an early stage, where more than one jurisdiction may institute proceedings, the allocation and sequencing of investigations and prosecutions, taking into account the location of suspects, evidence and assets and the ability to prosecute both the organized criminal activity and related corruption;

(c) Coordinating coercive measures such as searches, arrests and seizures across jurisdictions to prevent the destruction or loss of evidence and the dissipation of assets;

(d) Ensuring the participation of specialists, such as specialized investigators, forensic accountants or asset recovery experts in the investigation.

Conclusion 6: protection of witnesses, insiders and other sources should form part of the international cooperation strategy

22. Organized criminal groups rely on complicit corrupt or coerced public officials in law enforcement, customs, immigration or other institutions. Responses

highlighted that enabling individuals with inside knowledge to safely disclose was therefore an important means of detecting corruption linked to organized crime. To discourage compromised officials from reporting, organized criminal groups may use threats, violence or institutional influence, which often leads to extremely low reporting rates.

23. Subject to national law and taking into account the nature and seriousness of the person's conduct, measures to facilitate cooperation may include secure reporting mechanisms, protection of identity, physical protection and relocation and, where appropriate, plea agreements, sentence reductions, immunity or other forms of leniency.

24. Where an investigation depends on evidence provided by insiders, successful international cooperation also hinges on their safe participation. International cooperation mechanisms should therefore be sufficiently flexible to respond where information originates from a compromised official or other source and where that source reveals a transnational dimension. Protection and leniency agreements may therefore need to take into account a potential need to share information with foreign counterparts and the admissibility of evidence in foreign courts.

25. Good practices identified include:

(a) Assessing protection needs when international cooperation is first contemplated, particularly where witnesses or insiders face threats from organized criminal groups;

(b) Coordinating practical and legal arrangements for remote testimony, travel, relocation or other protection measures with the requesting State;

(c) Where permitted, using anonymous or remote testimony, protection of identity or other safeguards to reduce exposure;

(d) Ensuring that potential delays or complications caused by protection arrangements are anticipated in case planning;

(e) Where appropriate and permitted by domestic law, considering cross-border relocation or other international protection arrangements where a witness or reporting public official cannot be adequately protected in the State concerned.

Conclusion 7: financial investigation and asset tracing should begin early and proceed in parallel

26. Corruption linked to organized crime is difficult to prove. There is usually no immediate victim with an interest in reporting; compromised officials have been complicit and fear retaliation if they come forward; and corrupt investigators may tip off organized criminal groups or public officials. To anticipate and address evidentiary or procedural obstacles that conventional investigation and prosecution may face, asset recovery measures and other non-traditional enforcement methods, such as extended confiscation, non-conviction-based confiscation or civil forfeiture, civil litigation or administrative investigations, could be explored, both domestically and in international cooperation.

27. In their submissions, States Parties identified opaque corporate structures, shell companies, offshore accounts and cryptocurrencies as major challenges faced by investigators. In addition, difficulties in accessing financial or beneficial ownership information – both domestically and, especially, abroad – can significantly delay investigations and asset recovery and lead to the dissipation of assets.

28. Many States Parties therefore highlighted the importance of parallel financial investigations in cases of corruption linked to organized crime. Financial intelligence units, anti-corruption bodies and specialized investigators such as anti-organized crime authorities should coordinate closely, both domestically and with their foreign counterparts, in tracing the proceeds of corruption by organized criminal groups.

29. Good practices identified include:

(a) Where permitted under domestic law, considering asset recovery mechanisms that do not depend on a criminal conviction, as well as civil or administrative measures, when a criminal prosecution or conviction faces significant evidentiary or procedural obstacles;

(b) Commencing financial investigations as part of or in parallel to any criminal investigation of corruption linked to organized crime;

(c) Involving financial intelligence and asset recovery specialists at an early stage;

(d) Facilitating timely access to and exchange of available financial account and beneficial ownership information through competent authorities and appropriate secure cooperation channels;

(e) Identifying foreign assets and beneficial ownership structures as soon as possible and using informal channels to locate property before formal restraint requests are made;

(f) Coordinating the timing of freezing and seizure measures across jurisdictions;

(g) Addressing both the proceeds of the organized criminal activity and the benefits obtained by corrupt public officials and intermediaries;

(h) Coordinating, from an early stage, not only the tracing and restraint of assets, but also applicable procedures for the confiscation, recognition or enforcement of foreign orders and, where relevant, the return or disposal of recovered assets.

Conclusion 8: technology creates both opportunities for international cooperation and new legal challenges

30. Organized criminal groups are agile and able to cooperate across borders much more easily than States, not least due to the use of modern technologies. For example, encrypted communications have significantly complicated law-enforcement access to criminal communications, as these evade investigative techniques such as wiretapping. The use of artificial intelligence and deepfakes has greatly facilitated global and cross-border fraud operations.

31. In their submissions, States Parties highlighted the use of technology as a facilitator of crime and as a tool for both the investigation of organized crime and the administration of international cooperation. In cases of corruption linked to organized crime in particular, where relevant information may be held by many different authorities in different countries, digital case management or case analytics software, as well as secure communication channels, can help connect data points vital to an investigation. States are also increasingly developing and using artificial intelligence, in particular in threat analysis and investigations to better detect organized crime and related corruption.

32. Another aspect of growing importance is the use and usability of digital evidence in investigations of corruption involving organized criminal groups. In recent years, the dismantling of encrypted communication platforms has illustrated the scale of information that international cooperation can make available in investigations involving organized crime and related corruption. Law enforcement access to data from encrypted platforms used by criminals, such as EncroChat, Sky ECC or ANOM, has generated large volumes of cross-border evidence concerning organized criminal groups around the world and, in some cases, their ties to corrupt public officials. However, States Parties reported legal and practical challenges concerning the admissibility of evidence obtained from encrypted communications and raised concerns relating to data privacy. The value of digital cooperation therefore depends not only on technical access to information, but on

sufficiently early coordination concerning legal conditions under which information can be obtained, transmitted and used.

33. Good practices identified include:

(a) Ensuring that the use of advanced technological tools remains subject to applicable legal and procedural safeguards;

(b) Using analytical and digital tools to combine communications, financial and other relevant data, with a view to identifying links between organized criminal groups and public officials;

(c) Using specialized digital forensic capacity to process large data sets and combine digital evidence with financial and other intelligence;

(d) Exploring the use of artificial intelligence as a facilitator of crime and as a tool for detecting and investigating corruption linked to organized crime;

(e) Involving prosecutors from the start when an investigation involves foreign digital evidence and clarifying authenticity, chain-of-custody, admissibility and judicial authorization requirements before evidence is transmitted;

(f) Maintaining electronic case management systems for incoming and outgoing requests;

(g) Using secure channels and agreed handling restrictions for particularly sensitive digital material.
