



European Union

EU Statement on

**Agenda item 2: Review of the implementation of the
United Nations Convention against Corruption**

**Ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the
United Nations Convention against Corruption**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Sharm el-Sheikh, 13-17 December 2021

Mr Chair, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: [Turkey[§], the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland*, Liechtenstein+, Norway+, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino].

Let me start by wishing you, Mr Chair, success for all the work during this session. We would also like to thank the members of the Secretariat for their great efforts, as always you have done an excellent job.

The review of implementation of the UNCAC plays an important role in the global fight against corruption. The review process helps us to understand where we stand, which good practices exist and what gaps in the implementation need to be addressed. We were therefore pleased when the second cycle of the review was launched, and welcomed its focus on preventive measures and on asset recovery. Earlier this year, we were happy to announce that the **European Union**, as a party to the Convention, has also embarked on its **own review** and is currently working on its self-assessment for the first cycle.

The **Covid-19 pandemic** has had a tremendous impact on the review mechanism. In particular, it meant that the country visits came to an almost complete stop. This is unfortunate because the on-site visits have proved to be the core element of the implementation review mechanism. Without them, it is not possible to obtain an

[§] Candidate Country

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

+ Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

accurate picture of the legislative and practical implementation of the Convention, and to involve civil society in the reviews. Therefore, we hope that the country visits can resume as soon as the epidemiological situation permits.

Despite the delays caused by the pandemic, we also have to be mindful of the fact that the second review cycle will draw to a close in only a few years. This will **complete the first phase** of the implementation review mechanism. Therefore, it is high time that we begin the process of shaping a possible second phase. In fact the next Conference may have to make a decision on the future of the mechanism.

Having exhausted the chapters of the Convention, a new phase could look at the **follow-up measures** countries have taken to implement the recommendations resulting from the first two cycles. However, it might be problematic to restrict the second phase to such a review, as it cannot be excluded that since the first phase review the situation has not improved but even worsened. After all, a full decade may have elapsed in the meantime.

Indeed, this long interval would also indicate that the next cycles, if we were to embark on a second phase, should possibly be **shorter** than during the first phase. If too much time has passed between the review and the follow-up, the relevance and usefulness of the mechanism itself might be put in question. This is also true for another objective of the mechanism, namely the follow-up to **technical assistance needs** identified during the first phase. For the future, it is worth considering that while Member States and the Secretariat have constantly provided technical assistance, shorter cycles might also help to ensure that the needs analysis is still accurate and relevant.

We should also build on the positive experience from the first phase concerning the involvement of **civil society** in the reviews and we need to stress the key role that civil society plays in the fight against corruption. We need civil society to be active and highly engaged without restrictions and objections on participation. It is a well-established practice to invite representatives of civil society to the country visits and hear their views on the anti-corruption efforts of the country under review. We should make even greater use of the contributions that NGOs, academia and investigative journalists provide to the fight against corruption, bribery, money laundering and other Convention offences.

Thank you, Mr Chair.