



European Union

**EU Statement at the
Second resumed 16th session of the
Implementation Review Group (IRG)**

United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

Vienna, 17-21 February 2025

Mme President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States.

In this statement, I would like to address a few issues under agenda item 2, on the future of the Implementation Review Mechanism (IRM). Let me start, however, by thanking the Secretariat for the excellent organisation and preparation of the meeting and the hard work that has gone into the background papers, in particular the “Options Paper” on the 2nd Phase of the IRM. We also wish to underline our continuous concern with regard to ongoing wars, conflicts and humanitarian crises in different parts of the world, and their negative impact on the implementation of the UNCAC and corruption prevention more generally.

According to the workplan for the implementation of Conference decision 10/2 that was adopted at the last session of the Implementation Review Group (IRG), this session will continue the discussion of all the previous topics, as well as the timeline for the launch of the next Phase and synergies with other review mechanisms. Let me briefly touch upon each of these topics.

Concerning, *first*, the **scope** of the next review Phase, we believe that the next Phase should focus on all four elements outlined in the Options Paper to create an effective and meaningful follow-up mechanism:

- Follow-up on implementation of recommendations received in the first Phase;
- Review new developments that have taken place since the first Phase reviews were carried out;
- Review the delivery of technical assistance provided and whether it was sufficient;
- Identify new successes and good practices since the most recent reviews.

In addition, there must also be a follow-up on the recommendations made in Phase 2. Moreover, reviewers should also be free to look at open-source information and information generated by other relevant reviews, e.g. but not limited to, the annual EU Rule of Law Report, from the GRECO and the OECD.

For the IRM's next phase to be credible and impactful, it must also analyse the practical **effectiveness** of domestic provisions implementing UNCAC. The Options Paper makes good suggestions in this respect. Some more aspects could be added, in particular related to the set-up of relevant bodies and institutions; whether their mandates, necessary independence, capacity, transparency, and activities are adequate to ensure effective UNCAC implementation; as well as preventive, investigative and enforcement actions.

Concerning **technical assistance**, we note that a high number (4,427) of individual technical assistance needs have been identified throughout the first Phase of the IRM. In order to increase the efficiency of technical assistance provision towards successful reforms, the second Phase could better target where support is needed by identifying technical assistance needs more precisely, ranking identified needs based on the State Party's assessment of their priorities and fostering coordination between beneficiaries, providers and relevant actors to follow-up on the review outcomes. Including an analysis of the recommendations for technical assistance from previous reviews in the self-assessment, evaluating the quality of their implementation and their overall impact, could support more efficient technical assistance provision geared to initiate, advance or achieve suitable reforms, amendment or reorganisations.

Second, we support a modified thematic **sequence** and better **reporting** after the conclusion of a review. One could also incorporate a review of technical assistance provided since the country review took place – instead of including a review of chapter VI of UNCAC.

Review efforts should be redirected towards provisions with tangible and appropriate impact, prioritizing actions that help States under review to effectively implement the relevant recommendations and outputs of previous reviews. For example, we could consider reviewing – within a specific time-frame – key recommendations only. Establishing a formal, structured, yet streamlined follow-up reporting process after a review has concluded, which would consist of progress reports submitted within a fixed determined period of time after the country reviews, would help monitor and achieve that positive and accurate implementation. Additionally, States Parties and peer reviewers could report on the results of country reviews at IRG meetings. We also support publishing a press release for country report publications.

Third, on **information-gathering, information technology and direct dialogue**: Developing an easy to use, clear and concise self-assessment questionnaire (SACL) with targeted questions and indicative reference points that can inform the reviewers

on the effective implementation of the Convention would better guide the information-gathering exercise and could also help harmonise the information provided in the review process. This new self-assessment questionnaire would use information gathered during the first phase of the IRM as its baseline, as in the template provided by the Secretariat in the pilot exercise.

Fourth, as far as, the **outcome documents** of reviews are concerned, we suggest a re-design of the country report towards a more concise and substantive document. The text of the country's legal provisions can be included in an annex to improve the readability and added-value of the report. Instead, a greater focus should be put on an analysis of the measures taken by the country and their effectiveness. We could also envisage an evolution of the content of the executive summary, which is already public. Including more elements from the report into the summary could help increase the amount of information available to the public.

The inclusion of the views of civil society and other non-governmental stakeholders that have participated in the country review into the report would also bring an additional value to the report and improve its shared impact.

Fifth, as far as the **timeline for the launch of the next phase** is concerned, we believe that the next phase should be launched at the CoSP in Qatar and begin as soon as possible.

Finally, harnessing **synergies** between the various review mechanisms has become something like the Holy Grail of the IRM. It has been explored many times and member States placed very high hopes in it, but it has proven elusive and unworkable in practice. Therefore, we offer some modest but practical suggestions: i) including cross-references to findings in other review mechanisms in the country reports; and (ii) including links to the review reports of other mechanisms on the revamped country profile pages of the IRM. Nevertheless, in closing, we would like to express our hope that the **Anti-Corruption Partnership Forum**, which was established at the end of 2023 by the EU, UNODC, the OECD, and the GRECO, together with other relevant regional and international organisations dedicated to combat corruption, could lead to the achievement of actual synergies.

Thank you, Mme President.