



1. Implementation of the Convention against Corruption

Asset Recovery

Asset Recovery is one of the two focuses of the second International Review Mechanism (IRM) review cycle. Since August 2023, numerous reports from the Implementation Review Group (IRG) and the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on Asset Recovery have addressed this topic.¹ The Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (CoSP) noted in their 10th session that reviewers identified gaps in the implementation of Article 57 in the majority (85%) of the 82 Member States reviewed during the second cycle.²

The IRG states that the biggest challenges with Article 57, which is supposed to regulate the return and disposal of assets, were the following: Insufficient legislative or other measures for the return of proceeds to requesting States; no regulation of costs or means of deducting expenses; no protection of the rights of bona fide third parties in return proceedings; insufficient monitoring of the measures applied in asset recovery cases, in particular with regard to the return of embezzled public funds; lack of agreements for the final disposal of confiscated property.³

Pursuant to CoSP resolution 9/7, *Enhancing the use of beneficial ownership information to facilitate the identification, recovery and return of proceeds of crime*, a note was prepared for the 10th CoSP Session. In “*Good practices and challenges with respect to beneficial ownership transparency and how it can foster and enhance the effective recovery and return of proceeds of crime*” the secretariat found the lack of a unified, robust and comprehensive definition of “beneficial ownership” that covers all relevant factors or criteria to determine beneficial ownership to be a challenge.⁴ Apart from that, the collection of incomplete identification details on beneficial owners, including the nature and extent of their ownership interests, along with the lack of effective mechanisms for verifying, monitoring, and promptly updating the gathered information, was identified to be a problem.⁵ Therefore, the States highlighted the following measures to be good practices: a high level of interconnection of domestic registers, which enables automated synchronization and cross-referencing of data from different sources to ensure that the beneficial ownership data are accurate and establishing a robust and

¹ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Progress in implementing the mandates of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Asset Recovery (CAC/COSP/WG.2/2023/2)*. 2023.

² United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Implementation of chapter II (Preventive measures) and chapter V (Asset recovery) of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (CAC/COSP/2023/6)*. 2024. p. 2.

³ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Implementation Review Group, Implementation of chapter V (Asset recovery) of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and regional supplement (CAC/COSP/IRG/2024/6)*. 2024. p. 4.

⁴ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Good practices and challenges with respect to beneficial ownership transparency and how it can foster and enhance the effective recovery and return of proceeds of crime, Note by the secretariat (CAC/COSP/2023/16)*. 2023. p. 19.

⁵ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Good practices and challenges with respect to beneficial ownership transparency and how it can foster and enhance the effective recovery and return of proceeds of crime, Note by the secretariat (CAC/COSP/2023/16)*. 2023. p. 20.



comprehensive definition of beneficial owners.⁶ The CoSP, in resolution 10/6, called upon States parties to ensure or continue ensuring access to adequate, accurate, and up-to-date beneficial ownership information of legal persons and legal arrangements.⁷

In its resolution 9/2, titled “Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption, and strengthening international cooperation: follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly against corruption,” the CoSP requested that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in collaboration with the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR), should enhance global knowledge and data collection on asset recovery and return. This includes gathering and sharing information on challenges, best practices, and the amounts of assets frozen, seized, confiscated and returned in connection with corruption offenses.⁸ Policymakers, anti-corruption and asset recovery experts, civil society organizations, and donors have repeatedly emphasized the importance of having access to global knowledge that enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of recovering and returning assets lost to corruption.⁹

In response to this need, on December 12, 2023, StAR re-launched the Asset Recovery Watch (ARW) database during the StAR Day event at the tenth CoSP. The updated platform features a new design and incorporates recent cases from StAR’s data collection study on international efforts in asset recovery related to corruption. ARW is the only public database specifically designed to track the efforts of national authorities around the world to recover and return corruptly obtained assets.¹⁰

Finally, the StAR initiative also published “Managing Seized and Confiscated Assets: A Guide for Practitioners”, which includes recommendations about the disposal of assets. These focus on establishing appropriate legislation and clear policies for confiscated assets and ensuring that official-use programs have appropriate oversight, accountability, and transparency.¹¹

The Gender Dimension of Corruption

Following the mile-stone commitment in paragraph 69 of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) resolution 32/1 (2021)¹² on improving the understanding of the linkage between gender and corruption and the different ways corruption affects men and

⁶ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Good practices and challenges with respect to beneficial ownership transparency and how it can foster and enhance the effective recovery and return of proceeds of crime, Note by the secretariat* (CAC/COSP/2023/16). 2023. p. 20.

⁷ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2023. pp. 25-30.

⁸ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Progress in implementing the mandates of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Asset Recovery* (CAC/COSP/WG.2/2023/2). 2023. pp. 5-7.

⁹ Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative. *Annual Report*. 2023. p. 14.

¹⁰ Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative. *Annual Report*. 2023. p. 3.

¹¹ Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative, *Managing Seized and Confiscated Assets: A Guide for Practitioners*. December 2023. pp. 54-55.

¹² United Nations, General Assembly Special Session. *Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation* (A/RES/S-32/1). 2021.



women, the CoSP to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) focused their attention at 9th session on this aspect of corruption from grave importance. During the 9th session of the CoSP to the UNCAC, three resolutions were adopted,¹³ which incorporate the angle of the gender dimension of corruption into their regulatory content, which was novelty compared to the previous eight sessions of the CoSP to the UNCAC.¹⁴

In its resolution 9/1 entitled *Sharm el-Sheikh declaration on strengthening international cooperation in the prevention of and fight against corruption during times of emergencies and crisis response and recovery*, the CoSP committed itself to the same acknowledgment of the gender dimension of corruption as the United Nations General Assembly in its UNGASS resolution 32/1 (2021).¹⁵ The States parties at the 9th session reiterated the commitment of “improving their understanding of the linkages between gender and corruption, including the ways in which corruption can affect women and men differently”, by including “mainstreaming it [the gender dimension of corruption] in relevant legislation, policy development, research, projects, and programs, as appropriate and in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law.”¹⁶ Additionally, the CoSP added to the commitment of paragraph 69 of UNGASS resolution 32/1 (2021) to include the effect that, “during times of emergencies and crisis response and recovery, and to continuing to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in this regard.”¹⁷ Resolution 9/4 on *Strengthening the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption at regional levels* acknowledges that the regional platforms of UNODC should consider including “mainstreaming a gender perspective into their activities while continuing to promote the role of women in preventing and combating corruption.”¹⁸

Lastly, considering the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic at the time, the attending State parties connected the corruption related to increased government spending during the COVID-19 pandemic with the gender dimension of corruption. Resolution 9/8 strongly encouraged State parties of the UNCAC “to promote comprehensive interdisciplinary research, as relevant, on patterns and trends in corruption to inform their anti-corruption policies and strategies and more effectively address emerging challenges, such as corruption risks during

¹³ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2021. pp. 2-7, 16-19, 33-36.

¹⁴ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Education and training in the context of anti-corruption (6/10)*. 2015; United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Corruption in sport (7/8)*. 2017; United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Safeguarding sport from corruption (8/4)*. 2019; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Pacific Island Forum. Teieniwa Vision Interest Papers, *The Gender Dimension of Corruption*. 2023.

¹⁵ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2021. pp. 2-7.

¹⁶ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2021. pp. 2-7.

¹⁷ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2021. pp. 2-7.

¹⁸ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2021. pp. 16-19.



the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the ways in which corruption can affect women and men differently, and to continue to promote the empowerment of women” as per UNGASS resolution 32/1 (2021).¹⁹ Subsequent to the 9th session in 2021, the 10th session of the CoSP to the UNCAC took place from 11-15 December 2023 in Atlanta. Continuing in the line of the 9th session, the CoSP, at its 10th session, once more addressed the gender dimension of corruption.

Resolution 10/3 requested the Open-ended IWG on the Prevention of Corruption (Working Group on Prevention) to consider including “the negative effects of corruption on women and youth and the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption” as an agenda item at its upcoming 15th meeting in 2024. Most notably, the CoSP recognized in resolution 10/10 *Addressing the societal impacts of corruption* that “women and girls have specific and diverse health needs and that corruption can have a negative impact on their rights to access quality and affordable health services”, while additionally stating that “demanding sex or acts of a sexual nature within the context of the abuse of authority may be considered a particular form of corruption, which is primarily perpetrated against women and girls”.²⁰

Further, resolution 10/10 encourages States parties to take measures “to mainstream a gender perspective into preventive anti-corruption policies and strategies” as well as to “promote the meaningful participation and engagement of, and cooperation with, women and community-based organizations that support women in the policy development, planning, implementation and monitoring of their anti-corruption programs”.²¹ As a reflection of the ongoing efforts of States parties and UNODC in mainstreaming a gender perspective into the fight against corruption, resolution 10/10 mandated UNODC to continue to provide technical assistance “upon request, based on [the] priorities and needs [of States parties], with a view to supporting the implementation of the present resolution [meaning 10/10]”.²² Furthermore, resolution 10/10 encouraged States parties to carry out surveys and to collect data, with the intent to develop effective anti-corruption policies and strategies consistent with the UNCAC and to voluntarily share the results with other States parties through the Conference and at relevant meetings of its subsidiary bodies.²³

Answering the request of CoSP resolution 10/3, the UNODC will send out a questionnaire regarding this topic to the State parties of the UNCAC by 13 May 2024.²⁴ By 6th August 2024,

¹⁹ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2021. pp. 33-36.

²⁰ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2023. p. 41.

²¹ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2023. p. 42.

²² United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2023. p. 42.

²³ United Nations, Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*. 2023. p. 42.

²⁴ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption. *The negative effects of corruption on women and youth and the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption (CAC/COSP/WG.4/2024/CRP.1)*. 2024. p. 1.



position statements were received by 41 States parties on the topic at hand.²⁵ Subsequently, the Working Group on Prevention conducted an in-depth analysis of the data collected by the States parties on the negative effects of corruption on women and youth and to enhance the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption. At the 15th session from 3-6 September 2024, the Working Group on Prevention published their findings under the title “The negative effects of corruption on women and youth and the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption”. The Working Group on Prevention determined at the end that the collected data was too limited for a comprehensive and holistic conclusion on the topic.²⁶ Thus, the Working Group on Prevention wished to encourage the State Parties to strengthen their efforts in data collection and research conduction, allowing a more comprehensive assessment of the differentiated impact of corruption through sex-disaggregated data.²⁷

Further, the Working Group on Prevention reiterates once more that the fight of corruption can only be undertaken as a joint effort in the “whole of society”.²⁸ Lastly, the Working Group on Prevention wishes to request UNOCD – under the condition of the availability of extrabudgetary resources – to maintain the assistance of States parties endeavors in the implementation of CoSP resolutions 9/8 and 10/10.²⁹

²⁵ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption. *The negative effects of corruption on women and youth and the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption (CAC/COSP/WG.4/2024/CRP.1)*. 2024. p. 1.

²⁶ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption. *The negative effects of corruption on women and youth and the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption (CAC/COSP/WG.4/2024/CRP.1)*. 2024. p. 7.

²⁷ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption. *The negative effects of corruption on women and youth and the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption (CAC/COSP/WG.4/2024/CRP.1)*. 2024. p. 8.

²⁸ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption. *The negative effects of corruption on women and youth and the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption (CAC/COSP/WG.4/2024/CRP.1)*. 2024. p. 14.

²⁹ United Nations, Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption. *The negative effects of corruption on women and youth and the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption (CAC/COSP/WG.4/2024/CRP.1)*. 2024. p. 14.



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2. The Promotion of Information and Communications Technologies for Sustainable Development

Utilizing ICTs to Provide Medical Assistance for Citizens in Developing States

While unaffordability and inequity are commonplace in developing Member States health-care systems, ICTs have great potential to overcome these institutional limitations by improving patient outreach.³⁰

The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into healthcare has also shown great potential. It can analyze data and medical images with greater accuracy than human experts, as tests on heart scans have demonstrated.³¹ In order to achieve the optimal benefits of AI for the health sector, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Health Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization adopted the Global Initiative on AI for Health.³² AI is already being used in diagnostics, treatment development and monitoring, underlining the need to ensure the trustworthiness of these solutions through governance frameworks, technical standards, and guidelines.³³ It is particularly in the interest of low- and middle-income States to ensure the accessibility of these AI solutions through cooperation and collaboration, as well as the exchange of knowledge, data, and financial resources.³⁴

However, these great advantages and opportunities are not equally available to everyone. More than half of the world's population lacks access to essential health care services due to a lack of medical insurance and medical providers in their respective regions.³⁵ Although these programs can reduce the barriers that low-income residents often face in the health-care system, several challenges nonetheless persist.³⁶ The most prominent of which include users being unfamiliar with digital platforms, patients being skeptical of telemedicine, and developing Member States having poor internet coverage.³⁷ In least developed countries, only 27 percent of the population have access to the Internet, creating a digital gap between developed and developing

³⁰ World Health Organization. *Implementing Telemedicine Services During COVID-19: Guiding Principles and Considerations for a Stepwise Approach*. 2021. p. 1.

³¹ International Telecommunication Union. *AI cardiologist aces its first medical exam*. 2020.

³² International Telecommunication Union. *New UN initiative aims to step up AI's contribution to health*. 2023.

³³ International Telecommunication Union. *New UN initiative aims to step up AI's contribution to health*. 2023.

³⁴ International Telecommunication Union. *New UN initiative aims to step up AI's contribution to health*. 2023.

³⁵ World Health Organization. *World Bank and World Health Organization: Half the World Lacks Access to Essential Health Services, 100 Million Still Pushed Into Extreme Poverty Because of Health Expenses*. 2017.

³⁶ Dorn. *UN Technology to Cope with COVID and Beyond*. 2020; Dzenowagis. *Bridging the Digital Divide in Health*. 2021; World Health Organization. *Telemedicine: Opportunities and Developments in Member States*. 2010. pp. 8-11.

³⁷ Dorn. *UN Technology to Cope with COVID and Beyond*. 2020; Dzenowagis. *Bridging the Digital Divide in Health*. 2021; World Health Organization. *Telemedicine: Opportunities and Developments in Member States*. 2010. pp. 8-11.



countries.³⁸ Despite efforts to address this issue, the digital gap is widening, threatening the exclusion from these developments.³⁹

Furthermore, the necessity of enhancing accessibility for individuals with special needs must be acknowledged. 15 percent of the global population lives with a disability.⁴⁰ Consequently, an inclusive approach is essential in order to utilize the potential benefits of ICTs for all.⁴¹ To address these issues, the World Health Assembly has adopted the Global strategy on digital health 2020-2025, stressing the need for global collaboration, encouraging implementation, strengthening of governance, and a focus on a people-centered health system.⁴²

Improving the Educational Opportunities of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons through Information and Communications Technology

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has disclosed in the Global Trends report of 2023 that by the end of 2024, the number of forcibly displaced persons will likely exceed 120 million, a historical high.⁴³ This means that one in every 69 people, or 1.5 percent of the world's population, is forcibly displaced as a result of climate change, armed conflicts, persecution, and human rights violations.⁴⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, highlights that the reality of these forcibly displaced people is one of disconnectedness of their homes, their families, and lives, often for many years on end.⁴⁵ Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are also "50 percent less likely than the general population to have an Internet-enabled phone, and 29 percent of refugee households have no phone at all."⁴⁶ The issues with such low connectivity rates among displaced people are countless and for example, prevent them from employment or gaining an education, which reciprocally could highly improve their situation. These issues directly link to Sustainable Development Goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being), 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality and women empowerment), and 10 (reduced inequalities).⁴⁷ The UNHCR introduced the initiative "Connectivity for Refugees" in 2016 to address these challenges.⁴⁸ The initiative seeks "to ensure all major refugee hosting areas have available and affordable connectivity by 2030."⁴⁹

³⁸ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Widening Digital Gap between Developed, Developing States Threatening to Exclude World's Poorest from Next Industrial Revolution, Speakers Tell Second Committee*. 2023.

³⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Widening Digital Gap between Developed, Developing States Threatening to Exclude World's Poorest from Next Industrial Revolution, Speakers Tell Second Committee*. 2023.

⁴⁰ International Telecommunication Union. *Accessibility to ICTs: Achieving equitable communications for everyone*. 2021.

⁴¹ International Telecommunication Union. *Accessibility to ICTs: Achieving equitable communications for everyone*. 2021.

⁴² World Health Organization. *Global strategy on digital health 2020-2025*. 2021.

⁴³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends report Forced Displacement in 2023*. 2023.

⁴⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Trends report Forced Displacement in 2023*. 2023.

⁴⁵ Grandi. *Internet and Mobile Connectivity for Refugees – Leaving No One Behind*. N.d.

⁴⁶ Grandi. *Internet and Mobile Connectivity for Refugees – Leaving No One Behind*. N.d.

⁴⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Connecting Refugees*. 2016.

⁴⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Connecting Refugees*. 2016.

⁴⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Connectivity for Refugees: The Foundation of a 21st Century Humanitarian Response*. 2023.



The improved access for refugees and IDPs to Information and Communications Technology (ICT), achieved through initiatives such as “Connectivity for Refugees” and other related United Nations projects, have allowed refugees to use mobile devices to improve their education.⁵⁰ Other initiatives include, for instance, the Borderless High Education for Refugees, which provides gender-equitable teacher training diplomas for untrained refugees, aiming to make educational programs available where refugees need them.⁵¹ Member States of the United Nations have reaffirmed that education is the key to sustainable development by adopting resolution 78/156 in 2023.⁵²

⁵⁰ United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization. *Leveraging innovative technology in literacy and education programmes for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons*. 2022. p. 6.

⁵¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *A Lifeline to Learning: Leveraging Mobile Technology to Support Education for Refugees*. 2018. p. 40.

⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/78/156)*. 2023.



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