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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

Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
Reconvened twenty-eighth session
Vienna, 12 and 13 December 2019
Agenda item 4 (a)
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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 first half of 2021, as well as Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 52/13, 54/10, 54/17, 56/11, 58/1 and 60/3 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolutions 18/3, 20/1, 20/9, 22/2, 24/1 and 26/1. It covers the work of the working group from 11 June to 25 September 2019. Information on the work of the working group during the preceding period can be found in document [E/CN.7/2019/3-E/CN.15/2019/3](#).



I. Deliberations

1. In the period from 11 June to 25 September 2019, 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 two informal meetings. It continued to consider issues under the items on the agenda approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2017/236 and by 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, as well as with provisions contained in Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 54/10, 54/17, 56/11, 58/1 and 60/3 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolutions 20/1, 20/9, 22/2, 24/1 and 26/1.

2. At its meeting held on 11 June, the working group approved its calendar of meetings and the provisional programme of work for the remainder of 2019. At the same meeting, the Secretariat updated delegations on United Nations development system reform. In responding to the reform effort, UNODC would strengthen its support for the field office network to ensure that its substantive expertise and policy advice on issues that fell within its mandate were provided in support of the new resident coordinator system. Clarifications were provided on the impact, future and sustainability of the one-off surge capacity undertaken in 2019 and on its implications for the budget. The Secretariat also referred to the management reform process, covering aspects such as the delegation of authority framework and accountability, both in Vienna and in the field. The working group was also informed that the first annual regular budget for UNODC for 2020 was being reviewed by both the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and would be taken on board by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly at the main part of its seventy-fourth session. Delegations were informed that general-purpose income projections had dropped to an all-time low of \$8.0 million in 2018–2019, less than 1 per cent of the total income of UNODC. The Secretariat also updated the working group on the status of recruitment policies and practices to enhance geographic diversity among staff as well as on activities for the prevention of and response to sexual harassment in the workplace. A representative of the Office of Internal Oversight Services presented graphs and figures on cases of fraud, corruption, sexual harassment, harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse at UNODC and the United Nations Office at Vienna over the period 2016–2018. Presentations were also made on the regional programme for South Asia 2018–2021 and on the utilization of evaluation results in the context of the United Nations reform process. The Secretariat also provided an update on the implementation of the United Nations Office at Vienna/UNODC Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

3. At its meeting held on 25 September, the working group considered the unedited advance version of the consolidated budget for the biennium 2020–2021 for UNODC, expected to be approved by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at their reconvened sessions in December 2019. The working group was informed that the budget was expected to be reviewed by the Fifth Committee in November and subsequently approved by the General Assembly in December 2019. On the financial situation of the Office, the Secretariat reported that insufficient cash availability in the regular budget of the United Nations was affecting UNODC. Owing to the late payment of assessed contributions, the regular budget cash balance had decreased over the years and an unprecedented cash deficit of \$488 million had been reached in October 2018. A further deficit was expected for October 2019, leaving no other option than borrowing from the Working Capital Fund and from closed peacekeeping operations. Measures taken by the Office to align expenditures with cash flow included the management of vacancies, reduced allotments for non-post activities, delayed cash outlay and the prioritization of activities. The situation, however, remained critical and could eventually have an impact on programme delivery. On the consolidated budget for 2020–2021, the

Secretariat reported that UNODC programme delivery was projected to grow by 13.2 per cent and that the general-purpose income of UNODC was expected to continue to decline. As general-purpose funds were heavily utilized for staff costs, an impact on the human resources situation was expected if they continued to decline.

4. The Secretariat also updated the meeting on the United Nations development system reform process, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the funding compact, in particular joint programming activities aimed at creating a more unified and leaner United Nations system. To be able to position UNODC in the context of UNSDCF, the Office would ensure a physical and substantive presence at the country level. In the context of the surge, staff had been deployed to the field to address priority needs of the different countries. The surge would also allow the Office to support the substantive and thematic reforms in the United Nations system, including with regard to trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants and counter-terrorism. In the field of counter-terrorism, UNODC had developed several programmes in close cooperation with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other United Nations agencies, the proposed project funding for which would exceed the amount invested in the surge. UNODC was also involved in the new United Nations Network on Migration, providing input and supporting the development of a secretariat in Geneva. In addition, UNODC was closely following and contributing to the substantive priorities of the Secretary-General, including the task teams on corruption and drugs, as well as the cybersecurity group. Delegations underlined the need to evaluate the benefits of the United Nations reforms for UNODC, in particular given that the Office's mandate was not limited to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. At the same meeting, the Secretariat updated delegations on the status of its assessment of its recruitment policies and practices to enhance equitable geographic representation and regional diversity among staff, as mandated by Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 61/12 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 27/7. While equitable geographic representation was applicable to Professional-level staff members in the United Nations Secretariat funded by the regular budget, regional diversity would take into account the regions of origin of all Professional staff members in a specific entity. The meeting was assured that the Office was, in line with the interoffice memorandum of 29 May 2019 from the Chef de Cabinet, working to ensure the selection of candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries for geographic posts. The Secretariat also informed the working group that the goal of achieving gender parity at each level in the Professional and higher category (P-2 to D-1) had been reached. A presentation was made on the Office's efforts in gender mainstreaming. The working group was also briefed on how a gender dimension had been integrated into the Office's work to combat trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. The working group was updated on the work of the Independent Evaluation Section. The importance of ensuring sustainable funding for evaluation was underlined. The Secretariat also presented the UNODC Global Programme to End Violence against Children, supporting Member States in preventing and responding to all forms of violence against children. The meeting was informed that technical assistance had been provided with regard to the collection of data and evidence, legal advisory services, strategic planning for the public sector, institution- and capacity-building, communication and advocacy, children's knowledge and participation, as well as coordination and collaboration.

II. Organizational and administrative matters

6. Under the guidance of the Co-Chairs, the working group held two informal meetings, on 11 June and 25 September 2019. Further meetings were scheduled for 29 October, 26 November and 10 December. Informal consultations to consider the consolidated budget for the biennium 2020–2021 for UNODC (E/CN.7/2019/14-E/CN.15/2019/16) and the proposed programme budget for 2021 were scheduled for 13 November.

7. 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.
