

Navigating COSP

A Guide for Participants of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption

United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime



Acknowledgements

This Guide is a publication of the Corruption and Economic Crime Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which serves as the secretariat to the Conference of the States Parties (COSP) to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Under the overall guidance of Brigitte Strobel-Shaw and Shervin Majlessi, special thanks are extended to the following colleagues whose insights and expertise in supporting COSP have greatly contributed to the development of this Guide: Heba Ismail, Livia Krings, Tania Navarro, Doris Rodas Reyna-Waldner and Tatiana Veress.

This publication is supported by the Government of Norway.

Norway

Version 1.0 (November 2025).

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About this Guide

Multilateralism remains the cornerstone of how the international community addresses shared challenges and advances common goals. In the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, "multilateral cooperation is the beating heart of the United Nations, its raison d'être and guiding vision."[1]

The success of multilateral processes depends on the meaningful participation of all countries. Ensuring that every State Party contributes to collective decision-making strengthens both the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Each perspective enriches the dialogue and brings practical experience that helps translate shared commitments into action.

This Guide has been developed primarily for delegates who may be less familiar with the procedures and working methods of the Conference of the States Parties (COSP) and other intergovernmental meetings under the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). It aims to offer a practical overview to help participants navigate these processes with confidence and clarity. The Guide may also serve as a convenient reference for other participants (observers) engaged in UNCAC-related meetings. Its purpose is to support meaningful participation and facilitate an inclusive, well-informed dialogue among all participants.

Since its first session in 2006, COSP has served as a leading global forum for promoting the implementation of UNCAC and addressing the complex challenges posed by corruption. It brings together a wide range of stakeholders, providing a space for the exchange of ideas and experiences, while also playing a central role in shaping the international anti-corruption agenda through the adoption of strategic decisions.

Whether attending COSP for the first time or returning, this Guide offers a practical overview of how the Conference functions. Like many large international conferences, COSP follows formal procedures and uses specific terminology that may not be immediately familiar to all participants.

While this Guide does not cover every procedural aspect, it aims to answer common questions, clarify key practical aspects and provide useful insights to support effective participation across the various dimensions of the Conference. It is intended as a living resource that can be further enriched by the experiences and insights of delegates and participants. Users are invited to share their lessons learned and feedback (via e-mail to uncac@un.org) to help make future editions even more relevant and useful.

1 https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/multilateral-cooperation-beating-heart-of-united-nations-secretary-general-tells-security-council



1

Understanding COSP

a. What is COSP?

The Conference of the States Parties (COSP) is the main decision-making body of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) - the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument in the world. Established directly under UNCAC (article 63), COSP ensures that UNCAC is not merely a set of principles, but a living instrument that drives real change. It plays a central role in promoting and reviewing its implementation, enhancing international cooperation and adopting policy decisions that shape global anti-corruption efforts.

While UNCAC does not include an enforcement mechanism in the traditional sense, COSP plays a vital role in sustaining momentum and promoting meaningful progress. It also established the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the Convention, which serves as a key engine for advancing implementation by identifying good practices and challenges and fostering constructive dialogue among Parties.

COSP also adopts resolutions that guide States in their implementation of the Convention and provide strategic direction to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which serves as the secretariat to the Conference. These outcomes help inform technical assistance, policy advice and capacity-building services delivered by UNODC.

Core functions of COSP

Article 63 of UNCAC outlines two core purposes of COSP:

- Improving the capacity of and cooperation between Parties to achieve the objectives of the Convention; and
- Promoting and reviewing the implementation of the Convention.

Building on this mandate, COSP performs a range of key functions, including:

- Overseeing the implementation of UNCAC, including through the Implementation Review Mechanism;
- Adopting resolutions and decisions that reflect the collective will of the Parties, including policy recommendations and calls to action;
- Providing strategic guidance to UNODC;
- Promoting cooperation among States and other stakeholders to strengthen anti-corruption efforts; and
- Identifying emerging issues and supporting collective responses to evolving challenges.

A growing global forum

Since its first session in 2006, COSP has grown significantly - not only in size but also in scope and influence. It is the largest anti-corruption gathering within the United Nations system. Held every two years, typically in different host countries, COSP brings together a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including Parties, signatories, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Alongside its formal proceedings, COSP features a dynamic programme of special events and other consultations held on its margins. These activities foster knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and cross-sectoral collaboration - making COSP a unique space where policy and practice come together.

With near-universal ratification of UNCAC and steadily increasing participation, COSP continues to serve as a vital forum for shaping the international anti-corruption agenda and translating global commitments into concrete action.

Why COSP matters to the international community?

- An opportunity to show political commitment to anti-corruption at the highest level;
- A platform to influence the global agenda, such as through negotiation and adoption of resolutions and decisions;
- A chance to showcase national achievements and good practices and to learn from others' experiences; and
- A space for holding bilateral meetings, networking and seeking partnerships for technical cooperation, international cooperation and asset recovery.

b. Rules of procedure

The rules of procedure, which govern the work of the Conference, cover a wide range of organizational and procedural aspects, including:

- Organization of sessions and meetings;
- Preparation of documentation;
- Participation in the Conference;
- Credentials;
- Role and work of the Bureau;
- Decision-making; and
- Budgetary, financial and other matters.

A link to the rules of procedure is included at the end of this Guide.

c. COSP sessions

The Conference holds its **regular sessions** every two years, usually at venues away from the UNODC headquarters in Vienna. The decision on the venue is made by the Conference, following its consideration of offers to host from Governments.

Each regular session typically features plenary meetings for consideration of agenda items, official statements and adoption of resolutions and decisions, alongside informal consultations for negotiating draft resolutions. When required, subsidiary bodies of the Conference may also meet in parallel. (For more information on COSP at work, see section 4.)

Special sessions differ from regular ones in that they may be held at any time and for any duration, as agreed by the Conference, at the request of any State Party.

For or more information, see chapter II (Sessions) of the rules of procedure and the official website (links are included at the end of this Guide).

d. Subsidiary bodies

The Conference has established subsidiary bodies to assist it in performing its functions related to the effective implementation of the Convention during the period between its sessions. These subsidiary bodies have evolved over time to reflect changing priorities and mandates. Currently, there are four subsidiary bodies, which advise the Conference and make recommendations to help deliver on its mandates, in accordance with article 63, paragraph 7 of the Convention. The four subsidiary bodies are:

The **Implementation Review Group (IRG)** oversees the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism in order to identify challenges, good practices and technical assistance requirements to ensure effective implementation of the Convention. The Group holds regular and resumed sessions every year in Vienna.[2]

The **Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption** assists and advises the Conference with regard to the implementation of chapter II (Preventive measures) of the Convention. It holds one session in Vienna every year.[3]

The **Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Asset Recovery** assists and advises the Conference with regard to the implementation of chapter V (Asset recovery) of the Convention. It also holds one session in Vienna every year.[4]

The **Open-ended intergovernmental expert meetings to enhance international cooperation under the UN Convention against Corruption** assist and advise the Conference on the implementation of chapter IV (International cooperation) of the Convention. These expert meetings are held once a year in Vienna.[5]

For more information, see the official webpages of the subsidiary bodies (links at the end of this Guide).

e. Bureau

The Bureau of the Conference, which is elected at the opening of each session of the Conference, consists of:

- A President;
- Three Vice-Presidents; and
- A Rapporteur.

The officers of the Bureau are elected from among the representatives of the States Parties present at the session. Each of the five regional groups of Member States is represented by one officer. The offices of the President and the Rapporteur are subject to rotation among the five regional groups.

2 Established by the Conference in resolution 3/1.

3 Established by the Conference in resolution 3/2.

4 Established by the Conference in resolution 1/4.

5 Established by the Conference in resolution 4/2.

When a session is hosted away from UNODC headquarters, in accordance with the standard practice established for such conferences, the President is typically a representative of the host Government.

The Bureau plays an important role both during the sessions of the Conference and during the period between sessions. It meets as necessary during the sessions of the Conference to review the progress of work and to make recommendations for furthering such progress. It may also meet at such other times as the President deems necessary or upon the request of any Bureau member.

The Bureau assists the President in the general conduct of work that falls within the competence of the President and performs any other functions as foreseen by the rules of procedure.

For more information, see chapters VII (Officers) and VIII (Bureau) of the rules of procedure (a link is included at the end of this Guide).

f. Secretariat

UNODC, through its Corruption and Economic Crime Branch, serves as the secretariat to COSP and its subsidiary bodies. It is responsible for supporting all aspects of the Conference's work, including:

- Receiving, translating, reproducing and distributing all the documents, reports and decisions of the Conference;
- Interpreting speeches made at meetings;
- Preparing, printing and circulating the records of the sessions;
- Having the custody and proper preservation of the documents in the archives of the Conference;
- Assisting the Bureau in the performance of its functions; and
- Performing all other work and functions that the Conference may require.

In addition, the secretariat assists the Conference in fulfilling its responsibilities set forth in article 63 of the Convention and ensures the necessary coordination with the secretariats of relevant international and regional organizations.

For inquiries, the secretariat may be contacted at: uncac@un.org.

For more information, see chapter IX (Secretariat) of the rules of procedure (a link is included at the end of this Guide).



2

Who participates in COSP

a. Categories of participants

The full scope of the rules of procedure for the Conference is applicable to the participation of ***States Parties*** in the work of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies.

The rules also provide for the participation of ***several categories of observers,*** each with specific and, in some instances, more restricted modalities of engagement. These include signatories to the Convention, non-signatories, entities and intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Signatories to the Convention may:

- Attend meetings of the Conference;
- Deliver statements at such meetings;
- Receive the documents of the Conference;
- Submit their views in writing to the Conference; and
- Participate in the deliberative process of the Conference.

Non-signatories to the Convention, without taking part in the adoption of decisions by the Conference, may:

- Attend plenary meetings of the Conference;
- Deliver statements at such meetings at the invitation of the President in consultation with the Bureau;
- Receive the documents of the Conference; and
- Submit their views in writing to the Conference.

Entities and intergovernmental organizations, without taking part in the adoption of decisions by the Conference, may:

- Attend plenary meetings of the Conference;
- Deliver statements at such meetings at the invitation of the President in consultation with the Bureau;
- Receive the documents of the Conference; and
- Submit their views in writing to the Conference.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with or without consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), without taking part in the adoption of decisions by the Conference, may:

- Attend plenary meetings of the Conference;
- Upon the invitation of the President and subject to the approval of the Conference, make oral statements or provide written reports at such meetings through a limited number of representatives on questions relating to their activities; and
- Receive the documents of the Conference.

NGO participation in COSP

The admittance of NGOs to the Conference is subject to specific processes, depending on the consultative status with ECOSOC:

NGOs with ECOSOC consultative status: The secretariat maintains and periodically updates a list of NGOs accredited with ECOSOC whose areas of competence are relevant to COSP and to which invitations are issued.

Other relevant NGOs: NGOs without ECOSOC status may apply to the Bureau for observer status, in line with the rules of procedure. The process of circulating the call for expressions of interest is managed by UNODC's Civil Society Team. The list of other relevant NGOs is circulated to all States Parties for consideration in advance of the Conference. If there is an objection, the matter is referred to the Conference for a decision.

The table below provides a simplified overview of the participation modalities for each category.

Category	Attend meetings	Deliver statements	Receive documents	Submit written views	Decision-making
States Parties	√	√	√	√	√
Signatories	√	√	√	√	x
Non-signatories	√	√	√	√	x
Entities and intergovernmental organizations	√	√	√	√	x
NGOs (with/without ECOSOC status)	√	√	√	√	x

Participation of observers in sessions of the Implementation Review Group

In its resolution 4/5, the Conference adopted rules with regard to the participation of signatories, non-signatories, entities and intergovernmental organizations in the work of the Implementation Review Group (IRG).

While NGOs may not participate in sessions of the IRG or other subsidiary bodies, in its resolution 4/6, the Conference decided that briefings for NGOs should be conducted on the outcomes of the review process, including on technical assistance needs identified. Such briefings are conducted once a year, typically on the margins of the regular session of the IRG, which also holds joint meetings with the Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption. All NGOs that have been admitted to participate as observers in the session of the Conference previous to the briefing receive invitations to the briefings.

For more information, see chapters IV (Representation of States Parties) and V (Observers) of the rules of procedure (a link is included at the end of this Guide).

b. Credentials

Credentials are the official communication confirming who is authorized to represent and act on behalf of a State Party at COSP. The submission of credentials is essential because only duly authorized State Party representatives can participate in decision-making, a role that observers do not have *(see section 2.a for more information on the participation modalities for each category of participants)*.

Credentials must be issued by one of the following authorities: the Head of State; the Head of Government; the Minister for Foreign Affairs; or the Permanent Representative to the United Nations. For regional organizations that are Parties to UNCAC, they must be issued by the organization's competent authority. Observers do not submit credentials, but the names of members of their delegation must be submitted to the secretariat during the registration process (see section 3.b).

Credentials may include the following members of a delegation: one representative (Head of delegation), one or more alternate representatives (Alternate heads of delegation) and one or more advisers. Support staff or technical personnel do not need to be listed in the credentials.

The secretariat provides detailed instructions before each COSP on how to submit credentials. They must be in one of the six official United Nations languages, issued by the appropriate authority (as listed above) and submitted as originals (scanned copies may be sent in advance but are not sufficient on their own). Credentials must reach the secretariat at least 24 hours before the opening session. Originals may be delivered in person in Vienna (e.g. via the Permanent Mission), sent by post or handed over on-site at the COSP venue.

Any changes to submitted credentials (e.g. replacing or adding delegates) must follow the same process and be issued by the same level of authority.



Credentials vs. registration

It is important to distinguish between credentials and registration as they serve different purposes.

Credentials designate who is formally authorized to represent a Party in COSP proceedings.

Registration is an administrative step that enables access to the COSP venue and applies to a broader group of participants and members of the delegations (e.g. technical staff) who may not be listed on the credentials.

For more information, see chapter VI (Credentials) of the rules of procedure (a link is included at the end of this Guide).



3

Preparing for COSP

a. Invitations

Invitations to States Parties and observers are sent by the secretariat approximately four to six months before COSP and contain information regarding registration and documentation for the Conference. In the case of States Parties, these invitations are transmitted via a note verbale to their Permanent Missions accredited to the United Nations in Vienna, whether located in Vienna, Geneva, New York or sometimes elsewhere. In cases where no Permanent Missions are accredited to the United Nations in Vienna, invitations are sent to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

b. Registration

Registration is an administrative process that enables access to the Conference venue and events. This process entails a much larger number of individuals than the credentials process (see section 2.b), to ensure that all participants who are authorized to access the Conference are able to do so.

Registration is handled through the United Nations registration system Indico and is based on self-registration. Participants must first create an account on Indico and then register for the specific COSP session. Each registration must be supported by an official note verbale from the Permanent Mission or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For non-State participants, such as intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations, an official letter from the relevant competent authority is required. In addition to uploading this document, participants must provide their full name, job title, individual email address and a recent photograph.

Registration requests are reviewed by the secretariat and approved only after verification of the submitted documentation.

Once approved, participants may collect their conference pass at the designated registration area at the venue. Passes must be collected in person, with a valid photo ID and the QR code generated by the Indico system.

Before each session of the Conference, the secretariat publishes an information note with detailed guidance on the registration process. This note, along with session-specific instructions, is made available on the official COSP website.

c. Official website

UNODC, as the secretariat to COSP, maintains an official website for each session of the Conference. This website serves as the central repository for all documentation prepared for the Conference.

When sessions are held away from UNODC headquarters, the host Government usually creates a dedicated website to complement the information available on the official UNODC site, in particular with regard to logistical arrangements, such as accommodation, transportation, visa arrangements or local services.

d. Conference documentation

For each session of the Conference, the secretariat prepares a provisional annotated agenda. This document is based on the list of items that the Conference agreed upon at the end of its previous session and serves as the foundation for the upcoming session's work. The annotated agenda explains each item's purpose, background and the expected action to be taken, helping participants understand the context and objectives of the discussions.

Annexed to the agenda is the organization of work, which provides an indicative schedule outlining when each agenda item will be taken up in plenary. This timetable is intended to assist delegations in planning their participation and preparing their interventions. However, it is understood that the schedule may be adjusted as needed, depending on the pace and progress of the deliberations.

At the start of every session, the Conference formally adopts both the agenda and the organization of work. In addition, the secretariat prepares documents for each session, based on mandates from previous COSP resolutions or other reporting obligations.

All documents prepared for the Conference are made available on the UNODC website for the respective session, with official documents provided in the six official United Nations languages.

e. Registration to speak

Taking the floor during the general discussion

To speak during the general discussion, which is essentially a high-level debate held during the first two days of the session (see section 4.a), delegations must register in advance. The registration period for the general discussion typically opens one month before the Conference.

Speaking requests are submitted via the UN e-deleGATE platform, using the e-Speaker module, which compiles the list of speakers. A preliminary list of speakers is made available on e-deleGATE shortly before the session begins. Delegations are encouraged to consult this list to estimate when they will be called to speak.

e-deleGATE platform

e-deleGATE is a secure digital portal used by the United Nations to facilitate communication and document exchange among delegations. It includes two modules for COSP:

- **e-Speakers module:** Used to collect speaking requests specifically for the general discussion and establish the corresponding list of speakers.
- **e-Proposals module:** Used to submit draft resolutions and decisions, upload outcomes of informal consultations and submit draft resolutions or decisions for processing into official "L documents" (see section 4.b for more on resolutions).

Taking the floor under other agenda items during the plenary session

For all other agenda items, no advance registration is required. Delegations may request the floor during the session, typically by raising their nameplate, using the speaking console (where available) or by notifying the secretariat present in the room. A separate list of speakers is maintained for each agenda item and managed in real time.

f. Travel and logistics

All costs and logistical arrangements related to participation in COSP, including travel, accommodation and related expenses, are the responsibility of the participating Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

A detailed information note is prepared prior to each COSP to provide guidance on various logistical matters.

g. UN standards of conduct and accessibility

When attending meetings at the United Nations, participants are expected to comply with established requirements regarding registration, identification badges, security instructions, behaviour, use and access to facilities, seating arrangements, use of symbols and speaking rights. This helps ensure the respectful functioning of all official meetings.

In line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, UNODC is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all COSP participants. Delegates with accessibility or other specific needs are welcome to contact the secretariat at uncac@un.org ahead of the meeting. The secretariat is at their disposal to discuss how best to accommodate individual requirements and ensure a welcoming experience for all.



h. Digital tools and communication

COSP logo

Each COSP session features a dedicated logo, designed specifically for that session. This logo forms part of the official visual identity and is governed by usage guidelines issued ahead of each session. Usage guidelines are essential to ensure legal compliance and maintain the brand integrity of COSP.

The following general principles apply to every session logo:

- The logo must always be used in its entirety - it cannot be cropped or modified in any way.
- It must always appear side by side with the logo of UNODC, which serves as the secretariat to the Conference. The official usage guidelines explain how to correctly display the two logos together, including the required format of separating them with a line.
- If other logos appear on materials, there must be sufficient spacing between the COSP logo and any other logos to preserve visual integrity.

Use of the COSP logo by non-UN entities - including governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and private sector entities - is only permitted upon approval from UNODC. To obtain approval, entities must submit a waiver of liability form and adhere to all instructions outlined in the official usage guidelines, which are published on the COSP website.

Unauthorized use of the logo is prohibited. All entities are strongly encouraged to consult the latest guidance and follow the approval process carefully.

Social media etiquette

COSP sessions offer an excellent opportunity to amplify engagement and showcase initiatives, including through social media.

A communications package is usually made available, including social media templates and promotional materials, to support consistent messaging. These materials may be used to promote participation, initiatives or special events, or to raise awareness about the COSP, its work and key themes - provided that the branding rules regarding COSP logo usage are respected and the instructions provided are followed.

To protect the integrity of the Conference and its participants, we kindly ask that the following social media etiquette be observed:

- Refrain from posting or disclosing information from closed meetings, such as consultations on draft resolutions.
- Avoid sharing sensitive or personal information, including details that could compromise confidentiality, diplomatic processes or individual privacy.

All participants are expected to exercise discretion and professionalism when sharing content online.

i. Informal insights on preparing for COSP participation

For practical, informal insights on preparing for COSP participation, refer to section 5, which covers tips based on experiences shared by other delegations on how to prepare strategically, manage logistics, engage in formal sessions, participate in resolution processes, leverage special events, build relationships and enhance visibility and communication.



4

COSP at work

Each session of COSP offers a rich and multifaceted programme.

The full programme of COSP typically includes:

- Plenary proceedings, where official statements are delivered, agenda items are considered and resolutions and decisions are adopted;
- Negotiations on draft resolutions and decisions, which shape the strategic direction of the work of Parties to the Convention and UNODC in implementing the Convention;
- A vibrant programme of pre-Conference events and special events, which provide space for more informal knowledge-sharing and collaboration among various stakeholders; and
- Bilateral meetings and multilateral dialogues, which allow delegations to engage directly with one another to share experiences or explore cooperation opportunities.

Together, these components make COSP not only a decision-making forum, but also a platform for policy exchange, partnership-building and practical learning.

UN Journal: The UN Journal (journal.un.org) is the official daily bulletin of the United Nations, providing an overview of meetings scheduled across the UN system. During COSP, it includes session-specific information, such as agenda items under consideration by the Conference on any given day, meeting times and venues. Delegates are encouraged to consult the Journal for the most up-to-date information on COSP proceedings as it is updated every day.



a. Plenary proceedings

The plenary session of the Conference follows the structure of the agenda adopted by the Conference for each session. It typically includes multiple plenary meetings held over five days, conducted in line with the agenda for the session and the rules of procedure.

The official proceedings of COSP are comprised of:

- The opening of the session;
- Adoption of the agenda and organization of work;
- The general discussion; and
- Consideration of other agenda items

Languages and interpretation: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are the official languages of the United Nations. Interpretation to and from those languages is normally provided during plenary sessions of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies.

Webcast: All plenary proceedings of the Conference are broadcast on UN Web TV in all official languages of the United Nations at: https://webtv.un.org/en

General discussion

Once the Conference concludes the consideration of the procedural items of its agenda, the general discussion begins during which high-level representatives have the opportunity to make statements on matters of a general nature related to UNCAC implementation. This segment, which take places during the first two days of the Conference, helps set the tone and direction for the session and allows delegations to highlight national priorities, achievements and challenges.

Requests to take the floor are submitted via the e-Speakers module on the UN e-deleGATE platform (see section 3.e).

Speakers are included on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to representatives at the ministerial or higher level. If a minister-level speaker is replaced by a non-ministerial representative, the new speaker is placed on the list based on the time the change was communicated to the secretariat. Delegations may also arrange to switch places on the list with other delegations at the same level, provided they inform the secretariat in writing.

Speaking time is limited to four minutes per delegation and seven minutes for Chairs of Regional Groups. Longer statements are posted on the Conference website.

In addition to in-person statements, delegations may submit a limited number of pre-recorded video statements by high-level officials, such as Heads of State or Government, Ministers or vice-Ministers. These are played in the Plenary Hall and introduced either by a representative present in the room or, if none is present, by the President of the Conference.



Consideration of agenda items

Following the general discussion, the Conference proceeds with the consideration of specific agenda items as outlined in the agenda for the session.

The President of the Conference opens and closes each plenary meeting, directs the discussions and ensures the observance of the rules of procedure, gives the floor to participants, puts questions to a vote (if needed) and announces decisions. The President also rules on points of order, which are procedural motions raised by delegations to address how the meeting is being conducted, such as the order of speakers or voting procedures. The President has complete control over the proceedings.

Representatives of the secretariat deliver so-called introductory statements under most agenda items in order to present the findings and information contained in the official documents prepared for the Conference's consideration.

Delegations may request the floor at any time by raising their nameplate, using the speaking console (where available) or by notifying the secretariat present in the room. The President normally calls upon speakers in the order in which they signal their wish to speak.

Representatives of Parties are given the floor first, followed by observers.

To ensure the smooth conduct of plenary meetings, delegations may be invited by the President to limit the duration of their statements.

While the plenary meetings are normally held in person, a limited number of video statements may be allowed, provided that the technical requirements are fulfilled.

b. Resolution and decision-making

Understanding decision-making at COSP

One of the core functions of COSP is to adopt resolutions and decisions that guide and support the implementation of the Convention by the Parties and help shape the global anti-corruption agenda during the period between sessions.

Draft resolutions and decisions are processed in accordance with the rules of procedure for the Conference.

In practice, decision-making often begins well ahead of the COSP session itself. Some draft resolutions are informally consulted and negotiated months in advance, allowing delegations time to build consensus and refine proposals.

This section aims to offer a clear overview of the main concepts and steps involved in the decision-making process, including the difference between resolutions and decisions, and how they are developed - starting from submission, through consultations to final adoption at COSP.

Draft resolutions and decisions

Parties to the Convention can submit draft resolutions and decisions for the consideration of the Conference.[6] While both are formal actions, there is an important distinction between them.

Resolutions are formal actions of a substantive nature. They typically focus on specific thematic areas - such as education, asset recovery, environment or measuring corruption - and are always composed of two parts: preambular paragraphs and operative paragraphs.

Decisions are formal actions, procedural in nature. Examples include decision 9/1, which encouraged States Parties to submit draft resolutions by a set deadline, and the decision on the host country of next COSP, which is taken at every session. Decisions may include preambular paragraphs but often go directly into the operative paragraph(s).

Structure of a draft resolution

To help understand the format of resolutions, here is a breakdown of the two main components:

Paragraph type	Purpose	Format
Preambular paragraph(s) (PP)	Set the context, provide background and justification for the action proposed, reference past resolutions or treaties.	Begin with phrases like *Recalling, Recognizing, Acknowledging.* Not numbered.
Operative paragraph(s) (OP)	Outline concrete mandates or actions.	Begin with phrases like *Invites, Encourages, Urges, Calls upon, Decides.* Numbered.

How to submit a draft resolution or decision?

Step 1: Submit a Note Verbale to the secretariat: A note verbale from the Permanent Mission of the sponsor is required, indicating the submission of the draft resolution for the consideration of the Conference. If there is more than one sponsor, one note verbale from any of the sponsors is sufficient, as long as it includes all the sponsors.

Step 2: Submit the draft resolution via the e-deleGATE platform: Log in to the e-deleGATE account and navigate to "Vienna" > "Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption" > e-Proposals (Sponsorship and Submission).

6 In the rules of procedure, the term "proposal" denotes draft resolutions and decisions for consideration by the Conference.

Sponsor(s) vs. co-sponsor(s)

While the rules of procedure do not specifically define "sponsors" and "co-sponsors", the Conference follows established United Nations General Assembly practice. In this context, the Member State submitting a draft resolution is considered its sponsor, while other States indicating support are listed as co-sponsors.

Sponsor(s): The Party(ies) that came forward and submitted the draft resolution for the consideration of the Conference. A draft resolution can be submitted by one or more sponsors, and Parties may sponsor more than one draft resolution per session. Sponsors can chair the "informal" informal consultations.

Co-sponsor(s): Parties that formally support a draft resolution. Co-sponsors can come forward at any stage - after the official submission, during any informal consultations or immediately after the adoption of the resolution in the plenary. There is no limit to the number of co-sponsors, and each Party may co-sponsor one or more draft resolutions.

Deadline for submission of draft resolutions and decisions

Pursuant to Conference decision 9/1, States Parties are strongly encouraged to submit draft resolutions no later than one month before the start of the session. However, draft resolutions received after the deadline still need to be accepted for consideration by the Conference pursuant to rule 51 of the rules of procedure, which stipulates that resolutions should be submitted no later than one day in advance of the meeting.

Next steps: negotiation process

Once a draft resolution is formally submitted, it goes through a negotiation process before being considered for adoption by the Conference. This process includes "informal" informal consultations, "formal" informal consultations, and finally adoption by the plenary.

"Informal" informal consultations

These meetings are closed, with participation limited to Parties and signatories. They typically commence in Vienna, following the official submission of a draft resolution, at the request of the sponsor(s)/chair(s).

The first round of "informal" informal consultations is generally devoted to introducing the draft, during which the sponsor(s) present the text, outline its main objectives and explain the rationale for its thematic focus. Subsequent rounds of informal consultations focus on negotiating the text line by line, allowing delegations to directly incorporate their national positions into the text. On average, draft resolutions undergo two to three readings and each paragraph that is agreed upon by consensus will be marked as "agreed in informals".

The sponsor(s)/chair(s) upload the outcome of each informal consultation to the e-Proposals in the e-deleGATE platform.

End of "informal" informal consultations

Ideally, consensus is reached on the full text in Vienna as early as possible, and at the latest by the final day scheduled for informal consultations. Following this, the document is forwarded to UN editors and translators for processing into the official "L document".

Draft resolutions that cannot be fully agreed upon in Vienna will continue to be negotiated through "informal" informal consultations during COSP.

What is an "L document"?

An "L document" refers to a limited distribution document used within the United Nations system. These are typically draft resolutions, decisions or other official papers circulated during meetings of UN bodies, such as COSP. The term limited distribution means that the document is shared only with official delegations participating in the respective meeting or conference. L documents are issued in the six official languages of the United Nations. In the case of draft resolutions, they are assigned an L document symbol once the "informal" informal consultations end in Vienna regardless of whether consensus has been reached on the full draft or only parts of it (e.g. CAC/COSP/2023/L.4).

"Formal" informal consultations

Similar to the "informal" informal consultations, the "formal" informal consultations are closed meetings, with participation restricted to Parties and signatories. They begin at COSP, usually on the third day (Wednesday), following agreement on the draft resolution reached during the "informal" informal consultations either in Vienna or at COSP, or if most of the text has been agreed upon and only a few paragraphs remain unresolved.

During these consultations, the Chair - a member of the Bureau of the Conference - seeks to build consensus on the outstanding paragraphs. If consensus cannot be reached, delegations are referred to the "informal" informal consultations to continue deliberations, before the text returns to the "formal" informal consultations. If successful, and the entire text is agreed upon, the draft resolution is considered ready for adoption by the plenary.

"Formal" informal consultations resemble the 'Committee of the Whole' - commonly referred to as COW in other UN bodies - although the Conference formally does not have a COW.

Adoption of resolutions and decisions

Once delegations reach agreement on the full text of a draft resolution or decision through informal consultations, it is considered ready for adoption by the plenary.

Resolutions and decisions are typically adopted by consensus - as also reflected in rule 56 of the rules of procedure, which states that Parties shall make every effort to adopt decisions in the Conference by consensus.

It may happen that consensus cannot be reached, and in that case, the rules of procedure foresee voting and include provisions on how it is to be conducted.

It is beyond the scope of this Guide to go into all procedural aspects, but in short: voting on resolutions is considered a "matter of substance". In such cases, if all efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted and no agreement has been reached, decisions are, as a last resort, taken by a two-thirds majority of States Parties present and voting. The phrase 'present and voting' refers to Parties casting an affirmative or negative vote. Parties that abstain are considered as not voting. If voting takes place, the President of the Conference, supported by the secretariat, guides the process and recalls the relevant rules.

As mentioned earlier, only Parties may participate in decision-making - whether by consensus or by vote. Observers do not take part in this process.

Decision on the venue

The Conference is usually held outside Vienna and hosted by one State Party, which then assumes the presidency of the Conference for two years.

At each session, the Conference usually adopts a decision regarding the venue of the next Conference. During the period between sessions, usually one State Party comes forward and expresses interest in hosting the next Conference. If multiple Parties express interest, they engage in discussions to reach a mutual agreement on which Party will host the upcoming session or on a sequence for hosting future sessions. At each session, the final decision on the venue for the next session is usually taken by consensus.



c. Pre-Conference events, special events and other bilateral and multilateral meetings

Pre-Conference events

Given the global visibility and significance of the Conference, the days surrounding COSP present an excellent opportunity for anti-corruption stakeholders to connect in person. Being in the same place, time zone and mindset enables participants to engage meaningfully, network and learn from one another. This momentum typically begins over the weekend prior to the official opening of the Conference, with a variety of pre-Conference events, also known as "pre-events".

These can take many different forms, including award ceremonies, annual meetings of associations and organizations, academic symposia, steering committee sessions, preparatory meetings for NGOs participating in COSP, practical workshops and asset recovery case discussions.

Pre-events are not part of the official COSP programme and are usually organized independently. They tend to be by invitation only or require pre-registration via the organizer's website, although in some cases they have been open to all Conference participants.

The list of pre-events is typically published on the official UNODC COSP website closer to the start of the Conference.

Special events

COSP is not only the main intergovernmental decision-making body under UNCAC, it is also a vibrant global platform for dialogue, collaboration and the exchange of experiences.

To complement the official plenary sessions and resolution negotiations, COSP hosts a wide array of special events on its margins. These are shorter, thematic events - usually panel discussions followed by open dialogue - that provide space to:

- Highlight national, regional and global initiatives and achievements;
- Share good practices and explore challenges; and
- Connect a variety of stakeholders from across regions and sectors.

With each session of COSP, the number of applications to organize special events has grown steadily - a reflection of their increasing value and relevance for participants. Special events offer a unique opportunity to deepen engagement and knowledge during the Conference, while also providing a space to network with the global anti-corruption community.

Special events are open to all registered participants and take place within the Conference venue. In recent years, some events, at the discretion of each event organizer, have adopted hybrid formats, allowing for remote participation and live streaming. Events typically last between 50 to 90 minutes, although this may vary depending on format and venue constraints.

To ensure alignment with the Conference's mandate and rules of procedure, special events may be organized by:

- Member States;
- United Nations entities;
- Intergovernmental organizations; and
- Non-governmental organizations with the relevant observer status.

Approximately six months before each COSP, the secretariat issues a call for applications on the official COSP website, providing detailed guidance on how to apply, selection criteria and logistical information.

Although these events are sometimes referred to as side events in other conferences, COSP uses the term special events exclusively.

The programme of special events is published online, whether in the UN Journal or on the official UNODC COSP website. This ensures that participants are informed in advance and can plan their individual schedules to attend events that align with both their interests and availability.

Bilateral and multilateral meetings and international cooperation

COSP provides a unique opportunity for States Parties and other stakeholders to engage in bilateral and multilateral meetings on its margins. These interactions enable participants to meet counterparts from across the globe - governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations - to foster collaboration on policy development, technical assistance, international cooperation and asset recovery. They may also serve as a platform to discuss matters related to UNCAC implementation and country reviews, explore joint initiatives and strengthen partnerships that advance global anti-corruption efforts.



5

Practical participation tips

a. Before and during COSP: Informal insights

Participation in COSP offers a unique opportunity to engage in global anti-corruption efforts, share national experiences and build meaningful partnerships. It also provides a high-level platform to demonstrate political commitment to anti-corruption, influence the global agenda and contribute to shaping international priorities.

While each delegation will approach COSP in its own way, this section offers practical tips based on experiences shared by other delegations. These ideas can help participants prepare strategically and make the most of their time at the Conference - particularly first-time participants.

- **Prepare strategically: national coordination**

When planning participation, it can be helpful to think about the delegation's objectives and ensure its composition reflects those priorities – such as topics for resolutions, opportunities for bilateral meetings and engagement in special sessions. Many delegations also choose to include senior-level representatives, such as Ministers or other high-ranking officials, to signal strong political commitment and enhance visibility. Reviewing the agenda and official documents in advance can help identify sessions of particular relevance and support the preparation of interventions or positions. Some delegations have found it helpful to coordinate internally ahead of COSP, including through inter-institutional collaboration. This kind of preparation can support the presentation of consistent national positions and help align messaging across ministries, agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

- **Prepare the logistics**

As with any major conference, planning logistics in advance helps ensure smooth participation. This includes practical details, such as travel arrangements, accommodation and registration. A detailed information note for participants is issued prior to each COSP, providing guidance on logistical matters. In addition, the host Government usually maintains a dedicated website to complement the official UNODC site, offering information on accommodation options, transportation, visa requirements and local services.

- **Engage in formal sessions**

Depending on the delegation's status (see section 2.a), statements or interventions may be delivered during the plenary, or written statements can be submitted for publication on the COSP website. The general discussion, usually held during the first two days of the session, offers high-level representatives an opportunity to highlight national priorities, achievements and challenges, helping set the tone and direction for the entire Conference. Other plenary discussions throughout the session also provide valuable opportunities to share perspectives and contribute to the Conference. While each delegation determines its own approach, formal participation offers a valuable opportunity for visibility and engagement.

- **Participate in resolution processes**

COSP provides a forum for Parties to propose, negotiate and adopt resolutions that shape the future direction of international anti-corruption efforts. In this context, Parties may wish to consider, in accordance with national procedures and priorities, whether to propose or co-sponsor draft resolutions. It may also be helpful to review the country's positions on key issues and identify areas where the delegation may wish to contribute during consultations. Some delegations have found that inter-institutional coordination ahead of COSP can support consistent national positions and more effective engagement in resolution processes. Participation in these processes is at the discretion of each Party but can be a meaningful way to help shape the Conference's outcomes and global anti-corruption policy.

- **Leverage special events**

COSP typically features a rich programme of special events covering a wide range of topics. These events offer valuable opportunities to share national initiatives and achievements, learn from other countries and organizations, explore emerging issues and innovative approaches, and connect with a broader audience. Whether a delegation is organizing a special event or simply attending, participation can be a meaningful way to engage with the broader COSP community and showcase its work. Delegations interested in organizing special events may consult the application guidelines issued ahead of each COSP session.

- **Build relationships**

COSP offers a valuable platform for networking and bilateral engagement. Many delegations take the opportunity to schedule meetings with counterparts from other countries, regional groups or organizations. These exchanges - whether held in dedicated meeting spaces, during special events or in the margins of the Conference - can be impactful, helping to build trust, exchange ideas and foster future cooperation. Such interactions can also support technical assistance, international cooperation and asset recovery efforts, and can help advance shared anti-corruption priorities.

- **Visibility and communication**

Delegations are welcome to promote their participation in COSP through social media and other communication channels. Sharing updates, photos and key messages can help raise awareness of efforts and enhance engagement with a broader audience. Delegations should observe the COSP logo usage guidelines and exercise discretion when sharing content online (see section 3.h).



b. After COSP: Sustaining engagement

Participation in COSP is a key moment in the global dialogue on anti-corruption. However, the work of implementing UNCAC continues well beyond COSP itself. Delegations may wish to consider the following avenues to stay engaged and contribute to ongoing anti-corruption work at the international level.

The following ideas, drawn from past practices shared by delegations, are offered as informal and optional suggestions. They may help sustain engagement and build on the momentum generated during COSP.

- **Follow up on COSP outcomes**

After each session, delegations may find it useful to review the resolutions adopted and reflect on how these relate to national priorities or ongoing initiatives. Some delegations choose to brief their national stakeholders or institutions on key takeaways from the Conference.

- **Maintain momentum**

COSP often serves as a catalyst for new partnerships, ideas and initiatives. Delegations may wish to continue conversations started during the Conference, whether through bilateral follow-ups or regional coordination.

- **Prepare for future COSPs**

Staying informed about upcoming COSP sessions, including opportunities to contribute to special events, can support strategic participation and continuity.

- **Engage with UNODC**

UNODC offers various tools, platforms and programmes to support UNCAC implementation. Delegations may wish to stay connected and/or request technical assistance or explore available services and activities that align with their national needs.

- **Participate in subsidiary bodies**

The work of the Conference continues through its four subsidiary bodies (see section 1.d). These bodies focus on specific thematic areas, normally based on mandates from past COSP resolutions, allowing for detailed discussions and helping pave the way for the next session of the Conference. This ongoing process ensures momentum in implementing the Convention and supports informed, evidence-based discussion at COSP.



6

Links to official resources

- United Nations Convention against Corruption: https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/learn/what-is-uncac/overview.html
- COSP website, including link to COSP rules of procedure in all six official United Nations languages: https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/cosp/conference-of-the-states-parties.html
- Implementation Review Group: https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/cosp/implementation-review-group.html
- Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption: https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/cosp/working-group-on-prevention.html
- Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Asset Recovery: https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/cosp/asset-recovery-working-group.html
- Open-ended intergovernmental expert meetings to enhance international cooperation under the UN Convention against Corruption: https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/cosp/expert-meeting-on-international-cooperation.html
- UN Journal: https://journal.un.org/
- e-deleGATE: https://e-delegate.un.org/

Other relevant resources

- Website of the Implementation Review Mechanism (IRM): https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/uncac/implementation-review-mechanism.html
- IRM country profile pages: https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/country-profiles/view/search.html
- Tools and Resources for Anti-Corruption Knowledge (TRACK) and its legal library: https://track.unodc.org/



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