



First meeting of the Working Group on Tracking and Tracing Systems (Article 8)

27–28 June 2022

Virtual meeting, Zoom

Summary report

1. The present report provides a summary of the discussions and presents the decisions taken on 27–28 June 2022 during the First meeting of the Working Group on Tracking and Tracing Systems (Article 8) following decision FCTC/MOP2(6). The Working Group was established by the First session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP1) to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, in decision FCTC/MOP1(6), and its mandate was extended by the Second session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP2) to the Protocol, in decision FCTC/MOP2(6).
2. The Convention Secretariat, which serves as the secretariat of both the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and the Protocol, prepared the following meeting documents, under the guidance of Key Facilitators: a) Objectives of the Meeting; b) Provisional Agenda; and c) Workplan and timeline. Four Parties have agreed to act as Key Facilitators for the Working Group, namely the European Union, Kenya, Pakistan and Senegal. They met twice in order to plan and prepare for the meeting.
3. The meeting was attended by:
 - 15 Parties to the Protocol that expressed interest in participating in the Working Group as members;
 - seven Parties to the WHO FCTC that are not Parties to the Protocol but expressed interest in participating in the Working Group as observers;
 - three international intergovernmental organizations and two nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), invited on the basis of relevant expertise and sound knowledge of matters related to the authorities' response to the illicit tobacco trade, as observers;
 - the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC), invited as an expert; and
 - the staff of the Convention Secretariat.

The full composition of the Working Group was communicated by the Convention Secretariat in the meeting documents and was reported verbally during the meeting; it also is available on the Convention Secretariat website.

4. The summary below follows the provisional agenda as adopted by the Working Group. Throughout the text, interventions are identified by function, either Working Group member or observer.

Welcome, objectives of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

5. The First meeting of the Working Group was chaired by Pakistan, at the proposal of the Key Facilitators and in agreement with the Working Group. The Key Facilitators had agreed to provide support in a rapporteur function by validating the present report.
6. The objectives of the meeting were agreed as follows: “The First meeting of the Working Group will provide the Working Group members and observers, as well as invited experts, with the opportunity to discuss the approach for the development of the global information-sharing focal point (GSP) and the next steps before drawing the road map as specified in decision FCTC/MOP2(6). It will also allow members of the Working Group to discuss information needs, exchange views on data collection requirements and agree on a workplan and activity timescale.”
7. The provisional agenda was adopted as proposed.

Review of the Working Group documents presented to MOP2 and decision FCTC/MOP2(6)

8. A first discussion took place on the road map for implementing the GSP, including on information needs and data collection requirements.
9. A Working Group member:
 - proposed that the Convention Secretariat should identify the costs and time needed according to each potential option for features of the GSP, and whether it would be possible for UNICC to provide such information using the conceptual analysis developed for MOP2 as a basis;
 - highlighted the need for attention to the structure of, and questions included in, the biennial reporting exercise, to avoid duplication in approaching Parties for information on tracking and tracing systems; and
 - proposed to circulate the questionnaire used by the Working Group during its first mandate as a basis for reflection and possible review.
10. The above proposals were met with support.
11. A Working Group observer – one of the NGOs – suggested that the Working Group consider the need:
 - for additional Parties to join the Protocol;
 - for financial and technical assistance for low- and middle-income countries to implement the Protocol;
 - for more specific information on reporting on tracking and tracing systems in order to gain a better understanding of the status of the issue; and
 - to be vigilant and counter interference by the tobacco industry, front groups and affiliated organizations.

Workplan and timeline for the Working Group

12. A Working Group member said the workplan and timeline were constrained by the mandate given by MOP2 and the necessary preparation for the Third session of the Meeting of the Parties, and that the proposal was a realistic approach.
13. It was also stressed that the Second meeting of the Working Group will be key, and decisions at that meeting will be critical for the Working Group to fulfil its mandate. Members of the Working Group were strongly encouraged to take an active role at the Second meeting, including in its preparation.
14. The workplan and timeline was adopted as proposed.

Interim solution of the GSP

15. Following a presentation by the UNICC on a platform to serve as an interim solution for the GSP, a Working Group member raised the following questions:
 - Whether the platform will be capable of downloading data to generate reports for different purposes, or will there be a need to fill out and download templates, highlighting the usefulness of downloading relevant data?
 - How would exchanges – and the corresponding volume of the data – between requesting Parties and requested Parties, via the UNICC platform, be counted, stressing the need to be able to get reliable and useful statistics on the use of the platform to inform any decisions to be taken by the MOP regarding the GSP?
16. The UNICC:
 - highlighted a few possible information technology solutions related to templates, but suggested agreeing on a template as a first step;
 - emphasized that the system was a human-driven solution, and that therefore it will rely on how it will be used by people;
 - announced its intention to organize a pilot exchange of data to better tailor the system's needs and functionalities; and
 - took note of the proposals and made assurances that the proposals would be taken into account in the development of the proposal as it is further refined.
17. The Convention Secretariat further clarified that there must be a balanced approach for how data are entered (free text versus predetermined templates), and that, in any case, downloads will be possible for the Parties but not for the Convention Secretariat. In an end-to-end encrypted information scenario, the analysis will depend on the data provided by Parties, and the Convention Secretariat will not be able to access the information exchanged between the Parties in that system.
18. Working Group members also emphasized that it would be important to add another layer of security in the system and that protecting the confidentiality of data with double encryption was key. UNICC agreed with these points.

Collection of information on the establishment of tracking and tracing systems

19. A Working Group member suggested that a new methodology be considered to collect data on the development and implementation of tracking and tracing systems, for instance by identifying relevant interviewees working in this specific area at the national level. Online interviews were also suggested. Another suggestion concerned a separate online session, ahead of the Second meeting of the Working Group, where Parties with existing traceability solutions could present their systems.
20. The Convention Secretariat pointed out that it was difficult to identify people on an individual basis, per country, and recalled that it was important for Parties to the Protocol to communicate the names of their focal points on tracking and tracing to the Convention Secretariat. It also recalled that the first questionnaire was sent to a Protocol-relevant audience (beyond ministries of health) and restated that it would share the questionnaire to collect data with the members of the Working Group for information and review, as necessary.

Next steps

Scheduling the Second meeting of the Working Group

21. Following a discussion on the various options to hold the Second meeting of the Working Group, it was agreed that:
 - The meeting would take place in person in order to allow enough time for discussions and flexibility to extend the working hours if needed, in light of substantive discussions.
 - Considering that the deliberations and outcomes of the Second meeting will be critical for the Working Group to complete its mandate, Working Group members were strongly encouraged to send at least one delegate to attend in person. The possibility of holding some segments of the meeting in virtual mode should be explored to allow the participation of delegates who are unable to participate in person due to travel constraints.
 - The meeting is to last three days (proposed from Monday to Wednesday), during the week of 24 October 2022, with details to be refined by the Convention Secretariat under the guidance of the Key Facilitators.
 - The meeting will be held in Geneva, at the seat of the Convention Secretariat.

Summary of the work to be carried out in advance of the Second meeting of the Working Group

22. Following a discussion on the summary of the work to be carried out in advance of the Second meeting of the Working Group, presented by the Chairperson, the Working Group decided:
 - (1) To work according to the approved the workplan and timeline.
 - (2) To request the Convention Secretariat:
 - to work with UNICC to identify the timeline needed to develop each option of the features of the GSP (working progressively to allow for adjustments, for example, after six months) as well as the associated costs, using the conceptual analysis as a basis, and present it to the Second meeting of the Working Group;
 - to circulate: (a) the questionnaire on tracking and tracing systems used by the Working Group during its first mandate; and (b) the structure of the biennial reporting exercise of Parties to the Protocol; this would not be done for the purpose of collecting the same

information again at this stage, but rather so that the Working Group members are aware of the information collected and can review it, as necessary, for further use;

- to present a report with preliminary results of the collection of information during the Second meeting of the Working Group, based on any feedback from the Working Group on the questionnaire, and to continue progress in compliance with the MOP2 mandate for the Convention Secretariat; and
- to work with UNICC to reflect on the technical issues related to security and confidentiality in order to inform the deliberations of the Second meeting of the Working Group.

Additional comments from Working Group members to guide the Convention Secretariat in its work towards the above, included:

- the need to involve the Working Group members first-hand in the information exchange with Parties in relation to their tracking and tracing systems experience, including through a proposed workshop for Parties to share practices directly with the Working Group, potentially as part of the Second meeting of the Working Group.
- (3) To request UNICC to present to the Second meeting of the Working Group the project plan for the interim solution for the GSP, with written documentation to be circulated in advance.

Additional comments from Working Group members to guide UNICC, the Convention Secretariat and the Working Group towards the above, included:

- The need to pay due consideration to the technical comments on the interim solution for the GSP made by the Working Group at its first meeting, as well as to key issues related to security and confidentiality.
- The need to be mindful of the strict timeline for UNICC to set up the interim solution for the GSP from the moment of its approval, including the consideration that the interim solution should be implemented by September 2023, and that the MOP2 Bureau is expected be consulted on the issue beforehand, as per FCTC/MOP2(6).
- The need for the Working Group members to be able to guide the Convention Secretariat on the matter and have access to the same information as provided to the Bureau.
- The need to stay aligned with the guidance already provided by MOP2, based on documents that were presented to the MOP, in relation to the “interim solution of the global information-sharing focal point, based on a manual exchange of information through an encrypted messaging system until the necessary conditions for setting up information technology infrastructure to host the information exchanges of the global information-sharing focal point are met”.

Any other business

23. There were no requests for any other business to be discussed.

Closure

24. The Chairperson thanked participants for their contribution and closed the meeting.

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