

OCTOBER 2026 · ONE YEAR AFTER HANOI

The United Nations Convention against Cybercrime

One year after Hanoi: what it is, what it contains
and what it means for Central America and the
Caribbean

Jesus Castellano

9 pages

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The essentials in four points

- It is the first global treaty specifically against cybercrime, adopted by consensus in the UN General Assembly on 24 December 2024 (resolution 79/243).
- It defines offences, sets procedural measures and opens channels for international cooperation, including a 24/7 point of contact in each State Party.
- It builds in technical assistance and capacity-building, designed in particular for developing countries.
- It remains open for signature until 31 December 2026 and will enter into force once 40 States are parties. My reading: it is the framework the region should adopt.

HOW IT CAME ABOUT

Negotiated by the full UN membership

The United Nations General Assembly adopted it by consensus on 24 December 2024, in New York, through resolution 79/243.

The UN describes it as the first global treaty to prevent and respond to cybercrime, and as the first international criminal justice treaty negotiated in more than 20 years.

Its purpose: to prevent and combat cybercrime more efficiently and effectively, to strengthen international cooperation, and to provide technical assistance and capacity-building, in particular to developing countries.

Up to 155 countries took part in the negotiation

WHAT IT CONTAINS

Nine chapters, a complete architecture

The text runs from definitions to the mechanism of implementation. Each chapter covers one piece of the cycle: criminalize, investigate, cooperate, prevent and build capacity.

- General provisions
- Criminalization
- Jurisdiction
- Procedural measures and law enforcement
- International cooperation
- Preventive measures
- Technical assistance and information exchange
- Mechanism of implementation
- Final provisions

THE TOOLS

What it allows countries to do

- Offences it defines: illegal access, illegal interception, interference with data and systems, misuse of devices, computer-related fraud and forgery, online child sexual abuse or exploitation material, solicitation or grooming of children, non-consensual dissemination of intimate images and laundering of the proceeds of crime.
- Procedural measures: preservation and production of electronic data; search and seizure; freezing, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds of crime.
- International cooperation: mutual legal assistance, joint investigations and a 24/7 point of contact per State Party for immediate assistance, including the collection and preservation of evidence.
- People: protection of witnesses and assistance to victims.

DESIGNED FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Capacity, not just obligations

Technical assistance and capacity-building are not an annex: they are one of the three purposes of the Convention and have a chapter of their own.

A Conference of the States Parties will oversee implementation and work to improve the capacity and cooperation of States. It is the natural forum for the region to request support and share experience.

There is debate about the safeguards. The text answers it: implementation must be consistent with States' obligations under international human rights law, and the Conference will review how it is implemented.

ONE YEAR AFTER HANOI

Where it stands today and what is missing

The signing ceremony was held in Hanoi on 25 and 26 October 2025, with more than 2,500 delegates from 119 governments.

It remains open for signature at UN Headquarters until 31 December 2026; after that, the route is accession.

It will enter into force once 40 States are parties. As of 30 September 2026, three had ratified: Azerbaijan, Qatar and Viet Nam. Still pending: more ratifications and the rules of procedure of the Conference of the States Parties, with no agreement at the January 2026 session.

72 countries signed in Hanoi

CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

What it means for the region and what I recommend

The region has open, connected economies, where crime crosses borders faster than case files do. A global framework, current and with assistance built in, is exactly what it needs. My recommendations:

- Sign before 31 December 2026, while it remains open for signature.
- Plan ratification now, with a realistic legislative timetable.
- Align national cybercrime law with its chapters: criminalization, procedural measures and international cooperation.
- Designate the 24/7 point of contact and make use of technical assistance and the Conference of the States Parties to build capacity.

SOURCES

Going to the text

- United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 79/243, 24 December 2024.
- UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), materials on the Convention.
- Official text of the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime.

The question is no longer whether a global framework exists. It is when the region makes it its own.