



Standard Operating Procedure 2026

Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act No. 25 of 2002 as amended

Ministry of Justice and National Integration, Sri Lanka

GENERAL INFORMATION

Process Title:	Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters	Unit:	MLA Unit
Division:	Legal Division	SOP ID:	MLA/CRIM/01/2026
Effective Date:	20/01/2026	Revision No:	01

PROCESS OVERVIEW

Process Description:

The objective of the standard operating procedure is to define the collective responsibility of the officers of the Mutual Legal Assistance Unit of the Ministry and to ensure that the in-bound and out-bound requests received by the Central Authority are executed promptly, effectively, and efficiently.

Purpose & Scope:

The purpose of these SOPs is to provide clear and defined procedures for handling inbound and outbound mutual assistance requests relating to criminal matters, within the MLA Unit of the Ministry of Justice and National Integration, in assisting the Central Authority established as per Act No. 25 of 2002.

PROCESS STEPS

Common Tasks		
Step	Task	Owner
Confidentiality Protocols	All officers assigned to the MLA Unit of the Ministry must execute a formal Oath of Secrecy to safeguard the confidentiality of all case files, registers, and data stores, and to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of information shared or received through mutual legal assistance.	▪ Central Authority ▪ MLA Unit
In-bound Requests		
Step	Task	Owner
Receipt of MLA request	✓ Central Authorities shall receive MLA requests from Foreign Authorities in following modes- ▪ via post/courier sent directly by the Central Authority of a specified country ▪ via Sri Lankan Missions abroad (High Commissions/ Embassies of Sri Lanka) ▪ via Foreign Missions based in Sri Lanka ▪ via Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka ▪ via the official dedicated email- mlassistance@moj.gov.lk ✓ All such MLA Request shall forthwith be forwarded to the MLA Unit.	▪ Postal Unit ▪ Secretary's office ▪ MLA Unit
Logging system	Upon receipt, the officer shall- ✓ Immediately assign a unique, non-repeating tracking ID to the request. ✓ Enter the Information into the database. (Log the requesting State/agency, the date of receipt, the nature of the offense, and the specific relief or evidence requested, etc.) ✓ Assign a "colour-coded label" for identification of the level of priority for each file. ✓ Respond with an acknowledgement to the requesting party regarding the receipt of the request.	▪ MLA Unit

Screening and Legal Compliance	Vetting - The Reviewer shall, ✓ Determine whether the MLA Request is authorized by law, and agreement/ treaty/convention, or under reciprocity. ✓ Verify that all required content items are present and complete. ✓ Verify Dual Criminality: Assess whether the alleged conduct described constitutes an offense under Sri Lankan domestic law and the requesting state's laws to confirm the offense is punishable in both jurisdictions. ✓ Seek formal legal review and advice regarding executability from the Hon. Attorney-General, where applicable. ✓ Determine the appropriate competent or judicial authorities, which are to be designated for the execution of the request. ✓ Identify and reject requests to locate fugitives or initiate arrests, and route such rejected requests to the Ministry of Defence for formal extradition consideration.	▪ MLA Unit
Refusal/ return	Communication of refusal/ return for completeness to the Requesting Authority ✓ In the event that an MLA request is incomplete or inexecutable under applicable domestic law or relevant treaties, the Requesting Authority should be duly notified. ✓ Such notifications shall be transmitted via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka through diplomatic channels, accompanied by a simultaneous electronic mail alert to the Requesting Authority confirming dispatch.	▪ MLA Unit
Designation of Competent Authority for execution of MLA Request	Reference to the Competent or Judicial authority for the execution of the request ✓ Once the MLA request is verified as compliant, forward it to the appropriate competent or judicial authority by means of “by hand” for the execution of the request. ✓ The Request shall be forwarded alongside its assigned priority level. ✓ Notify the designated focal points of the receiving or judicial authority. ✓ Periodic monthly follow-ups (reminders) should be sent to track request status and gather necessary details. ✓ Where an update indicates partial execution, an interim execution report should be requested from the Competent or Judicial Authority.	▪ MLA Unit

Verification of Scope and Completeness	Vetting the response received from the competent authority ✓ Determine whether the response is fully compliant, incomplete, or a request for more information. ✓ Facilitate translations of the MLA response and enclosed documents, if necessary.	▪ MLA Unit
Dispatch the MLA Response	Procedure for forwarding the response to the appropriate requesting authority ✓ In accordance with established policy, all responses are routed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka for onward transmission via diplomatic channels to the competent authority of the requesting state or intergovernmental organization. ✓ Simultaneously, notify the appropriate authority via email that the response has been dispatched through diplomatic channels. ✓ If the response satisfies the MLA request, the covering letter to the appropriate authority should indicate that the case held by the Central Authority of Sri Lanka will be closed, unless otherwise requested for the same to be kept open for further communications within the specified timeframe. ✓ Every response should include feedback on the usefulness of the assistance provided.	▪ MLA Unit
Closure of the MLA record	✓ In the absence of a specific request to maintain an active file, a formal communication informing closure shall be dispatched by post to the competent or judicial authority, and the database updated accordingly.	▪ MLA Unit
Out-bound Requests		
Step	Task	Owner
Receipt of MLA request	✓ Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and National Integration, as the Central Authority under the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, receives MLA requests from competent authorities of Sri Lanka either “by hand” or “by post”. ✓ Requests are sent in a sealed envelope, with the marking of the “MLA/Out-Bound/CA/.....(Name of the Requested State)/20....(year)” on the top left-hand corner of the envelope. ✓ All such MLA Request shall forthwith be forwarded to the MLA Unit.	▪ Postal Unit ▪ Secretary’s office ▪ MLA Unit

Logging system	Upon receipt such MLA Request should be forwarded to the MLA Unit under the MOJ. ✓ Immediately assign a unique, non-repeating tracking ID to the request. ✓ Information will be entered in to the data base. (Log the requesting competent authority/agency, the date of receipt, the nature of the offense, and the specific relief or evidence requested, etc.) ✓ File will be assigned a “colour-coded label” for identification of level of priority ✓ Respond an acknowledgement to the to the competent authority regarding the receipt of the request.	▪ MLA Unit
Screening and Legal Compliance	Vetting - The Reviewer shall, ✓ Determine whether the MLA Request is authorized by law, and agreement/ treaty/convention, or under reciprocity. ✓ Verify that all required content items are present and complete. (Including necessary translations of foreign languages) ✓ Determine the appropriate Central Authorities/appropriate authorities of the Requested State or Intergovernmental Organization to whom the requests are to be dispatched for execution.	▪ MLA Unit
Refusal/ return	Communication of refusal/ return for completeness to the Competent Authority ✓ Where an MLA request is incomplete or unenforceable pursuant to applicable law or agreement/ treaty/ convention, such deficiency shall be communicated to the competent authority ✓ In many instances, these are communicated directly to the focal points of the relevant competent authority, and also sent by closed envelope by way of “by hand” and email. ✓ For minor corrections, focal points should be informed over the phone or via WhatsApp.	▪ MLA Unit
Transmission of MLA Request	Reference to the Central Authorities/appropriate authorities of the Requested State or Intergovernmental Organization for the execution of the request ✓ Once the MLA request is verified as compliant, the MLA request should be dispatched through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka via the Diplomatic Channel to the appropriate foreign authority for execution.	▪ MLA Unit

	✓ The Request shall be forwarded alongside its assigned priority level and with the indications of level of urgency and timeline, if applicable. ✓ In considering the preferred communication mechanisms of a specified foreign country/ intergovernmental organization, requests are also communicated via email or online portals. ✓ Periodic monthly follow-ups (reminders) should be sent to track request status and gather necessary details.	
Verification of Scope and Completeness	Vetting the response received from the foreign appropriate authority Check whether the response received is a full compliance of the requested assistance or partial compliance, or request for further information.	▪ MLA Unit
Referring the MLA Response	Procedure for forwarding the response to the Competent or Judicial authority ✓ The response should be forwarded to the relevant Competent or Judicial authority by way of “by hand”. ✓ If the response received satisfies the MLA request, the covering letter to the competent or judicial authority should state that the Central Authority will close the file unless requested within the specified timeframe. ✓ Every reference of response to the competent or judicial authority should include feedback on the usefulness of the response received and whether any legal proceedings have been initiated/conducted.	▪ MLA Unit
Closure of the MLA record	✓ In the absence of a specific request to maintain an active file, a formal communication informing closure and feedback based on information provided by the competent or judicial authority about the usefulness of the assistance provided (in applicable instances) shall be dispatched to the appropriate foreign authority through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the database updated accordingly.	▪ MLA Unit