

## **SPEAKING POINTS**

*5 minutes statement - Intersessional meeting of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drug – Panel on drug supply*

### **Europol's contribution in the fight against drug trafficking**

#### **1. Introduction**

- Thank you Madam Chair.
- Your Excellency, Ambassador Buenrostro Massieu<sup>1</sup>; Distinguished representatives,
- it is a Pleasure to be here today and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present Europol's views on drug supply and reduction efforts.
- Europol is the European Union Law Enforcement Agency. Our role is to support the investigations of the Members States on Serious and Organised Crime and Terrorism.
- We facilitate information exchange; support investigations with crime analysis and support operations by setting-up coordination centres and providing criminal expertise.
- Our central position in the European Security infrastructure gives us a unique view of the problem of drug supply and organised crime threats in the region.
- These trends are presented in our Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment – The EU most comprehensive analysis on criminal threats.
- This report serves as a base for decision by the ministers of Justice and Home Affairs on what should be the EU priority in the fight against serious and organised crime.

#### **2. Problem Statement**

- What we see, is that illicit drugs trafficking remains the largest criminal market in the EU.

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<sup>1</sup> Chair of the CND – Also chairing this meeting. Ambassador of Mexico and permanent representative to the International Organisations in Vienna. Member of the Vienna Chapter of the International Gender Champions Initiative.

- More than a third of the criminal groups active in our region are involved in the production, trafficking or distribution of drugs.

-This trade generates billions of euros every year - *conservative estimates for the EU market assess its retail value to 24 billion euro a year.*<sup>2</sup>

-These immense profits fund various other criminal activities. They allow criminals to thrive and develop their criminal enterprises.

-65% of the groups involved in drug trafficking simultaneously engage in other criminal activities,

-all at the expense of the health, prosperity and security of the EU citizens.

-These groups are becoming more and more sophisticated and pose an increasing threat to The EU.

-They rely heavily on corruption and are able to operate complex criminal ventures to sell their products and launder their proceeds.

-At the same time, the online trade in drugs is expanding.

-This adds a layer of complexity to counter-trafficking operations and calls for the development of new partnerships outside of the law enforcement realm.

### **3. Europol activities**

- Disrupting the activities of groups involved in the wholesale of cannabis, cocaine and Heroin; Tackling networks distributing multiple types of drugs; and reducing the production of synthetic drugs are priorities for the EU.

- In the last decade, almost 25% of all information exchanged with or via Europol related to drugs.

-This is continuously increasing and so are the requests for Europol operational support.

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<sup>2</sup> EMCDDA & Europol 2016, EU Drug Markets Report 2016, p. 23.

- At this very moment, we are supporting one hundred and twenty four high priority cases related to drugs.
- We offer a full range of services from criminal analysis to forensic support and deployment on the ground.
- The threat of drug trafficking is becoming increasingly complex. So it is essential for Law enforcement to continuously reflect on its methods and identify ways to improve its response capacity.
- In the 2017 report 'Towards a Europol response to Drugs in Europe', Europol therefore identified a set of measures aimed at enhancing the European cooperation against drug-related crime.
- A programme board for Member states and key partners was then created to allow the development of common positions.
- In December we hosted a conference for senior drug enforcement managers. The objective was to review the operational strategies and agree on common tactics.
- A new action plan was endorsed to strengthen our joint response to drug trafficking.
- The plan includes various measures to:
  - improve our intelligence picture on drug supply in the EU;
  - increase the technological and investigative capabilities of the Member States;
  - and foster the recovery of the criminal assets linked to drug trafficking.
- One of the key measures foreseen is the development of Standard Operating Procedures for the selection of high value targets and the establishment of Operational Task Forces.
- This will facilitate the coordination of actions against the groups posing the highest threat to the EU.
- Another example of improved services by Europol is the establishment of a dedicated Dark Net team supporting law enforcement agencies in preventing and investigating on-line criminality.
  - Last year, Europol supported the dismantlement of two of the largest Darknet markets: Alpha Bay and Hansa.

#### **4. Way forward**

- To conclude, a lot of efforts are made in the EU to address the threat of drug supply and disrupt the activities of traffickers.
- Member states are increasingly committed to exchange information and coordinate their efforts,
- This is essential as we are facing global organised crime networks.
- If we are to truly tackle the threats posed by those groups we need to continue in that direction and go even further.
- International cooperation must be broadened and deepened.
- Europol is committed to support that effort and adapt its services to the needs of the member states.
- Our ability to provide forensic and technological support will be enhanced.
- We will continue developing targeting mechanisms to allow coordinated actions on high value targets.
- Finally, regular exchanges will be maintained with the heads of European drug enforcement services – our next annual conference is scheduled in December.
  - This is essential to assess the efficiency of our strategies and identify ways to improve the coordination of efforts.
- Thank you very much.