

18 August 2008

Original: English

Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean

Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 13-17 October 2008

Major regional drug trafficking trends and countermeasures**Current situation with respect to regional and subregional cooperation***

1. The present document provides information on regional cooperation initiatives and assistance provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in countering drug trafficking to Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mexico and Central America

2. The UNODC project “Mesoamerican Control Group of Narcotics, Psychotropic and Chemical Precursors”¹ has contributed to strengthening the inter-institutional relations at the country level as well as bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region. The identification of the focal points for this project and the subsequent establishment of the Mesoamerican group have served as a basis for a collaboration mechanism, which allowed for problem resolution and follow-up on precursors control matters. This project has improved cooperation in the area of technical cooperation on drug control among the Governments in Central America, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). In 2008, the UNODC project staff and Mesoamerican group members conducted monthly conferences using *Voice-over-Internet Protocol* technology, for the purposes of consulting on basic parameters on specific precursors control training needs, resolving problems, improving bilateral and multilateral cooperation and identifying good practices in precursors control.

3. In 2007, 273 officers from customs, national anti-drug authorities, police, as well as staff of the Ministry of Health attended precursors control trainings, organized in the framework of the project, in cooperation with the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA),

* This document has not been edited.

¹ This project covers Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama and Guatemala.



the Mexican Federal Commission for the Protection from Sanitary Risks (COFEPRIS, Ministry of Health) and the Mexican Attorney General's Office (PGR).

4. During the first half of 2008, UNODC organized a seminar for the pharmaceutical industry of El Salvador, where the pseudoephedrine control system of Mexico was presented and explained. Such seminars will be organized in other Central American countries during 2008. In July of this year, customs and COFEPRIS authorities, including new personnel, were trained on the use of the National Drug Control System, developed by UNODC.

5. The UNODC Legal Assistance Programme in the Latin America and the Caribbean region has expanded its training and mentoring programmes on matters related to trial techniques, case management, circumstantial evidence and special investigation techniques. In 2007, more than 7,500 investigators, prosecutors and judges were trained in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Within the framework of the Programme, a money-laundering conviction study, based on 177 sentences handed down in Colombia, was being finalized. It was expected to yield lessons learned and good practices that may be of relevance throughout the region. New initiatives included public (justice sector) – private (financial sector) partnerships against money-laundering and financing of terrorism – a pilot project in this area was completed in Colombia during the first half of 2008. The Programme is also represented on the board of the International Association of Drug Treatment Courts which is promoting the drug treatment court approach in the region.

6. Colombia has taken up the presidency of the CICAD Group of Experts on Maritime Narcotrafficking.

7. National efforts, in conjunction with information sharing at the regional and international levels led to the dismantling of a number of criminal organizations and to an increase in the number of asset forfeitures from criminals.

8. In 2007, there was a substantive increase in the number of seizures of precursors in Colombia.

9. Colombia is conducting a study on drug consumption that will be completed in late 2008 or early 2009.

10. The UNODC Country Offices in Peru and Colombia have been working closely together to support through the Shared Responsibility project² the Governments in coordinating joint actions aimed at promoting the principle of “shared responsibility”, improving partnerships with other countries as well as achieving greater impact and efficiency in the fight against drug trafficking, precursor control, money-laundering and other areas.

11. The special anti-drug forces in Bolivia reported that more than 10,000 anti-drug operations were conducted in 2007 and over 14,900 kg of cocaine base and 2,900 kg of cocaine were seized. In addition, in the first half of 2008 more than 5,800 anti-drug operations took place and over 9,500 kg of cocaine base and 1,900 kg of cocaine were seized.

12. In April 2008, more than 2,000 police and prosecutors were trained in the use of the tool “Investigation Plan” in nine cities of Bolivia, in line with an inter-institutional

² See www.sharedresponsibility.gov.co.

agreement between National Police and General Attorney Office to participate in the Training Programme “Criminal Investigation Plan”. The trainings were conducted by a group of 20 police and prosecutors who, in turn, were trained in October 2007 by a team of the Legal Advisory Programme.

13. In July 2007, the UNODC Country Offices in Colombia and Bolivia cooperated to organize a mock trial on money-laundering in La Paz. More than 100 officers from the courts, police, attorney, financial investigation units and other public institutions participated in the event.

14. As in previous years, the Bolivian anti-drug authorities participated in cross-border operations and exchange of information. They developed joint activities with the Brazilian Federal Police in the framework of Operation Brabo as well as implemented Operation Huracan in cooperation with Chilean Police and Operation Inca – with the Peruvian police. The Bolivian anti-drug authorities continued to carry out the Operation Seis Fronteras in cooperation with other countries of the region.

15. The UNODC Country Office in Brazil has managed a project in partnership with the Federal Police Department, whose main objective was to increase its capacity to combat the organized crime. In order to promote the international cooperation on this issue, the Brazilian Federal Police, in cooperation with UNODC, have supported two activities:

- Police agents and criminal experts from various Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, as well as from several South American countries, were invited to attend a five-month training programme on how to fight organized crime more effectively. The main goal of this initiative was to increase South-South cooperation on this issue, which includes addressing cocaine trafficking from the Andean region through West Africa to Europe.
- In 2007, the third meeting of Chiefs of Police from the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries was held in Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro. The first part of the meeting in Brasilia was devoted to discussing the possibility whether it would be possible to establish a “Pro Tempore” secretariat to coordinate future meetings of Chiefs of Police of CPLP and to promote an official and permanent communication channel among these countries. The meeting included a presentation about the successful experience of National Secretary for Public Security in developing and implementing the community policing, an important task of the National Programme for Public Security with Citizenship. At the second part of the meeting in Rio de Janeiro the Police Chiefs were informed about the knowledge and technological resources acquired by the Public Security Secretary of Rio de Janeiro during the Pan-American Games in view of a future cooperation between police forces of Brazil and Africa during the Football World Cup in 2010.

16. In Peru, the UNODC Country Office currently coordinates a subregional project in partnership with CICAD that has produced the first comparative study on drug abuse and related factors. The study covers the population from 15 to 64 years old in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay and Peru. The study was conducted using a methodology that compared the consumption of illicit drugs, including marijuana, coca paste, cocaine as well as alcohol and tobacco in this subregion. It also contains an analysis of public policy on drugs in schools, the workplace and the community.

17. The UNODC Country Office in Peru submitted to the Peruvian government an updated study on drugs and crime in the country, which analyzed the progress, achievements and

challenges encountered in the fight against drug trafficking, illegal drug production, money-laundering, control of chemical precursors, and related crimes in the last few years. The study drew attention to the need for a holistic approach, which prioritizes investments into the public and private sectors in order to support the population most affected by these illegal activities.

18. The UNODC Country Office Peru has provided assistance to the Government of Peru in strengthening cooperation with several stakeholders, including the United States Agency on International Development (USAID) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

19. The same UNODC Office has also taken a lead role in facilitating the establishment or strengthening of civil asset forfeiture legal frameworks in Peru and Ecuador, assisting in the development of civil asset forfeiture legislation and the training of over 1,000 officials on the application of the law in order to seize assets derived from drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms trafficking and kidnapping.

20. UNODC, through its Legal Advisory Programme, has also provided assistance to Ecuador, Panama and Peru, on how to best transition from an inquisitorial to an accusatory justice system. Technical advice on best practices, as well as practical tools and guides are being produced to ease this transition and improve the efficiency of criminal justice reforms.

21. In addition, the UNODC Country Office in Peru was in the process of completing a study on the economic and social impact of organized crime in order to allow authorities and civil society to better quantify the economic losses caused by illicit criminal activity and to better understand the subsequent reduced availability of medical services, schooling, employment or other public services which could be funded if greater effort were placed on seizing the illicit assets of those involved in organized criminal activity.

Container Control Programme

22. In 2007, the independent evaluation of the Ecuadorian segment of the Container Control Programme concluded that the overall project objectives had been achieved and, in several instances, exceeded.

23. The inter-agency unit in Guayaquil seized close to 10 tons of cocaine. The existing information sharing system ContainerComm was in use by all the inter-agency units in the Container Programme as well as some selected container profiling units in Europe. Information transmitted by the unit in Guayaquil contributed to cocaine seizures in Europe.

24. A regional project idea to expand the programme to Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela was developed by UNODC. Firm interest to participate in the Container Programme was expressed by authorities in Panama, Costa Rica and Paraguay.

25. A technical needs assessment mission for the ports has been completed in Panama by UNODC and the report will be shared with Panamanian authorities. Similar assessment missions will be conducted in Costa Rica and Paraguay in the course of 2008.

Conclusions and recommendations

26. A better understanding of the dynamics of cross-border and internal trafficking to better track criminals and, more importantly, the movement and confiscation of illicit assets should be developed.

27. Sustainable sources of funding and regular trainings courses in order to strengthen and maintain cross-border cooperation, including in the area of tracking of movement of illicit funds, either through financial transactions or physical movement, should be secured. The confiscation of illicit assets would reduce both the impact of criminal activities, and the use of illicit assets to corrupt authorities.

28. A better understanding of illicit activities with greater focus on the assets derived from (and used in) such activities should be developed. This information would contribute to dismantling criminal networks and reducing corruption.

29. The use of tools such as civil asset forfeiture as a means of reducing the profits derived from criminal activities, including drug trafficking, in the region should be increased.

30. Regulatory frameworks and regional law enforcement cooperation in the area of money-laundering, chemical precursors and control of synthetic drugs should be improved.

31. Bilateral or multilateral agreements on joint investigations, intelligence-sharing and other joint efforts are necessary in order to conduct successfully and prosecute organized criminal groups (particularly those involved in drug trafficking) that operate throughout the region.
