

Arab States Recommend Stronger Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Institutions to Prevent Crime, Terrorism and Violent Extremism

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Cairo-Egypt, 21 November 2016, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC), in close collaboration with the League of Arab States (LAS) convened a two-day meeting of the Steering Committee of UNODC Regional Programme for the Arab States to Prevent and Combat Crime, Terrorism and Health Threats, and to Strengthen Criminal Justice Systems in Line with International Human Rights Standards (2016-2020), at LAS Headquarters in Cairo .during 17-18 November 2016

The main aim of the annual meeting is to bring together different national counterparts from the Ministries of Justice, Interior and Health from 18 Member States covered by the Programme, constituting the Steering and Follow-up Committee of the Regional Programme, to examine progress made in the implementation of the Programme during 2016 and identify priorities for 2017. The meeting was opened by H. E. Fadel Mohamed Jawad, Assistant-Secretary-General and Head of Legal Affairs Sector, General Secretariat, League of Arab

States. He highlighted the significance of the Regional Programme amid increased terrorism and organized crime in the region, and pledged the League's support to the implementation of the Programme

Addressing the participants, Mr. Masood Karimipour, UNODC Regional Representative for the Middle East and North Africa, stressed the importance of regional cooperation and partnership among Arab States, strong national institutions and rule of law. "In order to address organized crime, corruption and terrorism, we need criminal justice systems in which police, prosecution, courts, and prisons function effectively, and in full respect of the rule of law and human rights. Without human security and rule of law, sustainable development is also an elusive goal

The event was also attended by representatives of the Arab Councils of Ministers of Interior and Justice and brought together 71 participants who all agreed on a set of 17 recommendations that respond to the various challenges faced by the Members. These recommendations, inter alia, included i) Work towards launching and implementing specialized projects in the areas of cybercrime, forensics, and all types of illicit trafficking across seas; ii) Intensify efforts to launch and operationalize the regional initiative to counter illicit trafficking in cultural property; iii) Develop strategies, capacities and national institutions to counter terrorist offences and transnational organized crime, at both the security and judicial levels, including crime scene management, criminal analysis, enforcement operations and the use of specialized technological techniques to identify criminal networks; Explore the possibility of establishing national platforms to counter extremist ideology and spread a culture of tolerance among youth, through experience and knowledge exchange with the countries of the region that have successful experiences in this field; iv) Operationalize and support the Arab Judicial Cooperation Network of LAS General Secretariat, and urge UNODC to support it with capacity building and cooperation with other similar networks; v) Support and strengthen national border control institutions and capacities, and strengthen regional and international security and judicial cooperation to counter terrorism and transnational organized crime; vi) Continue Support and develop of national

anti-human trafficking capacities, notably on awareness raising among vulnerable groups (children, women, refugees, displaced, etc.), victim identification, operationalization of national referral mechanisms, and harmonization of national legislation with model Arab laws and relevant international instruments, as well as assist Member States, upon request, in drafting witness protection legislation and regulations; vii) Continue to support the development of effective responses to organized criminal groups involved in migrant smuggling, with a particular focus on dismantling networks, development and enforcement of relevant legislation and national and regional mechanisms, and enhance regional and international cooperation in this field; viii) Continue to develop institutional capacities to enhance knowledge of foreign terrorist fighters routes and trends, identification and investigation, and develop reintegration programmes for foreign terrorist fighters returning to their homelands, as well as work towards harmonizing Arab legislation, especially with international conventions and standards; ix) Continue to support Member States in developing effective preventive measures against corruption through promoting comprehensive anti-corruption policies, including the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of such policies, establishing and enhancing asset declaration systems, conflict of interest laws, and inspection and internal oversight mechanisms; and promoting integrity and transparency in the public sector; and x) Support Member States in the areas of financial investigations, money laundering (through financial, banking, and non-banking sectors) and asset recovery, including mutual legal/judicial assistance, regional and international cooperation mechanisms, as well as criminal asset identification, freezing, seizure and confiscation

The Regional Programme, developed in close partnership with LAS and through extensive consultations with Member States was launched on 9 May 2017.

UNODC has been supporting States in the region combat illicit trafficking, organized crime, terrorism and corruption while strengthening crime prevention, criminal justice, as well as prevention and treatment of drug use and HIV/AIDS for the last 19 years