



Preparation for the high-level review of the implementation by Member States of the “Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem”.

Contribution by INTERPOL
related to P. 3.(c) of the
Commission on Narcotic Drugs Resolution 56/12

1. Introduction

INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization, is on the frontlines against drug trafficking, providing effective tools and services for law enforcement.

As the largest global police organization, INTERPOL provides its 190 member countries with a secure, global communications system called I-24/7, which links the INTERPOL National Central Bureaus (NCBs) in all member countries to each other and to the Organization’s General Secretariat headquarters in Lyon, France. The I-24/7 system allows authorized users to share intelligence and request assistance for international police cooperation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in a secure manner and in real time. In 2012, more than 17 million messages were exchanged using the I-24/7 network.

Through I-24/7, law enforcement can also access a range of global databases and data services. INTERPOL maintains operational databases containing information such as names, fingerprints, photographs and DNA profiles of individuals under investigation or wanted for arrest, as well as data concerning stolen and lost travel documents and stolen vehicles. In countries where access to INTERPOL’s databases through I-24/7 remains limited to the NCB, INTERPOL has developed a practical, technical solution which enables frontline or other remotely located law enforcement officers (i.e. border police, immigration) to query relevant data stored in INTERPOL’s databases, even in cases where national databases may not exist or may be unavailable.

Always with a view to enhancing international police cooperation, INTERPOL strives to reinforce the human and institutional capacity of law enforcement in all member countries which require technical assistance.

Recognizing that law enforcement in certain countries faces particular challenges in effectively combating crime, often leading to specific needs and requests, INTERPOL provides extensive training and capacity building. INTERPOL periodically conducts targeted training, combined with joint regional police operations, to improve the exchange of information to more effectively combat transnational crimes.

INTERPOL – Fostering international cooperation **against drug trafficking**

As far as international police cooperation aimed at combating drug production and trafficking and related crimes is considered, INTERPOL is dedicated to assisting its member countries in two main ways:

- 1) On a daily, case-by-case basis, INTERPOL provides significant assistance to its member countries by facilitating cooperation and the development of transnational investigations. INTERPOL’s Command and Coordination Centre (CCC) provides member countries with immediate assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week in all four official INTERPOL languages (English, French, Spanish and Arabic). The CCC can contact INTERPOL’s specialized Criminal Organizations and Drugs Sub-Directorate for urgent cases and follow up;
- 2) In response to a specific criminal phenomenon or issue, INTERPOL can quickly establish a trend analysis, dedicated project or operation, based on a request from any member country communicated via its NCB.

Projects or operations undertaken in the field of combating illicit drug trafficking are managed by the “Criminal Organizations and Drugs Sub-Directorate”, whose work consists of the following main actions and initiatives:

- Assessing the issue at hand with the assistance of expert police guidance, and setting up common strategies;
- Creating a network of contact officers specialized in drug investigations;
- Gathering, collecting and exchanging relevant operational information, including information pertaining to real and/or active cases;
- When requested, creating a central repository of information for the benefit of investigators;
- Establishing dedicated working groups and arranging periodic meetings;
- Sharing analytical products of common interest;
- Deploying Incident Response Teams (IRTs) upon the request of a member country to provide on-the-ground assistance, especially with regards to the international aspects of an investigation;
- Issuing drug alerts or INTERPOL notices.¹

Presently, INTERPOL’s Criminal Organizations and Drugs Sub-Directorate, in cooperation with its member countries, other international partners and regional law enforcement organizations, is coordinating or partnering in several drug-related projects and operations.

¹ INTERPOL notices are international alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information on wanted or missing persons, unidentified bodies, or people or situations that present a risk to public safety. Notices are published by INTERPOL’s General Secretariat at the request of NCBs or other authorized entities, in any of the Organization’s official languages.

2. INTERPOL’s drug control activities in 2012-2013

1. Operational aspects

INTERPOL projects and operations

- **Project White Flow**

This project was launched in 2009 to focus on cocaine trafficking from South America via West Africa, mainly to Europe. Its overall goal is to connect and support investigations aimed at detecting and dismantling the criminal organizations involved in this illicit drug trafficking activity. The project was later extended to all African countries. As an immediate response to new modus operandi in drug trafficking to, through and from Africa, delegations of the 4th Operational Working Group Meeting, held in April 2013 in Lyon, followed INTERPOL’s proposal to end the White Flow project, and to transfer its main objectives to the new INTERFLOW Initiative (see below), which has a wider scope.

- **INTERFLOW initiative**

In recent years, drug trafficking in Africa has taken on a new dimension. Besides the well-known production and trafficking of cannabinoids within and outside Africa and the continent’s role as an import hub of cocaine on the way to Europe, illicit production and trafficking of methamphetamine has also become a threat, particularly in West and Southern Africa.

The discovery of illicit laboratories and the seizure of large amounts of chemical precursors underline the need to increase law enforcement activities at the national and international levels. In addition, heroin trafficking via East Africa to North America, Asia and Europe has become another challenge for law enforcement agencies in the region and globally.

For this reason, INTERPOL decided to extend the main focus of Project White Flow to a wider range of illicit drug-related transnational crimes, to also cover the production and trafficking of methamphetamine and heroin as well as precursors trafficking and diversion.

Taking into account that Project White Flow’s main objective was to assist investigators with active cases, facilitate the exchange of information and, when appropriate, bring law enforcement agencies together in closed sessions to exchange confidential information, the new INTERFLOW² Initiative shall continue using the same model as it has proven to be successful.

Recent major operations

- **Operation “Atakora” (Benin, Ghana and Togo)**

Held in July 2012, this INTERPOL-led activity began with a training session that was followed by an on-the-ground operation. More than 160 officers from Benin, Ghana and Togo were trained in a wide range of drug investigation technics, followed by a coordinated and successful operational activity.

² When it was first brought under discussion as a follow-up to Project White Flow, INTERFLOW was initially called the ‘New Africa initiative’. It was given its definitive title following an April 2013 meeting of participating member countries.

Drugs including cannabis, methamphetamine and large amounts of highly addictive pain killer tablets were among the seizures at airports, sea ports and land borders, and 74 individuals were arrested.

Atakora was funded by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

- **Operation “Ice Trail” (Middle East, Asia and the Pacific)**

This operation was launched by INTERPOL in 2010 to follow and support international investigations related to methamphetamine trafficking from the Islamic Republic of Iran via different routes to Southeast Asia and the Pacific. It ran until June 2013. In 2012 and 2013, two Operational Working Group Meetings in Tehran, Iran and Almaty, Kazakhstan each brought together more than 40 investigators from source, transit and final destination countries. The operation saw the seizure of significant quantities of methamphetamine, the dismantling of illegal laboratories, particularly in Iran, and the arrest of criminals involved in the production, smuggling and distribution of the illicit drug.
- **Operation “Icebreaker” (Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean)**

In October 2012 this operation, held in close cooperation with the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and the World Customs Organization (WCO), focused on the diversion and trafficking of chemical precursors used for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. More than 360 tonnes of chemicals, 200 kg of methamphetamine, cocaine and LDS, and USD 2 million in cash were seized, four illicit labs were dismantled and some 25 suspects were arrested. The operation was the outcome of a comprehensive INTERPOL Capacity Building Programme for the Americas on Organized Crime, funded by the Canadian government.
- **Operation “Lionfish” (Central America and the Caribbean)**

This operation was designed, prepared and executed in May and June 2013 to fight the maritime trafficking of drugs and firearms in Central America and the Caribbean by identifying, investigating and bringing to justice the perpetrators and dismantling their criminal networks. Nearly 30 tonnes of illicit drugs, including cocaine, heroin and marijuana were seized during the operation. In addition, participating authorities made 142 arrests and seized 15 vessels.

The operation took place at the end of the second phase of the Canadian government-funded INTERPOL Capacity Building Programme for the Americas on Organized Crime. It was led and organized by INTERPOL in close conjunction with the Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council (CCLEC) and the World Customs Organization (WCO). Operation Lionfish demonstrated the possibility of carrying out an inter-agency operation at a regional level, with successful results at global level, based on effective communication and coordination.
- **Operation “Westerlies” (routes from Africa to Southeast Asia)**

This operation was carried out in November 2012 by Japan Customs and WCO, with support from INTERPOL, as a reaction to the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine in some African countries and the trafficking via different routes to Southeast Asia, particularly Japan. The operation resulted in nearly 40 arrests and the seizure of EUR 15 million worth of drugs, including methamphetamine, amphetamine and cocaine.
- **Operation “Sky-Net” (global)**

This operation took place between September and October 2012, initiated by China Customs and WCO, with support from INTERPOL. It was aimed at fighting the trafficking of illicit drugs and chemical precursors through the post and courier services.

Authorities made some 940 drug seizures of more than six tonnes of drugs, including 1 tonne of cannabinoids, 160 kg of cocaine, nearly 200 kg of heroin and other opiates, plus other synthetic drugs. More than 500 individuals involved in the illicit trafficking were placed under investigation.

2. Strategic Cooperation

Cooperation with UNODC

Project AIRCOP – AIRCOP communication project

- AIRCOP is a joint project led by UNODC, in partnership with WCO and INTERPOL, which is funded by the EU and the Canadian government.
- The project aims at facilitating the exchange of information between international airports (primarily in Africa, with West Africa as its primary focus during the first stage of the project) through the creation of Joint Airport Interdiction Task Forces (JAITF) composed of different agencies working at the airports (police, customs, etc.).
- The objective of the task forces is to fight against drug trafficking and organized crime groups. The task forces are granted direct access to INTERPOL’s I-24/7 communications system to directly query its databases.

There are 14 countries participating in AIRCOP: 10 in West Africa, two in East Africa and two in Southern Africa. All 14 countries meet once a year to discuss best practices, the use of INTERPOL’s tools and service, and transnational operations.

Project AIRCOP Latin America / Caribbean (LAC)

In 2013, this project was expanded to the Latin American and Caribbean region. Phase 1 is focusing on three countries. In addition to enhance communication between drug origin, transit and destination countries, the project aims to enhance joint investigations and collaborative activities.

Project WACI – West Africa Coast Initiative

The West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) is a partnership programme involving UNODC, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and INTERPOL. Its aim is to support the ECOWAS Action Plan to address the issue of illicit drug trafficking and organized crime. It is a collaborative effort aimed at providing advisory services, equipment, technical and operational assistance, and specialized training.

A key element of this programme is the establishment of Transnational Crime Units (TCUs), elite inter-agency units specially trained to fight transnational organized crime and to coordinate law enforcement activities in an international framework.

Officials making up the TCUs will be seconded from existing priority law enforcement agencies, integrating them into a single unit where they will work together on a daily basis. In this way, the expertise from different law enforcement sectors will be combined into one unit, creating positive synergies that lead to more efficient, proactive and effective law enforcement activities.

TCUs will also be responsible for international coordination – including cooperation with INTERPOL – of the fight against transnational crime, serving as the focal point for any international activities and cross-border matters.

Because the units will act as national coordinating focal points, strong collaboration with the INTERPOL NCB in each of the WACI countries is a core feature of the TCU concept.

The role of INTERPOL within WACI is to:

- Provide the participating countries with secure communication tools and access to its police information system;
- Contribute to strengthening the capacity of TCUs and NCBs to effectively address all aspects of drug-related organized crime.

CARICC - Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors.

In 2012, INTERPOL and CARICC signed a cooperation agreement granting CARICC direct access to and the use of INTERPOL's police information system. After a dedicated training course in March 2013, CARICC is fully able to directly access INTERPOL's databases, with a specific focus on drug-related investigations.

In April 2013, CARICC hosted an Operational Working Group Meeting on the illicit methamphetamine trade, co-organized with INTERPOL, which focused on INTERPOL's Operation Ice Trail and on future operational cooperation between the two organizations.

Terrorism and drug trafficking interactivity.

In the framework of INTERPOL's Project Kalkan, which concentrates on terrorism in Central and South Asia, a meeting focusing on narco-terrorism was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan in April 2012 in cooperation with CARICC and the UNODC. This event brought together counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics officers from key countries in Central Asia and from other region of the world.

A range of issues were discussed and operational cases were presented by the participants, focusing on the coordination of operations and investigations to detect the interactivity of terrorist organizations and transnational drug trafficking groups in Central Asia and neighbouring regions.

Paris Pact

Cooperation within the framework of the Paris Pact initiative

INTERPOL is a partner in the Paris Pact initiative, a broad international coalition of more than 70 countries and international organizations, which represents one of the most important frameworks in the fight against opiates originating in Afghanistan. It aims at the reduction of illicit trafficking in opiates, reduction of opium poppy cultivation, levels of production and global consumption of heroin and other opiates.

Efforts under the Paris Pact initiative are aimed, among others, at the fight against money laundering, the illicit trafficking/diversion of chemical precursors and strengthening of international and regional cooperation.

- Detecting and blocking financial flows

INTERPOL participated to the Second Technical Working Group on Financial Flows Linked to Illicit Production and Trafficking of Afghan Opiates held in Abu Dhabi in 2011. The outcome of the meeting, co-organized by the United Arab Emirates and UNODC, included a number of recommendations:

- The creation of a database of cases and typologies of events;
- An assessment of current needs by the countries in the region;
- The encouragement to mainstream financial investigations related to counternarcotic operations through education and training.

INTERPOL is working to effectively contribute to the implementation these recommendations, by facilitating concrete transnational cooperation among law enforcement agencies in its member countries in the fight against money laundering; and organizing working meetings aimed at bringing together specialized law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and investigative judges to:

- Exchange case information/best practices
 - Create mutual understanding/networking
 - Agree on joint action/operations.
- **Diversion of precursor chemicals in illegal circulation for manufacturing drugs in Afghanistan**

In this area, INTERPOL has a long-lasting cooperation with the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). With regards to heroin production and trafficking, INTERPOL is partner in the INCB’s Project Cohesion Task Force which targets precursors used in the manufacturing of heroin.

The main objectives of INTERPOL’s involvement are to support risk assessment and to initiate, support and coordinate backtracking investigations.

- **Strengthening and implementing regional initiatives on combating Afghan drug trafficking**

The importance of cooperating with regional law enforcement organizations was acknowledged by the INTERPOL General Assembly through its adoption of the resolution AG-2006-RES-07 in 2006 which supports regional policing initiatives.

In compliance with this resolution, in 2012 CARICC and INTERPOL signed a previously mentioned cooperation agreement, which gives CARICC direct access to INTERPOL’s police information system.

Cooperation with other partners

International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)

Cooperation within INCB precursor task forces

INTERPOL actively participates in the INCB precursor task forces, focusing on chemical precursors used for the illicit manufacture of amphetamines, cocaine and heroin. The Organization’s main objective is to initiate and support backtracking investigations and to include chemical precursor-related knowledge and trends to INTERPOL-led training sessions and operations.

Pompidou Group

Cooperation with the Pompidou Group

The Pompidou Group’s core mission is to contribute to the development of multidisciplinary, innovative, effective and evidence-based drug policies in its 35 member countries. INTERPOL participates in different forums and initiatives under the framework of the Pompidou Group, including the Pompidou Precursor Network and the Airport Group.

INTERPOL participated in a Pompidou Group conference, delivering a presentation on the role of INTERPOL with relation to information exchange, coordination and networking among law enforcement agencies. The aims of this conference were threefold:

- To examine the mechanisms of information exchange between law enforcement agencies and regulatory authorities, to improve coordination on a national level;
- To raise awareness of opportunities for national regulatory and law enforcement agencies to use existing international cooperation tools in their efforts to prevent the diversion of drug precursors;
- To contribute to the improvement of interagency cooperation on an international level, through the open exchange of views on issues of general concern.

In Strasbourg, France in 2012, INTERPOL participated in the 7th Meeting of the Permanent Correspondents and High Level Conference of the Pompidou Group.

Project WAPIS – West African Police Information System

Sharing and managing police data related to organized crime is the aim of the INTERPOL West African Police Information System (WAPIS) Programme, launched in November 2012.

Developed by INTERPOL, the WAPIS Programme is part of an EU-funded project initiated during Belgium's presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2010. The project facilitates the collection, centralization, management, sharing and analysis of police information among countries belonging to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Mauritania.

The WAPIS Programme forms one of the pillars of the EU's Cocaine Route Programme and is financed through the European Commission's Instrument for Stability. It will enhance the exchange of criminal information among West African countries themselves, and with the rest of the world, using modern policing tools to fight threats posed by organized crime and terrorism.

Besides the EU and the pilot countries, ECOWAS is also a crucial partner of the WAPIS Programme.

Europol

Cooperation with Europol

In the field of combating drug-related crimes, INTERPOL cooperates closely with Europol in the context of different initiatives.

A cooperation is already in place with reference to the analysis work file (now Focal Point) COLA on cocaine trafficking, while discussions are ongoing for the association of INTERPOL to the AWFs Heroin (on illicit heroin trafficking and production) and Synergy (on illicit trafficking and production of synthetic drugs).

Within the framework of the new 'EU Policy Cycle for organized and serious international crime', INTERPOL is actively involved in several of Europol's operational action plans (OAP), either dedicated to combating drug trafficking, or where combating drug trafficking is among the main objectives.

- OAP West Africa - aimed at weakening the capacity of active criminal organizations to traffic cocaine and heroin through West Africa to Europe and other destinations;
- OAP Western Balkans - to mitigate the role of the Western Balkans region as a key transit and storage zone for illicit commodities, particularly drugs, destined for the EU and other destinations, as well as a primary logistical base for organized crime groups;
- OAP Synthetic Drugs – designed to reduce the production and distribution of synthetic drugs, including new psychoactive substances (final decision-making in process).