

Expert consultation on improving drug statistics and strengthening the Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ)

UNODC Concept Note

Background

Strengthening the production, collection, dissemination and analysis of accurate, reliable and comparable statistical data on drugs is a crucial element in the overall strategy to address the drug problem. This need has been reiterated in a number of resolutions and documents by the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Commission on Narcotics Drugs (CND).

More recently, the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly in April 2016 highlighted the value of reliable, comparable, objective and quality statistics across all drug domains and it also indicated a number of new areas where there is a need to strengthen relevant statistics to improve understanding of emerging challenges (see list in the annex).

In March 2017, at its 48th session, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) examined a comprehensive International Roadmap to improve statistics on drugs (the “Roadmap”) and “...having reviewed and recognised the statistical merits of the roadmap, commended it for the consideration of the CND to ensure harmonization with the policy directions of the CND; and in this regard, encouraged collaboration between the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs”. (See UNSC Report on the 48th session, E/2017/24-E/CN.3/2017/35.)

Furthermore, at the 60th session in March 2017, the CND adopted resolution 60/1, highlighting the importance of strengthening the capacity to develop reporting mechanisms, including by identifying gaps in the current drug statistics and by exploring possibilities to strengthen existing data collection and analysis tools at the national level. In addition, the CND invited UNODC, in close cooperation with Member States, to reflect on possibilities to strengthen and streamline its existing data-collection and analysis tools, including improving the quality and effectiveness of the annual report questionnaire (ARQ).

Against this backdrop, an Expert Consultation will be organized by UNODC as a first step to reflect on ways to improve the current data collection on drugs, including the ARQ, and to discuss activities to support countries in the production of drug relevant statistics, as for example indicated by the Roadmap.

Objective

The Expert Consultation will take place in Vienna in the period late January to mid-February 2018 – prior to the sixty-first session of the CND – and it will focus on two areas:

1. *Reflect on how to strengthen and streamline UNODC mandated drug data-collection tools.*

The meeting will discuss options to improve the current data collections on drugs with respect to content and process. In particular the meeting will: i) assess data availability, quality and use as emerging from the analysis of multi-year data collection, utilization and dissemination and discuss possible modifications which could improve accuracy and comparability of reported data; ii) analyze the ARQ data collection process to identify possible improvements at national and global level; and iii) discuss how the requests included in the UNGASS Outcome Document for new data and statistics can best be addressed in the mandated UNODC data collection instruments on drugs.

2. *Capacity building.*

The meeting will discuss priorities in terms of activities and outputs needed to strengthen drug national data systems particularly in terms of capacity building and methodological development considering also ways to strengthen national and international partnerships.

A technical assessment of UNODC drug-related data collection will be conducted by UNODC prior to the Expert Consultation and presented thereto.

Participants in the expert consultation are expected to include national experts from drug-related institutions who collect and analyze drug statistics (for example persons who fill out the ARQ and/or from national observatories), experts working in National Statistical Offices, experts responsible for drug-related data working in international and multi-national organizations, and academics with expertise in the measurement and analysis of the drug problem. Efforts will be made to ensure a balanced participation of demand and supply experts together with experts from other topics related to the drug problem (for example organized crime, illicit financial flows, the darknet). The participation of experts from developing countries is crucial and all efforts will be made to ensure an equal representation of regional groups. Donors have been approached to support the participation of a minimum of 4 experts from each of the following 4 regions in need: Latin America, Africa, Asia-Pacific and East Europe/Central Asia.

The main outcome of the consultation will be a report to be submitted to the CND as a room document to inform the Commission on the possible avenues to undertake to improve the quality and availability of drug statistics.

UNODC activities for the organization of the Expert Consultation

In order to organize the expert consultation and prepare the relevant background documentation, UNODC will undertake the following activities:

1. Conduct a technical assessment of UNODC drug-related data collection in terms of availability, quality and use of its data and information. It will review the ARQ data collection and reporting processes (both at national level and within UNODC) to enhance its effectiveness and quality and prepare a proposal on statistical themes and qualitative information that address the information needs identified by the UNGASS Outcome Document;
2. In order to facilitate preparation and fruitful participation by the experts in the consultation, UNODC will send a preliminary version of the technical assessment to Member States prior to the meeting, as well as a questionnaire to gather feedback on areas to explore during the consultation;
3. Organize the Expert Consultation with experts from national institutions, representatives of relevant regional and international organisations and other scientific experts with expertise in the measurement and analysis of the drug problem. UNODC will prepare specific Terms of Reference for the profile of national experts to attend the consultation;
4. Present a room document to the Commission of Narcotic Drugs for its consideration (March 2018);
5. Present the same report to the 49th Session of UN Statistical Commission (March 2018) as follow up to the discussion that took place at its 48th Session.

Contact:

Mr. Enrico Bisogno
Chief, Data Development and Dissemination Unit
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
+43 1 26060 4426
enrico.bisogno@unodc.org

ANNEX:

Extracts promoting data collection in areas not covered by the Annual Report Questionnaire from the outcome document of the Thirtieth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly¹

Promote and improve the systematic collection of information and gathering of evidence as well as the sharing, at the national and international levels, of reliable and comparable data on drug use and epidemiology, including on social, economic and other risk factors, and promote, as appropriate, through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the World Health Assembly, the use of internationally recognized standards, such as the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention, and the exchange of best practices, to formulate effective drug use prevention strategies and programmes in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization and other relevant United Nations entities;

Promote data collection, research and the sharing of information, as well as the exchange of best practices on preventing and countering drug-related crime and on drug supply reduction measures and practices, in order to enhance the effectiveness of criminal justice responses, within the framework of applicable law;

Respond to the serious challenges posed by the increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in persons, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and money-laundering, and, in some cases, terrorism, including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism, by using an integrated, multidisciplinary approach, such as through promoting and supporting reliable data collection, research and, as appropriate, intelligence- and analysis-sharing to ensure effective policymaking and interventions;

Improve the availability and quality of statistical information and analysis of illicit drug cultivation, production and manufacturing, drug trafficking, money-laundering and illicit financial flows, including for appropriate reflection in reports of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board, in order to better measure and evaluate the impact of such crimes and to further enhance the effectiveness of criminal justice responses in that regard.

Continue to identify and monitor trends in the composition, production, prevalence and distribution of new psychoactive substances, as well as patterns of use and adverse consequences, and assess the risks to health and safety of individuals and society as a whole and the potential uses of new psychoactive substances for medical and scientific purposes, and on that basis to develop and strengthen domestic and national legislative, regulatory,

¹ Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem', A/RES/S-30/1, Annex.

administrative and operational responses and practices by domestic and national legislative, law enforcement, judiciary, social and welfare, educational and health authorities;

Support research, data collection, analysis of evidence and sharing of information and strengthen law enforcement, criminal justice and legal responses, as well as international cooperation, to prevent and counter drug-related criminal activities using the Internet, consistent with relevant and applicable law.