Background

The Network of Prosecutors against Organized Crime (REFCO)\(^1\) is an initiative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, funded by the Government of Canada, which began in 2009 and was launched with its first meeting in March 2011. Members of the network include 10 prosecution offices from Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama.

Objectives

The aim of the network is to strengthen the investigation and prosecution of serious and organized crime and facilitate regional and international cooperation.

Activities

Network plenary meetings:

- Two network plenary meetings are held every year to review past activities and set the priorities for the coming six months;
- Plenary meetings are held in conjunction with meetings of the Council of Attorney Generals of Central America in order to link REFCO activities to the priorities of the Attorney Generals of the region.

National and regional workshops:

- To provide support and technical assistance
- To strengthen the structures of organized crime prosecutions and increase specialization
- To promote communication through a shared platform to discuss challenges in investigations/prosecutions

\(^1\)REFCO is the Spanish acronym for Red de Fiscales contra el Crimen Organizado.
Technical coordination meetings:
- To exchange information and conduct joint transnational investigations
- To draw up a common strategy between two or more countries to dismantle criminal groups

Exchange programme:
- To promote mutual trust
- To identify best practices
- To foster regional cooperation
Results

More than 600 prosecutors from 11 prosecution offices have participated in activities in person or by video conference.

Strengthening national structures to prosecute organized crime

- Support to the establishment of an extortion unit in Honduras
- Implementation of wire tapping legislation in El Salvador

Technical cooperation in high-profile cases of transnational crime

- Between prosecutors of Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador to collect evidence and dismantle a transnational organized vehicle trafficking group.

Identification of best practices to investigate organized crime

- Sharing of good practices between prosecutors in Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic

Endorsement of the Council of Attorney Generals

- The Council of Attorney Generals has identified REFCO as the channel for carrying out initiatives in the region to fight against organized crime.
National workshops 2012
- Wiretapping, El Salvador
- Organized crime, Guatemala
- Extortion, Honduras

Regional workshops 2011/2012
- Trafficking for illegal adoption, Nicaragua
- Front companies, Nicaragua
- Criminal groups, El Salvador
- Extortion, El Salvador
- Money-laundering, Panama
- Organized crime, Dominican Republic
- Theft and vehicle robbery, Guatemala
- Investigative methodology in organized crime, Colombia

Technical coordination meetings in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, 2012

International forums to discuss initiatives and recommendations for the investigation and prosecution of organized crime, 2011/2012:
- Eurojust, cooperation with developing countries in the fight against drug trafficking, Poland
- AIAMP, Good practices in the investigation of drug trafficking and money-laundering offences, Uruguay
- Plenary meeting of the AIAMP, Brazil
- Transnational cooperation in the prevention and fight against terrorism and financing, Colombia
The REFCO newsletter is published approximately four times a year. It contains the opinions of prosecutors and information on the activities of public prosecution offices.

REFCO coordinates with other organizations such as, the ABA, IAAMP, Iber-Red, the OAS, the USDOJ.

Website and database active since May 2012: www.refco.org.pa

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