Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries
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Illicit drug trafficking, its associated crime and the harmful effects to health act as major hindrances to social and economic progress in the region and beyond.

The development and implementation of effective programmes to mitigate, reduce and eliminate this harm requires a coordinated approach.

The Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries is UNODC’s framework to support the countries of West and Central Asia to develop regional and international joint responses to counter the harmful impact of illicit narcotics trafficking on security, governance and social economic development.

The RP recognizes that the solution to the Afghan drug problem lies in an integrated regional response requiring strong commitment and political will from countries of the region alongside dedicated contributions of the international community based on principles of shared responsibility.

The RP aims to enhance counter-narcotics capacities across the region resulting in overall increased operational impact. It does this through: streamlined coordination and facilitation of regional cooperation; targeted allocation of required resources; and provision of technical assistance for regional cooperation to countries of the region. The RP is designed for a balanced approach between supply and demand.

The overall vision of the RP is for countries of the region and their institutions to be substantially strengthened and working together cooperatively to counter the destabilizing impact of illicit drugs and crime.

For more than a decade, Afghanistan has been at the epicenter of the global illicit opiate trade, accounting for over 80% of production. Trafficking of opium out of, and precursors into Afghanistan occurs in all directions, but is focused on three major routes, the Southern, Northern and Balkan Routes.

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Since its launch in 2011, the RP has become the centerpiece of a new strategy to harmonize programmes at country, regional and global levels. The RP aligns activities with the Country Programmes for Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and the Programme for Central Asia to ensure complementarity and economics of scale with regards to efficient programming and sharing and resources. This is further illustrated by cooperation between the RP and the Global Programmes such as the Global Programme on Money Laundering, the Container Control Programme and the Afghan Opiate Trade Project.

**Phase II of the RP (2016-2019) aims to boost regional cooperation and trust building by continuing to sponsor regional events that bring senior officials, policy makers and practitioners together to discuss common problems and common solutions. It also aims to boost impact by working on practical roadmaps, action plans and regional operations.**

The RP covers eight countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
INTER-REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY TO COUNTER NARCOTICS

The RP connects West and Central Asia with neighbouring regions through Networking the Networks Initiative, which supports, among other work, the linking of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) and the Joint Planning Cell (JPC) with Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) and the Gulf Criminal Intelligence Centre (GCIC).

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

At the strategic level, the RP coordinates closely with the Paris Pact Initiative and also the Heart of Asia (Istanbul) Process. It is the primary delivery operational vehicle for the Paris Pact Initiative, helping translate the recommendations of the expert working groups into action. The RP is also engaged with the Counter-Narcotics Confidence-Building-Measures of the Heart of Asia (Istanbul) Process and is helping to deliver the goals and outcomes pursued by that Group. Existing complementarity between the Heart of Asia Process and Paris Pact - a partnership of countries more closely neighbouring Afghanistan is further enhanced by the RP’s effective, on-going engagement with both initiatives.
GOVERNANCE

A Programme Steering Committee (PSC) consisting of Heads of Drug Agencies of Member Countries is the premier governance body of the Regional Programme. The PSC meets on a yearly basis, usually on the margins of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna to agree on strategic priorities and future direction of the RP. However, it held its first meeting in the region in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in May 2015. During this meeting, Member Countries unanimously endorsed the continuation of the RP into a second phase (2016 – 2019), expressing their strong interest to continue to actively participate in the Programme to build on effective, training, capacity building, networking, and information sharing activities, which are continuing to deliver tangible outcomes.

Development of the second phase of the RP has been informed by extensive discussions with partner agencies in all 8 Member Countries. In total, the RP's Senior Management held meetings with over 150 senior officials in Member Countries to discuss and agree on priority areas of focus.

SECRETARIAT

The RP’s Secretariat is co-located between Kabul, Afghanistan and Tashkent, Uzbekistan with the Senior Programme Coordinator and Sub-Programme Coordinators residing in Islamabad, Kabul, Tashkent, and Tehran respectively. The RP also has support staff located in all member countries.
PROGRAMME DESIGN & DELIVERY

In order to provide an effective platform for cooperation, joint working and confidence-building between Afghanistan and its neighbours to deliver a holistic approach to countering narcotics, the RP focuses activity on four thematic areas, namely Regional Law Enforcement Cooperation (SPI), International / Regional Cooperation in Legal Matters (SPII), Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependence including Vulnerable Groups (SPIII), and Trends and Impact (IV).

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION (SPI)

- The Law Enforcement Cooperation Sub-Programme focuses on enhancing law enforcement capacities, developing regional law enforcement coordination mechanisms, and promoting cooperation through (i) sharing information, coordination and cooperation, (ii) capacity building through coordinated regional training, and (iii) development of regional capacity in forensics and precursors to strengthen investigation and prosecution of cross border crimes.

- These interventions are helping in delivering substantial seizures of narcotics and related arrests.

INTERNATIONAL / REGIONAL COOPERATION IN LEGAL MATTERS (SPII)

- Sub-Programme 2 strengthens the capacity of relevant national institutions to better cooperate across borders in criminal matters. Interventions include: provision of training on judicial cooperation and harmonization of legislative frameworks, capacity building in areas of Joint Investigations, Cybercrime, Controlled Delivery operations, Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Corruption, and Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants as well as providing support to enhance cooperation in Mutual Legal Assistance, Extradition and Transfer of foreign Prisoners. It also supports creation of a network of contacts among judicial institutions in the region in addition to the on-going operation of Central Authorities (based on UN Drugs and Crime Conventions). Another important focus of Sub-Programme 2 is on improving seizures of the proceeds of illicit drugs and precursors trafficking. Relevant legislation and model Agreements / MoUs have and continue to be shared regionally alongside prioritization of capacity-building of national authorities to support them in the pursuit of criminal profits from drug related crimes. Going forward, one of the priorities will be given to support regional FIU to FIU Cooperation and a regional Anti-Money Laundry Group Experts.

- SP 2 provides technical guidance and practical, case-based assistance with the aim of building on notable achievements such as the signing of Memorandums of Understanding between RP Member States on Mutual Legal Assistant, extradition, intelligence sharing, and the exchange of foreign prisoners.
PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF DRUG DEPENDENCE INCLUDING VULNERABLE GROUPS (SP III)

• Sub-Programme 3 undertakes a comprehensive programme of activities aimed at prevention and treatment of drug dependence among vulnerable groups through a focus on promotion of international best practice in diagnosis and treatment provision, training of health care professionals in such delivery, and provision of comprehensive harm reduction services to improve prevention and treatment modalities in the region.

• It supports the strengthening of regional collaboration on drug dependence prevention, treatment and care, and the exchange of practices amongst regional centres on research and training.

• Priority activities have focused on the provision of comprehensive treatment services to drug dependent Afghan refugees and returnees, strengthening the capacity of health and other related professionals in delivering diversified and scientific-based drug dependence treatment and care (including pharmacological and psychosocial treatment social health services including HIV related prevention and care, and rehabilitation and reintegration services), the development and expansion of the internationally recognised FAST Programme dedicated to promoting evidence-based family-skills training to deliver harm reduction, support to the development of drug-demand reduction policies, and training of health-care and enforcement professionals to deliver appropriate interventions and responses to drug dependent individuals and prisoners.

TRENDS AND IMPACT (SPIV)

• Sub-Programme 4 is strengthening capacities in data generation, collection, analysis and reporting to meet the need for evidence-based policies and interventions to counter narcotics in the region whilst also expanding the understanding of narcotics cultivation and trafficking and related illicit financial flows, development and societal harms of drug misuse and abuse.

• The cross cutting nature of trends and impacts necessitates close cooperation between SP 4 and other law enforcement, criminal justice and drug demand reduction activities of the RP. Region-wide capacity building is aimed at the raising of standards and abilities to enable regional trend analysis.

• In recognition of the need for the active engagement between different actors, SP4 also provides a platform for constructive dialogue, and engagement between civil society, the media and counter-narcotics professionals in order to enable delivery of holistic challenges. It also supports the promotion of regional support for Alternative Development Initiatives in Afghanistan.

SPs I, II and IV will support delivery of the Counter-Narcotics Confidence-Building-Measures of the Heart of Asia (Istanbul) Process.
SPECIAL INITIATIVES

AKT
The Afghanistan-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan (AKT) Initiative is aimed at strengthening cross-border cooperation in law enforcement and legal matters between these countries at the starting point of the Northern Route for trafficking narcotics from Afghanistan.

TI
The Triangular Initiative (TI) is composed of three countries including the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The overall objective of this initiative is to improve communication and strengthen cooperation against illicit trafficking of drugs and precursor chemicals. Under the TI, biannual meetings at Senior Officials level as well as Ministerial levels are held and the member states review the progress so as to take remedial actions.

CASH
The CASH Initiative was launched in January 2012 to enhance the capacity of countries in West and Central Asia to better address cross-border illicit money flows and to facilitate exchange of experience and best practices on matters related to anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT). So far under the CASH Initiative, eleven regional meetings of national Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) of RP countries have been organized along with several meetings of sub-regional Financial Intelligence Units (among the TI and AKT countries). Moreover, the RP model bilateral MoU on AML/CFT was developed and shared with the Regional Programme countries. Some countries have already signed the MoU on AML / CFT which has helped them to establish a stronger legal basis for regional cooperation on AML / CFT as well as exchange requests / information on “Suspicious Financial Transactions”.

PHASE II
The second phase of the RP will build and expand on successes from the first phase. It is more a more ambitious programme that includes lessons and learned and recommendations from the recent independent evaluation of the programme to maximize limited resources for the formulation and delivery of priority activities to support Afghanistan and its neighbours in countering narcotics.

Overall budget of the Regional Programme USD (including Programme Support Costs)

It is estimated that UNODC will require USD 40.9 million to implement the extension phase of the Regional Programme (2016 to 2019).

Sub-Programme 1: USD 11.3 million
Sub-Programme 2: USD 9.6 million
Sub-Programme 3: USD 10.2 million
Sub-Programme 4: USD 9.8 million