

SUMMARY MEETING REPORT

INTEGRITY OF COUNTER NARCOTICS AND JUSTICE SECTOR INSTITUTIONS:

The role of anti-corruption measures in the effective fight against drug trafficking & organized crime

I. Background:

Integrity, accountability and resilience against the influences and threats from organised crime groups are essential to ensure that law enforcement units working on drug-trafficking and related offences, can carry out their work effectively. If those elements are not in place or not put into practice, the detection, investigation and prosecution of offences might be jeopardized. The impact can be felt at the national level, but also across borders where criminal networks operate across countries or continents.

Many initiatives supporting the fight against trafficking of drugs and contraband have not yet analysed and addressed corruption risks more comprehensively. Law enforcement agencies and officers working on drug related and organised crime though, need dedicated training and support systems due to their exposed position.

The special event outlined approaches on institutional integrity implemented under the CRIMJUST project (2016-2020), which is focusing on several countries along the Cocaine Route across Latin America, the Caribbean and West Africa. In addition, the event showcased how civil society can support criminal justice institutions in the assessment of vulnerability to corruption and help in the development of mitigating measures or advocacy for more resources and political support. The special event provided expert input as well as room for conversation and debate, highlighting the critical issues and promoting active knowledge exchange between participants. It aimed at increasing awareness in the anti-corruption community, supporting exchange of experiences and advocate for more financial support from donors.

II. Outline:

The Chair, Constanze von Soehnen, opened the event and thanked the participants, in particular States parties participating in the CRIMJUST project, donors and strategic partners such as INTERPOL, Transparency International and the World Customs Organization. She underlined recent resolutions such as the *Doha Declaration on Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice into the Wider United Nations Agenda* and *resolutions 5/4 and 6/6/ of the Conference of States parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*, in which the Conference had expressed concern about the link between corruption and organised crime and requested States parties to strengthen integrity in the entire criminal justice chain, including police and prosecutions.

Tofik Murshudlu, the Chief of the Implementation Support Section of the Organised Crime Branch, provided an overview of the worldwide cocaine flows and drew the attention of the audience to increased cocaine seizures in the past decade as well as increased coca cultivation in some countries. He then presented the CRIMJUST project, a European Union funded project to “Strengthening criminal investigation and criminal justice cooperation along the cocaine route in Latin America, the Caribbean and West Africa”, which is implemented by UNODC in partnership with INTERPOL and Transparency International. The project focuses on three areas, capacity building of criminal justice actors, regional and interregional cooperation between criminal justice institutions, and institutional integrity. The delivery of activities focuses on the inter-

regional nature of organised crime and attempts to tackle it with a holistic approach and synergies with other projects. In the first year of implementation 44 capacity building activities had been carried out, reaching 1202 participants. He underlined that the increased effectiveness of counter narcotics units, resulting in more seizures and ultimately cases, would put drug-traffickers and organized crime groups under pressure to react. This would mean a likely increase of efforts of organized-crime groups to infiltrate relevant units, threaten officers and resort to bribery.

Constanze von Soehnen and Virginia De Abajo-Marques, followed with a presentation on Institutional Integrity. They explained that next to the CRIMJUST project also other activities such as the *Judicial Integrity Network* were making important contributions to enhance integrity and accountability in the criminal justice sector. In order to complement those other initiative, UNODC under CRIMJUST started to focus primarily on integrity of counter narcotics units and will now, in addition, expand work to integrity of prosecution authorities. The lessons learnt and impact of the CRIMJUST project could be useful in the fight against other forms of trafficking of illicit goods.

Counter narcotics units which are often composed of staff from different institutions such as customs, police, or military and are therefore guided by different operational and administrative regulations. In 2017 an online survey had been carried out in key institutions of the CRIMJUST target and associate countries to gather information on existing integrity measures. The survey results were presented and discussed during an inter-regional meeting in Panama in January 2017, which also provided experts with the opportunity to share their experiences and identify common challenges. Subsequently a desk-based research report was drafted to form the basis for future support to the countries. The report and follow-up measures focused on three broad areas, 1) Selection, training and vetting procedures, 2) case management and standard operating procedures, and 3) disciplinary procedures, reporting mechanisms and oversight. UNODC has now started to support countries in various ways, such as the development of an integrity training for counter-narcotics officers, corruption risk assessments and study visits. Apart from continuous advocacy for the subject, the next steps would be to intensify work on prosecutorial integrity and to raise awareness in the donor community to the need for additional financial support for such initiatives.

Zoe Reiter and Arielle Joshep from Transparency International concluded with a presentation on ways how civil society organisations under CRIMJUST try to support the objective of strengthening integrity and accountability of justice institutions and ending impunity. During the first year of implementation, an assessment tool, the *Criminal Justice Dashboard*, had been developed to assess criminal justice institutions in regard to seven areas: Internal and external oversight, protections, transparency, civil society participation, capacity and independence. Civil society organisations in several countries are now starting to apply the assessment methodology to assist in the identification of gaps, best practices and lessons learnt, make concrete recommendations how to close those gaps and support advocacy for criminal justice institutions to have sufficient resources and independence to carry out their functions without undue influence.

In the subsequent open discussion it became clear that collaboration with civil society in this area is still rare and that more constructive dialogue could be useful to join hands in the common goal to prevent and fight corruption as well as organised crime and drug trafficking. Different indices produced by civil society organisations would have different value. Perception based indicators, for instance, can be very useful to get a snapshot of the views of a constituency or clients. The results might indicate that more dialogue and transparency about anti-corruption measures, disciplinary and criminal sanctions might be needed. Experience based indicators are useful to gather information on concrete cases of corruption, in particular bribery. Specific assessments, such as the Dashboard, Corruption risk assessments or need assessments can then, in addition, put a spotlight on a specific sector or institution to generate more concrete information.

