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GEG PRESENTATION ON THE MEM TO THE
CICAD XXXI REGULAR SESSION
(April 29 – May 2, 2002)

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I. INTRODUCTION

During the last two weeks, the CICAD Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) Governmental Experts Group (GEG) completed the first set of working papers, which will ultimately be transformed into the second round evaluative country reports reflecting the drug control progress in the Hemisphere for participating OAS States. As the CICAD Commissioners represent the substantive and political anchor for the work of the GEG, and now that the MEM process is in its second round, we are grateful for this opportunity to provide a report on the status of our work.

Based upon our considerable experience to date, we also have specific recommendations that we respectfully submit to you as counter narcotics commissioners. We believe these recommendations can strengthen and enhance the power of the MEM, a process which is quickly evolving in a very positive way. The GEG seeks your guidance to serve our ultimate goal, which is to fortify the MEM as a truly unique and effective tool for cooperating states to confront the illegal drug menace and its companion crimes which negatively impact virtually every other objective we have from the political, economic and social perspective of the Hemisphere. From the human standpoint, the GEG is becoming a truly cohesive group. As Paul Kennedy of Canada suggested to us when we launched our work earlier this month, GEG workers are transforming themselves into a collective, “corporate” body, which seeks to efficiently identify the problems we face, from the standpoint of our mandate, so that we can develop practical solutions to overcome them.

II. METHODOLOGY

Having been through the exercise once, the GEG during its most recent session substantially reduced the time needed for philosophical reflection, rapidly determined its plan of action and immediately set out to work. Preparatory to dividing into five working groups, each with responsibility for five or six of the MEM countries, we assigned new coordinators to guide us: Alvaro Ahumada, of Chile, in the chair, and Ornel Brooks of Belize, as his deputy. With an outline design for country reports established as well as concrete editorial guidance in hand, members of individual groups were assigned one or two countries to work on prior to editorial review and approval of the reports for presentation and adoption in plenary.

Although we are working this time with 83 indicators as opposed to some 60 in the first round, the new specificity of the indicators and, for the most part, quality of responses, allowed the GEG to produce highly detailed working papers for each country which help to facilitate identification of individual country strengths and weaknesses so as to

produce fair analyses of performance. Indeed, we believe that the great detail and, obvious honesty in responding to indicators by countries will continue to facilitate more substantive, focused relevant recommendations.

With only two exceptions, the GEG completed working documents for CICAD member states which will now be returned to countries for their input and comment at the GEG's next two editorial meetings in July and September before the individual country reports and Hemispheric analysis are presented to CICAD Commission for its approval in December prior to final publication at the end of this year.

We can tell you, that the working documents at the moment are just that: working documents. There remains a great deal of work and dialogue between the GEG and national drug control entities to perfect them and make them ready for the final evaluation. To that end, as an adjunct to the first GEG written products to date, we are asking countries, as needed, to clarify, add information, provide explanations where conflicting information is supplied and offer all the commentary they wish on the GEG's current analysis of performance. The GEG also considers recommendations provided as necessary for the continued participatory development of the MEM. To ensure success, we want to provide countries with recommendations that are pertinent, prioritized and relevant.

III. GUIDANCE FROM COMMISSIONERS

Keeping in mind that we are involved in a dynamic process, the GEG seeks instruction from the CICAD Commission on a number of fronts to ensure the healthy evolution and success of the MEM process. Some of our ideas relate directly to the documents we are producing in the second round. Other suggestions are put before you as ways to affirm the MEM as a credible and accepted way of advancing drug and crime control objectives in the Hemisphere.

A. Need for Quality, Readable Reports

In this round, we are striving as a group to improve the quality and presentation of MEM documents to make them user friendly for a wide range of audiences from experts to the layman. In this sense, we are striving to make our writing straightforward and in the context of national challenges. As experts, we don't want readers to get buried in detail. Nevertheless, we are working hard to make sure that statistical data and charts which make it easy to assess the status of implementation of recommendations can ultimately become part of our reports.

Having said that, and based upon our most recent experience, OAS/CICAD member states must be congratulated for the seriousness of their approach in responding to indicators, which obviously reflects their appreciation of the MEM's potential as an effective and persuasive mechanism. The GEG, the CICAD Commission and the entire Hemisphere understand this. For its part, the GEG is determined to foster a high quality

MEM process which is clearly recognized as such by the full range of audiences throughout the Hemisphere.

B. Judicious Use of Outside Information Sources

Within the scope of the GEG's current rules, we are basing our writing on three essential documents. These include the country reports from the first round, the report on implementation of recommendations from the first round and the most recent set of 83 indicators to which country's responded. In most cases, these existing documents are providing essential information we need to produce fair and accurate reporting, evaluation and recommendations. At the same time, in some instances information is lacking. In one case, a country failed to respond to 33 indicators, while in the case of Guyana, they have not named an expert nor responded to the questionnaires. Via written communication, we are urging the countries to take another look at the indicators and to respond concretely, even if the response is in the negative with a suitable explanation, which the GEG can properly analyze. The idea about consulting outside sources was raised, but no discussion was pursued.

C. On-site Pilot Evaluations

As is contained in the original instructions for the GEG, we believe the time is right for some limited on-site assistance visits for evaluations with individual countries to assess a variety of issues such as the appropriateness of indicators or the methodology for fulfilling discrete sections. Our idea in suggesting this now is to advise and to lend assistance where it is needed. For example the GEG may be informed of effective practices/measures in a country(s) that could be implemented effectively in others. This would be in keeping with the MEM's goals of cooperation and coordination. The Commissioners recognize very well that full participation by all countries is an essential element in the MEM process. To carry out such visits, the GEG respectfully requests financial support from the CICAD Commissioners.

D. Support to Implement Recommendations

A fundamental underpinning of the MEM process is that CICAD member states must assume responsibility for implementing MEM recommendations and identify resources to advance the various objectives in the range of recommendations. The GEG is well aware that many countries are facing severe financial constraints and must secure international cooperation to take the essential steps that are needed. Thus, the GEG looks to the CICAD Commissioners as well as the Secretariat to help prioritize needs. At the same time, the GEG respectfully requests that CICAD make it very clear to countries that requests for financial, technical and commodity assistance must be thoroughly justified before funding is made available once it has been identified.

E. Public Affairs Initiative

The success of the MEM ultimately depends on its acceptance by a wide range of audiences in each country in the Hemisphere. To this end, the GEG encourages Commissioners to develop and implement a specific public affairs plan which will publicize and explain the goals and objectives of the MEM, especially its progress to date and its promise for the future. The news media, governments, elected officials and drug and crime control experts are just a few potential audiences for such an undertaking, which come to mind. In this vein, understanding that this suggestion is very much a political undertaking, the GEG stands ready to assist Commissioners in any way to advance this concept.

IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, the GEG wants to report to CICAD Commissioners that remarkable progress is being made in the implementation of the MEM on behalf of the Hemisphere. In some ways, it seemed inconceivable several years ago that a group of experts from 30-some countries could effectively shed their national mantle and work uniformly as a group for the betterment of the entire Hemisphere. In our view, the MEM has taken on an issue which for decades has been extremely sensitive and political. With the MEM process representing the best thinking of the Hemisphere as a whole, much of the political aspect of drug and crime control is in the process of being removed. On behalf of the GEG as whole, it is indeed an honor to be a part of this process which is aimed, ultimately, to promote a better quality of life for all of us living in North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean.

Before we meet again in July to work on the next stage of this second round, members of the GEG will be working from their home countries to continue perfecting the working documents we have just prepared. We very much count on the CICAD Commissioners to urge their national drug control and political bodies to actively work with us to make sure the MEM is one that is truly productive. Looking towards December, when we will present documents in connection with this second round to the CICAD Commission for its approval prior to publication, we are determined that the work we produce will advance the credibility and effectiveness of this new mechanism which is truly unprecedented in the Hemisphere. We are counting on the Commission for its full support, especially of the recommendations we have made, and we thank you very much for the opportunity to make this report.