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**Chair's Report on the Inter-governmental Working Group (IWG)  
of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM)**

Distinguished Commissioners,

The Chair of the Inter-governmental Working Group (IWG) is pleased to present the Report on the progress of the work in preparation for the Seventh Evaluation Round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM).

As you will recall, the Plan of Action 2016-2020 of the CICAD Hemispheric Drug Strategy was approved last November, during the 60<sup>th</sup> CICAD regular session in Nassau, The Bahamas, which included actions and objectives from the UNGASS 2016 outcome document and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

As previously agreed, the Commission convened and mandated the Inter-governmental Working Group (IWG) to carry out the preparation of the Seventh Round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism, which should report the state of progress reached regarding the objectives and actions of said Plan of Action. Also, at the same session, the Commission unanimously agreed to nominate Chile to chair the tasks of said working group.

As known, the IWG, is open to the participation of all the OAS member states, and aims at revising the MEM process, and improve its operational characteristics. This entails, among other aspects, reviewing and updating the Evaluation Questionnaire, Procedural Manual, Evaluator's Guide, and any other relevant document for the process and collaborates in identifying strengths, challenges, progress and setbacks of the drug policies and strategies of each member state.

Once the representatives of each country were designated, the First IWG Preparatory Virtual Meeting was held during the first week of February of this year, which reviewed more pertinent aspects of our work and agreed to a work plan structure based on 21 virtual and in-person scheduled meetings between February and September of this year. Also, during said meeting Argentina was elected as vice-Chair of this group.

To facilitate their work, the IWG was divided in 5 sub-working groups in accordance to the thematic areas outlined in the Hemispheric Strategy and its Plan of Action. In this manner, the following sub-groups were created: Institutional Strengthening – coordinated by Chile; Demand Reduction – coordinated by Argentina; Supply Reduction – coordinated by Antigua and Barbuda; and Control Measures – coordinated by Costa Rica and International Cooperation – coordinated by St. Kitts and Nevis.

As scheduled, during February and April, virtual meetings were carried out for each of the five aforementioned sub-groups and one virtual plenary meeting, all of which has become part of the first phase of drafting the MEM evaluation criteria. Thus, during this first phase we have drafted the corresponding interpretive notes to each of the priority actions of the objectives under the Plan of Action.

The interpretive notes, to be part of the Evaluator's Manual, are guidelines for those that will carry out the evaluator role, on the aspects to bear in mind while making an informed judgement on the level of progress in fulfillment of each action.

The use of an online platform, with Spanish and English interpretation, is without a doubt a notable element of our activity which allows for real-time interaction among participants in group or plenary meetings, which is significant savings of resources for countries and the CICAD Executive Secretariat.

However, it is necessary to highlight that there were some difficulties in the smooth functioning of the Group. The use of the platform could be more efficient if countries could ensure that their representatives had the necessary technical equipment (for example, microphones, proper internet connectivity, etc.). Today's technology offers opportunities that are necessary to consider so that we can comply with the mandate given to us.

Another hurdle that we have yet to overcome is that of the full participation of various member states in this first phase. It is therefore necessary that those countries that are experiencing difficulties with the participation of their designated representatives, name alternate representatives that ensure participation both in the sub-working groups and plenary meetings. To date, 31 of 34 member states have designated representatives to this group.

After the approval of the interpretive notes by the IWG Plenary, the next phase will start this May 23, with the drafting of the questions that will form part of the Evaluation Questionnaire that will be sent to the countries next year. As you will recall, these questions will provide the necessary information to determine the level of progress of a priority action of the Plan of Action.

Distinguished Commissioners, the next MEM evaluation round that will be carried out during 2018 will allow us to, for example, see how the countries are addressing the challenges emanating from UNGASS 2016, covered in our Hemispheric Plan of Action.

For this reason, an Evaluation Mechanism that is updated and linked to the results of previous rounds, undoubtedly, will enable us to precisely determine the efforts and progress of member states in addressing the drug phenomena during the past years.

Last but not least, we want to underscore the support from the Executive Secretariat, particularly the MEM unit whose professionalism, commitment and willingness always facilitate organized processes not free of complexities.

Thank you!

Alvaro Ahumada  
IWG Chair