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**REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP (GEG)  
OF THE MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM (MEM)**

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**OF THE MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM (MEM)**

Distinguished Commissioners, officials, and delegates to this sixty-fifth regular session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, I greet you on behalf of the members of the Governmental Experts Group (GEG), of the seventh evaluation round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), in the capacity as General Coordinator of the GEG.

At the sixty-fourth Regular Session of CICAD, November 19 to 21, 2018. Washington, D.C., the Commission was provided a status of the work progressed by the GEG in their drafting stages.

As you are aware, in November 2018, member states received the first draft reports update, to which each country reviewed the reports, and provided comments and responses during December 2018. The GEG proceeded to consider and evaluate the country inputs and update the national drafts accordingly and the GEG experts continued their drafting work from their respective capitals. During the months of January through February 2019, the coordinators and volunteering members of the GEG evaluated the progress of countries in common topics throughout the past MEM seven rounds via a series of online drafting activities. The aim of this exercise was to highlight the progress and setbacks of the countries through the MEM seven rounds.

The Second GEG Plenary Drafting Session, held from March 11 to 15, 2019, in Washington, D.C, was similar to the First Drafting Session. The Experts from all of the Thematic Working Groups met to closely review and further draft and edit to the updated contents to the drafts, in order to have final draft national reports for the MEM seventh round completed. During this meeting, Alma Cecilia Escobar de Mena from El Salvador was elected as the GEG Deputy General Coordinator.

During the five days, experts from twenty-six (26) countries reviewed and discussed the substantive updated contents of the five thematic chapters (institutional strengthening, demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures and international cooperation) in the draft reports. This provided an excellent platform that enabled the GEG to continue working to complete the reports upon returning to their countries. Commissioners, on behalf of the GEG, I am pleased to report that the review of the final draft reports of the thirty-three (33) countries was completed.

Following the Second Plenary Session, the MEM Unit worked closely and tirelessly with all Experts, particularly the GEG Sub-group Coordinators in additional review, verification of the texts and in-depth editing of the drafts. This ensured that all draft national evaluation reports were ready in final form to transmit in their respective original language to member states. Commissioners received all final draft reports in preparation for this CICAD 65<sup>th</sup> meeting the first week of May. The MEM Unit provided vital support to this second drafting phase to all Experts to whom the GEG and I are grateful for their ongoing assistance and guidance during this seventh round MEM process.

## SUMMARY

The MEM seventh evaluation round process started in January 2018. Early 2018 member states' National Coordinating Entities (NCEs) submitted information in response to the MEM Questionnaire. The GEG Preparatory meeting and experts' work leading up to the two in person and virtual meetings, five virtual thematic working group meetings and two virtual coordinators' meeting ensured the accomplishment we are looking at today.

Despite an overall tight Calendar of Activities for the seventh round, various changes in experts throughout the drafting process, outgoing experts replaced by new experts who were given the needed orientation and guidance to continue the drafting of the reports. There also was other experts that took on additional drafting responsibilities such as, Coordinating Thematic Working Groups, and keeping to the work plan guided the work of the GEG and ensured that all the tasks were met and the final draft national reports were completed.

These national reports provide both progress and setbacks in countries implementing the objectives and measurable priority actions under the CICAD Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2016-2020. They also reflect the greater focus on the role of gender and human rights, and highlights new sub topics of the seventh round, such as proportionate sentencing. The reports also reflect some aspects in line with UNGASS 2016 recommendations and the United Nations 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The seventh round national reports also include evaluative paragraphs for each thematic area that highlights the steady progress or lack thereof in all the thematic areas throughout the previous MEM six rounds.

The ongoing work of the GEG Experts during the evaluation process was limited to an extent due to decreased funding to this Mechanism, which if more funding cuts continue in the future, this could jeopardize the effective running of the MEM process. This is an opportune time to remind all member states, the MEM is the only tool of its kind to measure drug policies of our countries and based on a mandate from the 1998 OAS Summit of the Americas. Limited funding also continues to be a challenge for countries to finance the participation of their experts in the in-person meetings. To alleviate this situation, assistance is provided through overall MEM operational funding in order for some experts to attend said meetings.

Experts dedicated numerous hours of work from their respective capitals before and after all GEG meetings. I would like to thank all the GEG experts, including those that departed earlier in the process and many thanks to all those experts that took on additional work and responsibilities. Also, the unwavering commitment to the evaluation process and on behalf of the GEG. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the support the Experts received from the MEM Coordinators assigned to each thematic area. Moreover, the invaluable and committed involvement of the MEM Unit staff led by Sofia Kosmas, as well as the support of the CICAD Executive Secretariat, without whose support it would not have been possible to complete this endeavor.

A special thanks to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that co-hosted with CICAD and the European Union, a Regional Meeting for Policymakers and Heads of National Drug Authorities on

the MEM 7<sup>th</sup> Round Process in February 2018, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I would especially like to recognize the funding and in-kind contributions for the MEM 7<sup>th</sup> round from Canada, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad y Tobago, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the United States.

Distinguished Commissioners, I also wish to thank all member states for their continuous support for this valuable multilateral process.

Mr. Chair, I submit the MEM 33 national draft reports for the seventh round for the Commission's approval.

Thank you.

Steve Millington,  
General Coordinator,  
Governmental Experts Group.