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**Report of the Governmental Experts Group (GEG)  
of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM)  
to the forty-fourth regular session of the  
Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)**

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Presented by GEG General Coordinator,  
Attorney Alberto del Río,  
in Santiago, Chile, November 20, 2008

Members of the Commission and delegates to this forty-fourth regular session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission,

Dr. María Teresa Chadwick, Chair of CICAD,

Allow me to greet to you on my own behalf and on behalf of the Governmental Experts Group I am honored to chair. As you know, we are currently in the last phase of the MEM Fourth Evaluation Round 2005-2006, assessing how countries are implementing the recommendations assigned to them by the GEG at the beginning of the cycle. As part of this follow-up, the GEG held its First Drafting Session in Lima, Peru, October 6 - 15, and will hold its Second Drafting Session in Washington, D.C., in March 2009.

I would like to announce that the GEG has a new Deputy General Coordinator, due to the fact that the term of office of the Principal Expert from the Dominican Republic, attorney Olivo Rodríguez, on the Board of Directors of the country's National Drug Council came to an end, and, as a result, so too did his position as a MEM expert. Given that vacancy, at the recent meeting in Lima in October, the experts elected our colleague Manodj Hindori, the expert from Suriname, as Deputy General Coordinator. The GEG acknowledges the efforts made by our Dominican colleague in coordinating the GEG, and we reiterate our assurance that Mr. Hindori's experience and talent will be highly valuable.

In preparation for the meeting in Peru, the MEM Section carried out the preliminary work of drawing up narrative drafts of the reports submitted by 32 countries and sent them to each of the experts for review prior to the October meeting. The preparatory work proved to be challenging since eight countries had changed experts between the March and October meetings.

Participation in our first meeting included 34 experts, both principals and alternates. This is the meeting which the greatest number of alternate experts attended and took an active

part in the GEG's work, together with the principal experts. Unfortunately, seven countries did not send experts to Lima: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. I should point out that three countries have not yet appointed an expert to the GEG/MEM: Guyana, Jamaica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The GEG is following up on a total of 453 recommendations issued during this Fourth Evaluation Round, broken down into the four thematic areas of the MEM, as follows:

- I. 104 recommendations on institution building;
- II. 94 recommendations on demand reduction;
- III. 130 recommendations on supply reduction; and
- IV. 125 recommendations on control measures.

Of these 453 recommendations, 165 had been assigned in earlier rounds, with 23 reiterated from the First Evaluation Round, 42 from the Second, and 100 from the Third. The evaluation on follow-up to the recommendations is under way. As a result of our first meeting, we initiated a dialogue with the countries by means of a preliminary evaluation and the GEG's notes to country. Their replies will be used to prepare the final evaluation in March 2009. As a result of this process, we will submit for CICAD's consideration the reports on follow-up to the recommendations of this Fourth Evaluation Round. It should be noted that the GEG had sufficient working time since it was able to complete the review of all the reports received.

As the members of the Commission know, in addition to each expert's responsibility to evaluate the country assigned to him or her, we are all obliged to participate in the review of all countries, with the exception of our own. Therefore our working procedure is in effect and operates first on an individual basis, then in each of the four working groups, and finally in the GEG plenary. This will continue to be our working procedure.

The experts have demonstrated increasing maturity and a sound critical attitude. Even when we see our national flags flying in the context of the Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere, as experts we make an ongoing effort to ensure that our work is not biased and we endeavor to set aside the slightest political consideration that we might bring from our countries of origin. Thus it has been possible to identify shortcomings and the need for change in some parts of the evaluation process. The GEG is enriched by the introduction of new members: each of them will seek to use his or her multidisciplinary experiences to introduce improvements in the approach to evaluation. I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of a pending task – the design of ongoing training mechanism for the experts – as discussed in an earlier session by this Commission. Indeed, I am well aware that we must move forward with the implementation of a system that will make it possible to evaluate the work of the GEG experts, as mandated a short while ago, and for which we will be issuing an online call for proposals.

#### **In-situ visit and analysis of the participation of some Caribbean countries**

The Deputy General Coordinator of the GEG, Manodj Hindori, will present a separate report to you on the visit to Saint Lucia, which was conducted at the request of the GEG and with the agreement of the Commission. Likewise, he will provide a report and explanation on the review conducted in Lima on the participation of some Caribbean countries in the MEM, seeking to link the specific situation of each nation with the practical difficulties posed by the multilateral evaluation tasks. We are convinced of the need to support them so as to meet our commitment to the Mechanism's objectives.

**Review document on UNGASS 1998, in light of the MEM and with a view to Vienna 2009**

In the final report of the forty-third regular session of CICAD, the Commission decided to make use of the infrastructure of the GEG – among other groups – to seek coordinated regional actions regarding the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS 1998). At the proposal of several of the experts, the GEG took advantage of its infrastructure to draft a technical document for use by the members of the Commission as a basis for their work on UNGASS during this forty-fourth regular session. Meeting this past October in Lima, and through e-mail communication with those experts who did not attend this session, the experts organized themselves to address the issue in accordance with the proposal drafted by the expert from Argentina, Mariana Souto, and in order to effectively carry out this consultation in the short term, using the experience acquired by the MEM-GEG Experts over four evaluation rounds. To that end, three experts with experience in the MEM and in their respective professional spheres, Álvaro Ahumada, Mariana Souto, and Manuel González, were assigned primary responsibility for drafting three segments, with one assigned to each. In addition, several other experts were enlisted to review the drafts. I would like to thank them personally for their efforts and their steadfast professionalism.

As a result of this effort, we are presenting to the Commission today a document entitled “Hemispheric Outlook on the Objectives and Goals of UNGASS 1998-2008 – A Review Based on Information Available from the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism.” This document is merely a preliminary report, prepared in light of the MEM experience. It is being submitted to the members of the Commission for the sole purpose of supporting the pursuit of agreed goals.

We must insist that it is to be viewed as a preliminary, strictly technical input, which is based exclusively on some of the hemispheric reports drawn up in the framework of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism during its four rounds. Still pending is analysis of the remaining hemispheric reports and of the 34 national reports prepared during each of the evaluation rounds. Nonetheless, it may be said that the evaluations conducted through the Mechanism shed light on the progress made in the Hemisphere on all aspects of drug control policy and likewise make it possible to identify the shortcomings that the Hemisphere must address to fully achieve the objectives set by the countries in 1998.

Just as the MEM is internationally recognized as a model for the assessment of regional drug control policies, we consider that the final version of this document could constitute

valuable input for the process of review of the UNGASS 1998 goals, which is currently under way. It is incumbent on the members of the Commission to decide whether to consider it as a contribution to be incorporated into a final document.

In conclusion, I would like to express thanks to the Executive Secretariat of CICAD, and specifically to James Mack, Rafael Franzini, and the Secretariat specialists, for supporting the work of the experts. It will only be possible to move forward in the tasks assigned to us with their assistance and with the invaluable and increasingly professional and committed participation of the MEM Section.

## **Part 2**

### **Lack of participation of some Caribbean countries in the MEM process**

In the process of follow-up on the implementation of MEM Recommendations of the Fourth Round, we are confronted with lack of full participation of some countries from the Caribbean region. In some cases we had difficulties getting all the required information on time. In two cases we even did not receive any information, despite numerous requests. Other countries did send information, but did not send their GEG expert to participate in the multilateral evaluation process.

We believe that all countries should be equally active in the MEM process. Therefore, we request the attention of the Commission for this lack of full participation of some Caribbean countries that may potentially limit achieving all the objectives of the mechanism.

Understanding the realities of small island states, and the challenges posed by bureaucratic difficulties and political changes in Caribbean countries, we believe that steps should be taken to re-energize non-participatory countries. Some of these steps are to:

- Reach out to countries with difficulties in terms of limited human resources or technical capabilities;
- Improve horizontal communication and coordination between Caribbean countries;
- Utilize personal contacts better to support our colleagues facing difficulties;
- Address the realities of small countries appropriately: the approach towards larger countries in the hemisphere may not be the same as the one towards smaller countries;
- Get the MEM mechanism on the political agenda of the heads of governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) or the responsible ministries of those countries.

We truly believe that all Caribbean countries are committed to the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism, but that sometimes the appropriate authorities may not be aware of difficulties and challenges their countries are facing regarding reporting to the MEM.

Therefore, we suggest that the Commissioners of the Caribbean countries become involved in this effort, so that they can transmit this message of concern to the respective authorities in their countries.

In addition, we suggest establishing special monitoring teams, consisting of members of the MEM Unit, GEG experts from the Caribbean and Representatives of the OAS who are on-the-ground in those countries. Those teams can identify the appropriate country contacts, establish what kind of technical assistance the countries need and closely monitor and follow-up on countries' participation in the next evaluation rounds.

We believe it important for the Commission to authorize CICAD's Executive Secretariat to steer this process of revitalizing Caribbean countries.

We are convinced that, with the due attention and support of the Commission, we will be able to achieve a renewed commitment of all Caribbean countries, and that the MEM process truly will become a unified, multilateral mechanism.

- **In-situ visit to St. Lucia**

During the first half of the MEM Fourth Round Evaluation of Progress in Drug Control 2005-2006, very little information was received from St. Lucia. The GEG was therefore unable to fully evaluate the country's situation regarding progress in drug control. In addition there was no active participation of St. Lucia throughout the whole GEG review process. The GEG, therefore, recommended an in-situ visit to St. Lucia, which was approved by the Commission in November 2007.

The objectives of the in-situ visit were to acquire first-hand knowledge as to the situation in St. Lucia, and thus to understand the reasons behind its lack of participation in the Fourth Round. Further, the in-situ visit was to build political support for and promote full participation of St. Lucia in the MEM process, and to encourage the dialogue between the National Coordinating Entity (NCE) and the national anti-drug authorities.

The in-situ visit took place from May 19 – 21, 2008. The in-situ visit team consisted of representatives of the CICAD Executive Secretariat, the GEG and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). In addition, the OAS Representative in Saint Lucia was added to the team. St. Lucia's counterparts were, among others, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Home Affairs and National Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Substance Abuse Advisory Council Secretariat.

During the in-situ visit, the mission observed that the different anti-drug entities of St. Lucia were already collecting the data needed for the MEM report. However, the mission found that the institutional capacity of St. Lucia was weak (no drug council, no anti-drug plan, weak NCE, limited inter-agency collaboration). The mission concluded that what was urgently needed was to re-strengthen the national capacity to improve the country's coordination of the MEM process. The mission formulated an Action Note that contained a total of 11 action points in the areas of national institutional capacity, coordination towards the MEM process and coordination of national drug control strategies.

The St. Lucian authorities were quite responsive to the Action Note. Within a time span of two months St. Lucia re-established its Substance Abuse Advisory Council (SAAC), formed an interagency MEM team, identified a GEG expert to participate in the second phase of the Fourth Round and appointed its CICAD Commissioner. And, most illustrative of all, St. Lucia submitted its information for the next MEM report on time. This was the tangible proof that the in-situ visit and its follow-up have been a success.

A key aspect contributing to the success of the mission was the continuous follow-up of the action points and their deadlines by the in-situ visit team. It must be stated here that the OAS Representative on-the-ground in St. Lucia played a crucial role in this follow-up process.

In summary, the lessons learned from this in-situ visit are the following:

- The in-situ visit does not end when the team leaves the country. Continuous follow-up is an integral part of the visit;
- Having someone on-the-ground who is in close contact with the authorities and who keeps an eye on the progress, perhaps the OAS Representative, is key to success;
- It is crucial to keep on monitoring the impact of the visit long after the visit, to ensure that the successes achieved during the visit are sustainable over time.