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REPORT ON THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP (IWG) MEETING

WASHINGTON, D.C., FEBRUARY 24 - 27, 2009

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Dr. Mariana Souto

1. Background

At the forty-second regular session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), held in Santa Marta, Colombia, November 27–30, 2007, the Governmental Expert Group (GEG) General Coordinator presented his report on the second GEG meeting of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism's (MEM) Fourth Evaluation Round (2005-2006). In response to the concerns expressed by the governmental experts, he proposed that the Commission convene a meeting in 2008, prior to the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) meeting, to identify options for improving the MEM process for the Fifth Evaluation Round.

The Commission debated the proposal and approved the scheduling of a meeting in 2008, prior to the IWG meeting, to consolidate the MEM process and benefit from lessons learned during the prior evaluation round. Argentina offered to host the meeting. The preparatory meeting for the Intergovernmental Working Group was held March 25 - 28, 2008, in Buenos Aires, and its outcomes were presented to the Commission at its 43rd regular session.

Among the most salient outcomes should be noted the implementation of a virtual forum, "pre-IWG online," which enabled the gradual incorporation of proposals prepared not only by countries participating in the process, but also by different Expert Groups and sections of the Executive Secretariat.

2. General aspects of the meeting

Based on the above-described preparatory work, the Intergovernmental Working Group Meeting was held February 24 - 27, 2009, under the chairmanship of Argentina and the vice-chairmanship of United States. Twenty-three countries, whose delegations were composed of both representatives of National Coordinating Entities (NCEs) and GEG experts, participated.

The meeting began with a review of the main items and agreements reached both at the pre-IWG meeting and during the online review process. These preparations provided elements that were used as the basis for proposing modifications to existing instruments and processes.

In this context, a review of the indicators proposed for the Fifth Round was initiated, taking into consideration those of the last round, with the aim of correcting the shortcomings identified.

The introductory document to be presented by the countries with the completed questionnaire of indicators; the MEM evaluation cycle and its corresponding calendar; the procedural manual; and Manual for the Preparation of Reports were also reviewed.

3. Review of the indicators of the Fifth Round

In the last two rounds, the countries were requested to include an introductory document to provide the experts with background information to help contextualize the policies and actions implemented in each evaluation area. At the IWG meeting, the guidelines for the introductory document were reviewed in order to include subjects the group decided to exclude from the questionnaire of indicators but that were deemed useful in providing context for the replies from the countries, such as the detection of new drugs or the existence of regional and bilateral agreements and treaties. Additionally, the recommended length of the document was reduced from 8 pages to 2 - 3 pages.

The questionnaire corresponding to the Fourth Round comprised 51 indicators. The questionnaire now proposed by the IWG contains 50 indicators and the following four chapters: Institutional Strengthening (4 indicators), Demand Reduction (12 indicators), Supply Reduction (13 indicators), and Control Measures (21 indicators).

The main changes proposed for each chapter are outlined below.

Chapter 1. Institutional strengthening

In the last round, this chapter had five indicators, of which those related to the national plan, the national authority, the international conventions, and capacity for information production, collection and analysis have been maintained.

In the first two cases, budget-related questions are simplified and definitions are incorporated to specify the scope of the information requested.

In the indicator on the capacity for information production, collection and analysis, studies and information are distinguished by area (supply and demand), and now include, in the supply reduction area, priority information and recommended information. Definitions are also included specifying the scope of the requested information.

The indicator on information dissemination capacity is eliminated, while the Fourth Round indicator information on the existence of a help line has been maintained.

Chapter 2. Demand reduction

Prevention

As regards prevention programs, target populations are more precisely defined, information on the target population is included, and instead of requesting a simple description of programs, specific information is requested regarding their type. Each information field requested is also more precisely defined.

Regarding the availability of specialized training, greater detail is requested on the different types of training, incorporating new boxes for the provision of additional information on each type.

Regarding program evaluation, information on different types of evaluations (process, outcome, and impact) is brought together in a single indicator, with new definitions specifying their scope.

Treatment

Although four indicators are maintained, the information requested on the existing institutional framework, the characteristics of services provided, and their national coverage and quality has been reorganized.

More specific information is requested on the regulation of treatment services offered and their incorporation in the general health system.

In all cases, the definitions and explanations accompanying each indicator have been expanded and are more precise.

Drug use statistics

In the indicator on “magnitude of drug use,” the prevalence tables request specific information, particularly regarding type of drug, and a new table is added on “Abuse and dependence in relation to number of users and total population surveyed.” More precise definitions and explanations of the information requested are also included.

As regards the age of first use of drugs, the population to which estimates apply is specified, types of substances are added, and both the average and median age of first use is requested. Again, definitions and explanations of the information requested are expanded.

For the indicator on perceived risk, different boxes are provided for the population to which the information applies, and information is requested as to whether studies exist that enable changes over time to be evaluated.

The indicator on new drugs, new trends, and new methods of administration is eliminated; countries are requested to include this information, if it exists, in the introductory document.

The indicator on drug use-related mortality is eliminated, moving the question on the existence of this type of information to Indicator 4, the table on recommended studies on demand.

“Relationship between drugs and crime” and “drug-related accidents” are separated into two indicators. Clarification is requested on the information on studies enabling the relationship between drugs and crime to be evaluated, specifying the type of study and its coverage.

The questions regarding alcohol use-related accidents are maintained, as are the questions on existing legislation for preventing these types of accidents.

Chapter 3. Supply reduction

Drug production

In the indicator on area cultivated and production potential, estimation systems are specifically requested, distinguishing type of crop. Data is also requested on the system utilized to determine production potential.

The indicator on seizure of indoor marijuana plants is eliminated, and these information fields moved to the indicator on areas of drug cultivation.

As regards area eradicated, clarification is requested on the type of eradication program utilized, if any.

The indicators on dismantled illicit laboratories for drugs of natural origin and drugs of synthetic origin are combined, eliminating the request for information on their size, and requesting different information on the type of illicit drug to facilitate understanding of the type of laboratory in question.

Alternative, integral, and sustainable development

The specific scope of these types of programs is requested, utilizing the “alternative, integral, and sustainable development” concept. New tables are provided for the submission of clearer information on program components, and the necessary definitions and explanations are provided for completion of the indicator information requested.

As regards monitoring and measuring the impact of such programs, the type of information requested on program results is specified.

Control of pharmaceutical and chemical products

Questions are more precisely formulated and information is now requested regarding the existence of a regulatory and administrative system that includes inspections and mechanisms for sharing information with judicial and law enforcement authorities.

Separate questions are asked regarding acts subject to criminal sanctions in order to include illicit production, illicit diversion, and illicit trafficking, and there are now separate, improved tables on quantities seized and quantities disposed of.

The indicator on the use of the Internet for illicit drug trafficking is moved to the subchapter on illicit drug trafficking. The question regarding future actions is eliminated. A question is added on information on the responsible and support entities for the control of Internet drug sales, and a new definition of the word “drug” is proposed.

Chapter 4. Control measures

Illicit drug trafficking

As regards quantities of drugs seized, questions are included on the existence of studies for drug characterization and profiling.

Information is no longer requested on public officials prosecuted and convicted of corrupt acts related to illicit drug trafficking.

The questions on the legislative approach to possession for personal use are improved, and statistics thereon are requested.

As regards specialized training on control of illicit drug trafficking, information is requested to establish its target participants, subject area, and number of participants. Two new indicators are included on maritime narcotrafficking: on port security and on maritime interdiction activities; as well as an indicator on interdiction of aerial activities.

Firearms, ammunition, explosives, and other related materials

There are now only four indicators in this area (compared to seven Fourth Round indicators), focusing on linkage of the program approach with illicit drug trafficking.

Accordingly, indicators are maintained on the legal framework, operational scope of control activities, databases, and statistics on seizures and forfeitures linked to illicit drug trafficking, including the subject of tracing illicitly trafficked firearms.

Money laundering

Six new indicators requesting information on money laundering are included, for a total of seven. Indicators were developed on national laws on money laundering; criminalization of the offense; the scope and applicable special investigative techniques; the different sectors with obligations to report suspicious transactions; the existence of a financial intelligence unit; budget, functions and membership in the Egmont Group; and mechanisms facilitating access to information protected by confidentiality rules.

Indicators are also included on the existence of an entity for the management and/or disposition of assets seized and/or forfeited in money laundering cases and on numbers of investigations launched, criminal proceedings, persons charged, and persons ultimately convicted of this offense.

Judicial cooperation

A new section has been created on judicial cooperation, with an indicator that brings together all questions related to the legal and institutional framework for judicial cooperation among the countries of the region to suppress illicit drug trafficking and money laundering, requesting specific information on extradition and mutual legal assistance mechanisms.

4. MEM evaluation cycle

The proposal for the cycle of the MEM Fifth Evaluation Round includes an evaluation of the progress made in anti-drug policies in member states through 2010, taking into account data for the 2006-2009 period. The new methodology proposed by the IWG to utilize information through 2010 would yield more updated and timely evaluations.

For the evaluation as a whole, based on the indicator questionnaire, the proposal includes two meetings of the GEG, as well as two for the follow-up phase on the recommendations

from the Fifth Round. As was the case in the Fourth Round, it is proposed that participants work electronically to prepare the Hemispheric Report of the Fifth Round.

To ensure the political presence of the MEM in the OAS General Assembly forum, the proposal includes the preparation of MEM reports for presentation in June 2010, 2011, and 2012. Since the national reports of the Fifth Round will not be available until late 2010, it was agreed that the CICAD Commissioners would decide the content of the report to be drafted within the MEM framework, for presentation to the Assembly at its regular session in 2010.

Lastly, the IWG proposes that two meetings of the IWG be held prior to the start of the Sixth Round, rather than one preparatory meeting of the IWG followed by a plenary meeting of the IWG, in view of the amount of review involved.

5. Procedural Manual

The Procedural Manual was reviewed and most of the chapters were modified, in accordance with the experience and necessities identified during the fourth evaluation round. The main revisions were as follows:

Inter-Governmental Working Group: This chapter was expanded with new sub-sections to provide a better overview of the IWG's functions and procedures as well as the roles of the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Executive Secretariat.

Governmental Expert Group (GEG): The characteristics of the Experts were modified to clarify the background and experience required for the GEG. The guidelines were modified to ensure that member states inform the Executive Secretariat of their designated Expert well in advance of the GEG meeting to ensure effective coordination, and to clarify the operation of the GEG in Plenary.

Financing of Expert Participation at GEG Meetings: The previously entitled "Solidarity Fund" chapter was re-named and focuses directly on the assistance member States can receive when, due to exceptional circumstances, they are unable to finance their Expert's participation in the GEG meetings.

National Coordinating Entity (NCE): Minor editorial changes were made to ensure clarity.
MEM Section: This section added points on the MEM Section maintaining continuous communication with both the GEG and the NCE, as well as providing the national coordinating entities with an operational manual.

IN-Situ Country Visits: This chapter was modified in the light of the experience of the St. Lucia in-situ visit in 2008. New guidelines and principles were established, covering such areas as preparatory work, and a monitoring process on action items identified by the in-situ visit team and agreed upon by the country being visited.

Reports: A new subsection was added to this chapter on guidelines for the MEM Hemispheric Report, following similar guide lines as for other MEM reports, as well as the importance of CICAD presenting the MEM reports to the Permanent Council.

6. Manual for preparation of reports

The changes to the Manual for the Preparation of Reports were made to strengthen the guidelines for improving the quality of reports and, at the same time, to facilitate the work of the Governmental Expert Group (GEG) and all participants in the process.

The changes are found in the chapters on preparation of national reports and Hemispheric Reports, where the content of the subchapters will relate directly to the changes made in the new indicator questionnaire for the Fifth Evaluation Round.

Based on the treatment given to the recommendations in the reports of the Fourth Evaluation Round, modifications were made to the subsection on reiteration of recommendations.

This proposal does not include the appendices on reference documents or the glossary.

7. Final reflections

All of the review processes conducted since the launch of the Mechanism within the framework of the Intergovernmental Working Group, as well as the experience of the GEG drafting sessions, have made it possible to reflect on the Mechanism's successes and failures, always in the spirit of improving its operation and outcomes over time.

Those of us who took part in these processes realize that matters will always remain for future review and improvement, in addition to the ongoing changes imposed on the evaluation mechanism by the essence and dynamic of the area in which we work.

We are, however, aware that the experience has made it possible to correct deficiencies and establish new guidelines so that each stakeholder in the Mechanism can participate effectively, in strict adherence to the principles underlying the MEM since its creation.

Accordingly, we understand that the review process carried out by the pre-IWG, culminating in the IWG, has made it possible to continue to strengthen a mechanism conceived to assist the countries in strengthening their policy on all manifestations of the drug problem.

The Fifth Round will yield new assessments and new needs for the enhanced operation of the Mechanism, demonstrating that among the MEM's salient characteristics are its dynamism and capacity to adapt over time.

The Chair wishes to thank all participant countries which, through their efforts, have once again demonstrated their strong commitment to the MEM a unique mechanism for the evaluation of national policy on the drug problem.