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INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE  
CONTROL COMMISSION

**CICAD**

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

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**GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES FOR COMBATING ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING  
ON LAKES AND RIVERINE SYSTEMS**

# **GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES FOR COMBATING ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING ON LAKES AND RIVERINE SYSTEMS**

## **PREAMBLE**

Lakes and riverines offer an excellent means for transportation of illicit drugs, controlled chemical substances, and other offenses. These routes are particularly useful when they cross or are part of the borders of two or more neighboring countries.

A group of experts of CICAD member states analyzed the problem to identify elements that the member countries could consider when developing their strategies to control these offenses. They made a series of recommendations on best practices for combating illicit drug trafficking on lakes and waterways.

## **PURPOSE**

This guide presents a series of proposed best practices for combating the use of coastal and river transportation routes for illicit drug trafficking. They are suggested to the member states, with respect for their domestic legislation and regulations. This document is not a legal instrument, and therefore not binding on the member states.

## **JURISDICTION**

Member states are urged to respect international conventions, treaties, bilateral/multilateral international agreements, and domestic legislation on joint or combined procedures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking by sea and river routes. When a member state finds it necessary to operate in jurisdictional waters of another state, it must above all respect that state's sovereignty, and only act with the express consent of that state.

## **PROPOSED MEASURES:**

1. Member states should consider upgrading their technological platform so each country can develop and seek the methods and/or mechanisms best suited to their jurisdiction for implementation on river and coastal navigation with the sole purpose of optimizing control, surveillance, and interdiction to ensure best practices in the fight against illicit drug trafficking, diversion of precursor chemicals, and other types of offenses.

### **Scope:**

- **Control of illicit drug trafficking and precursor chemicals.**
- **Control of trafficking in fuels and contraband.**
- **Control of trafficking in persons and human smuggling.**
- **Control of trafficking in weapons.**
- **Environmental protection.**
- **Help with search and rescue operations.**
- **Crimes against property**

2. Member states should consider developing and implementing a model system for registration and control of small vessels and homemade craft used on river and coastal routes, with mechanisms and control documents that will enable authorities to inspect, investigate, and do field work and/or document checks with a view to preventing and punishing any illegal activity, based on reliable information that provides real data on the facts of the case, with the supervision, coordination, and cooperation of competent authorities pursuant to the laws and legal norms of each member state. The model system should involve the following suggested actions:
  - **Increase control with personnel duly qualified to inspect and search river and coastal vessels.**
  - **Implement navigation rules based on the situation in the jurisdiction and each country's laws. (For example, Colombia restricts navigation from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.)**
  - **Improve controls on authorization for departure and arrival of smaller vessels from foreign ports, border ports if applicable, and/or national ports depending on each jurisdiction's circumstances.**
3. Member states should study the interest in and viability of establishing a mechanism for the exchange of information so competent authorities in each country can receive timely data on the characteristics of any vessel involved in or suspected of offenses of illicit drug trafficking and other types of offenses that occur in the common river and coastal areas of the member states along the established channels.
  - **Create a basic information exchange system between neighboring countries**
4. Member states should consider developing regulations, treaties, and bilateral or multilateral international agreements that will enable them to work together to prevent and punish any illicit activity in common waterway areas, and thereby organize a regional or local coordination and cooperation mechanism in which the parties undertake to make an effort to cut off the traffic of vessels suspected of involvement in the commission of crimes and violation of the provisions recommended in this guide, respecting the countries' self determination and each nation's sovereign jurisdiction.
5. Member states should consider promoting education and training of public officials, (immigration, customs, law enforcement agencies, militaries etc according to the country) in topics involving illicit drug trafficking, for the sole purpose of assisting in their fight against illicit drug trafficking and other related crimes, taking into account the following aspects:
  - **Recognition, detection, and handling of various types of illicit drugs.**
  - **Recognition, detection, and handling of chemical inputs.**
  - **Recognition, detection, and handling of firearms and explosives.**
  - **Techniques for inspection of ships and/or river and coastal vessels.**
  - **Methods for physical searches of individuals, search of baggage, and/or cargo searches.**
  - **Knowledge of national legislation related to the control of illicit drug trafficking.**