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I. Mini groups' work

France chairs the regional Dublin group for West Africa, which covers Cape Verde, Nigeria, Benin, Senegal and Ghana.

This report describes the work of the mini groups in this region in 2013-2014 and also includes information on the situation in Togo and Equatorial Guinea.

II. Regional situation as regards drug trafficking and use in West Africa

Since the 2000s, Spain, France and their partners have increased their efforts to fight the drugs trade in the North Atlantic and the Caribbean, in particular by making use of the Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) and Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics) (MAOC (N)) platforms. Latin American drug trafficking organisations reacted to this by changing their routes, and West Africa became a springboard for drugs destined for Europe.

West Africa is essentially a transit region for drugs.

According to the UNODC, 50 to 80 tonnes of cocaine are trafficked through West Africa each year, to supply a European market with an annual consumption of around 300 tonnes. Narcotics are trafficked by sea (in shipping containers and on fishing boats) but also by air (by couriers on passenger flights and as freight). In addition, although there has been no major seizure since the so-called "Air Cocaine" incident in Mali in November 2009, we should not exclude the possibility of secret flights using specially chartered aircraft between Venezuela, Colombia or Brazil and West Africa.

The main entry points for cocaine into West Africa are located in the coastal countries between Senegal and Nigeria.

The seizures made in West Africa are very variable and there are few reliable statistics available, so it is difficult to make any analysis of the main routes used to move cocaine into other countries in the region. Most trafficking (of the largest quantities) takes place using shipping containers destined for African ports.

More modest quantities are transported by air (1 to 10 kg of cocaine per passenger), but since there are a large number of couriers and a lot of air routes, this traffic also makes a significant impact. For the most part the cocaine seized originates from Brazil and is trafficked along four major air routes:

- São Paulo (Brazil) – Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). From Addis Ababa Ethiopian Airlines flights are used to reach major West African cities (Abidjan, Accra, Lomé, Cotonou, etc.);
- São Paulo (Brazil) – Lomé (Togo) (route open since July 2013). The Togolese capital is a regional hub serving most other capital cities in West Africa;
- São Paulo (Brazil) – Casablanca (Morocco). Royal Air Maroc flights from Casablanca serve the regional capitals;
- Dubai (UAE) – Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), via Accra (Ghana). This route was used frequently by couriers until 2012, for both South American cocaine and Afghan heroin. It remains an important route even though seizures on it have become less frequent.

The target market for the cocaine transiting through West Africa is essentially Western Europe, and in particular the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, France and Germany, where over three quarters of Europe's cocaine users are found. According to the most recent UNODC report (*Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa: a Threat Assessment*, February 2013), the amount of pure cocaine transiting through West Africa for Europe is now estimated at 18 tonnes (compared with 47 tonnes in 2007), with a value of USD 1.25 billion.

However, although West Africa has become a major player and a hub in international cocaine trafficking, global seizures in the region do not provide a true picture of trafficking, remaining for the most part marginal and on the decrease.

Trafficking via West Africa stems from the convergence of interests of South American criminal groups (essentially Colombian and Venezuelan), West African groups (mainly Nigerian and Guinean) and European groups.

There is also a suspicion that countries such as Nigeria or Mali are producing ever-increasing quantities of synthetic methamphetamine-type drugs in illegal laboratories, mainly for export to Asian markets (India, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Japan) via Cotonou airport in particular, where there have been more seizures of these drugs than of cocaine. A new route for exporting methamphetamine to Europe has been observed in Benin.

The African heroin route, which originates in Afghanistan, crosses the continent from east to west through Ethiopia and Sudan and comes to an end in the Sahel trading area. It now passes through Côte d'Ivoire and Benin, which have become alternatives to the more traditional heroin routes, as evidenced by the seizures made in recent months (these transit countries are being used rather than Ghana, where no heroin seizures have been recorded since June 2012).

In addition, cannabis resin from the Moroccan Rif region is sent to Egypt and Libya via Mauritania, northern Mali and northern Niger, or transits through Mauritania to reach the countries of the Arabian Peninsula (via Chad and Sudan).

Finally, some countries in the region also produce cannabis, mainly for local use.

The western seaboard of the African continent is still the main destination and storage area for cocaine arriving from South America.

Brazil, Bolivia and Venezuela are currently particularly active in the shipment of the cocaine transshipped in Cape Verde, as evidenced by the seizure in March 2013 of two tonnes of the drug off the archipelago's coast, and in coastal areas extending from Senegal to the whole of the Gulf of Guinea (Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria). The traffickers tend to reship drugs by air (essentially using passengers), sea (as freight on container ships or transported in sailing vessels) and by road via the Sahel.

The coexistence of terrorist movements and drug trafficking networks is causing particular concern for the security and stability of West Africa and the Sahel.

The crisis in northern Mali revealed that alliances of convenience had emerged between drug traffickers seeking to protect and profit from their trade, and certain terrorist groups. In some cases, this was simply a matter of co-existing in the same area, while, in others, terrorist groups were funding their activities using drug money (particularly by levying a "toll" on drug traffickers' convoys).

Although Operation Serval seemed to have weakened the terrorist groups operating in Mali (AQIM, MUJAO, Ansar Dine) and disturbed various trafficking routes, the UNODC reports that the situation in northern Mali has again deteriorated following the end of this mission and the reduction in military presence there. It would be premature to speak of narco-terrorism, even though the jihadist groups have only ever protected the traffickers, but we can now see clear connections between the two phenomena. From now on these "double-faced" groups such as MUJAO could conduct activities linked to terrorism and to all types of trafficking at the same time, with the latter perhaps even taking precedence.

In such circumstances, the terrorist groups (which are already self-sufficient due to their income from ransoms) would, thanks to trafficking, have ample funds to extend their recruitment efforts and improve their members' quality of life.

Since Operation Serval ended, routes have been reorganised and the trafficking has rediscovered its momentum. The destabilising effect of these phenomena is particularly visible in northern Mali. Due to the absence of an effective sovereign state, it seems that jihadist organisations are gradually managing to create a pseudo-state structure, using money from trafficking. There is a risk that in the medium term this structure will allow these groups to guarantee the support of local populations.

Narco-state: an additional cause of destabilisation but recent positive developments.

Guinea-Bissau, blighted by a succession of coups, political instability and recurring poor governance, has in recent years become a narco-state and one of the main centres of cocaine trafficking in West Africa. Colombian cartels are heavily involved in this trafficking, and enjoy the support of prominent local civilian and military figures, who have helped them to establish a foothold and operate with impunity. In 2013 the Chief of Staff of the Guinea-Bissau Navy was detained off the coast of Cape Verde and is being prosecuted in the United States inter alia for cocaine trafficking.

However, 2014 has seen an improvement in the situation in **Guinea-Bissau**, with the formation of the new government and a new legislature. The country's highest authorities have reaffirmed their commitment to fighting organised crime. The UNODC intends to take advantage of this improvement to increase its activity in the country, prioritising the establishment of an adequate legal framework. This work could largely be funded by EUR 600 000 provided by the European Union's West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI), and the release of 20 million of blocked funds by the African Development Bank.

On the other hand, the UNODC is concerned by the situation in Guinea (Conakry), which may now represent the weak link in the fight against drug trafficking in West Africa due to state collusion at the highest level. The threat there is more diffuse and harder to identify than in Guinea-Bissau, where the army's involvement was evident.

Drug use is on the rise in West Africa.

Considered for a long time to be marginal, local drug use is increasing significantly. The use of (mainly locally-produced) cannabis is well-established, but we are now seeing the emergence of an African market for cocaine and heroin, pushed by traffickers who want to diversify their sales by creating a new market (targeting Africa's nascent middle classes in particular). However, West African countries do not have the precise data, reliable statistics, or monitoring bodies needed for an analysis of drug use trends.

National situations

II.1. GHANA

II.1.1. Cocaine

Ghana is one of the entry points for South American cocaine arriving in West Africa, both by air and by sea.

Major seizures have been made in recent months on air and sea routes:

- On 12 January 2013 a Nigerian national was apprehended at Accra's Kotoka airport with 2 kg of cocaine in his luggage. He was intending to fly to Barcelona via Casablanca.
- On 20 January 2013 at São Paulo airport two couriers, one German and one Ghanaian, were apprehended with 12.126 kg of cocaine, whilst preparing to board a flight to Accra (Ghana) via South Africa.
- On 12 February 2013 200 kg of cocaine were seized at the port of Tema (Ghana). The drugs were concealed inside perfume bottles in a container originating in Cochabamba (Bolivia). Two Nigerian traffickers were arrested during the subsequent investigation.
- On 12 April 2013 1 kg of cocaine was seized at the port of Takoradi (Ghana), having been concealed inside shoes in a container originating in Panama.
- In May 2013 the manager of the private company providing security at Accra international airport was arrested, having been implicated in major narcotics trafficking.

- On 19 November 2013 414 kg of cocaine were seized from a fishing boat off the Ghanaian coast (Takoradi). Five people were arrested, three of whom were from Guyana.
- On 31 May 2014 at Accra airport a Nigerian passenger was arrested, having ingested 60 packets of cocaine. His final destination was Paris Charles de Gaulle airport, via Amsterdam.
- On 6 August 2014 a Spanish passenger trying to leave Accra airport en route to Madrid was arrested with a suitcase containing 12 kg of cocaine.

II.1.2. Heroin

The trends previously observed have been confirmed in 2014: the majority, if not all, of the heroin seized in West Africa comes from Afghanistan, trafficked via Pakistan and then the airports of Dubai, Addis Ababa, Nairobi or Dar Es Salaam, or sea ports.

We would point out two significant cases: the seizure of 10 kg of heroin at Accra airport on 15 April 2014, carried by a Ghanaian passenger arriving from Tanzania, and the arrest of three passengers (two Nigerians and one Ghanaian) who had ingested 200 packets of heroin at Accra airport on 9 April 2014.

II.1.3. Cannabis

Herbal cannabis (commonly known as "we" in Ghana) is grown in several countries in the region (Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire) and significant amounts are trafficked around the region (Burkina Faso, Togo, Mali, Senegal, etc.) and beyond. The services responsible for fighting drug trafficking in West Africa are starting bilateral cooperation on this issue (Ghana/Burkina Faso, Ghana/Togo).

There have been several important cases in 2013 and 2014:

- Investigations are ongoing following the dismantling (between September 2012 and January 2013) of a drug trafficking network which had trafficked 3 703 kg of cannabis from Togo to the UK using diplomatic bags, with the complicity of an employee of the US embassy in Lomé.
- On 22 January 2013 a Beninese national was apprehended in Sanguera (Togo) in possession of 234 kg of herbal cannabis (concealed in his vehicle) which he had acquired in Ghana.

- On 30 January 2013 a passenger was arrested at Accra airport in possession of 25 litres of liquid cannabis and 7 kg of herbal cannabis when preparing to leave Ghana for London Heathrow airport.
- On 10 July 2013 250 kg of herbal cannabis found in air freight containing fruit and vegetables originating in Accra (Ghana) was seized at London Heathrow airport.
- On 14 March 2014 86 kg of herbal cannabis originating in Ghana was seized in Niamey (Niger).

II.1.4. Methamphetamine

This type of drug is generally destined for the Asian market (Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, etc.). The drugs are mainly trafficked by air passengers. Trafficking networks, the vast majority of which are run by Nigerians, are established in Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso and Ghana, but also in The Gambia and Senegal.

Three cases should be mentioned here:

- The arrest on 5 November 2013 at Accra airport (Ghana) of a passenger in possession of 5 kg of methamphetamine who was about to board a flight to Singapore via Dubai and Colombo (Sri Lanka).
- The arrest on 10 November 2013 at Accra airport (Ghana) of a passenger leaving for Dubai in possession of 6 kg of methamphetamine.
- The interception on 9 February 2014 at Leipzig airport (Germany) of a parcel containing 691 grams of amphetamine concealed in filters originating in Accra (Ghana).

II.1.5. Precursor chemicals

There were no large-scale seizures of precursor chemicals in 2013 or 2014. This may be explained by the local authorities' ignorance of these products, or a certain lack of interest, which would justify a serious effort to provide training.

II.2. BENIN

On 16 April 2014, representatives of the Dublin mini group members and Switzerland met in the French embassy in Cotonou. The meeting resulted in a joint statement by the Dublin mini group (annexed to this report), which was delivered by hand to the Head of State on 13 May 2014.

Like the other countries in the sub-region, Benin remains highly exposed to drug trafficking, with a rise in synthetic drug trafficking, together with an increase in local consumption. Although Benin has the resources needed to tackle the situation effectively, results are proving poor despite the official statements professing the authorities' political will.

II.2.1. Characteristics of trafficking

Benin is a transit country for drugs originating in South American countries and bound for Europe, part of Africa and some Asian countries. The diversification and current intensified use of air routes for transporting drugs represent a constantly growing threat. While the port and international airport remain trafficking hotspots, it also appears that package courier companies are being used to make deliveries. Lastly, there are strong suspicions that drugs are being illegally unloaded off the coast between Cotonou and Grand Popo.

Local consumption is on the rise and leaning towards 'hard' drugs. Cannabis is still the most widely used drug due to its price, but cocaine use is growing. Likewise, Tramadol pills are now commonly found for FCFA 60 a unit, and small '*dosettes*' (dosage units of a heavily cut mix of heroin/cocaine) for FCFA 500.

Cannabis

With a local sale price of between FCFA 12 000 and 15 000 per kilogram, cannabis remains the most pervasive drug in terms of trafficking. It can be produced locally (cash crop), in which case it is most often consumed locally. Imported products are primarily transported by road and cater for the sub-regional market. The preferred route for this trade currently appears to be Accra-Lomé-Cotonou-Lagos or Niamey.

Cocaine

The local sale price for cocaine stands at around FCFA 20 000 per gram. Other countries' seizures of products heading to the port of Cotonou attest to the scale of the trade. However, seizures are as difficult to make as ever. Numbers remain low and clearly do not reflect the real extent of trafficking.

The opening of an Ethiopian Airlines route linking São Paulo and Casablanca, and then serving airports in West Africa, has undeniably led to an increase in seizures of the drug ingested in the form of pellets.

Heroin

The local sale price for heroin is between FCFA 15 000 and 17 000 per gram. Local consumption of heroin is continuing to grow, spawning related crime that is primarily affecting the poorer districts of Cotonou.

Synthetic drugs

Synthetic drugs, the growing importance of which can be seen in the seizures made in early 2013, were only seized in minimal amounts in the second half of the year. Such substances are primarily intended for the Asian market, but some are also consumed in Europe and even in the sub-region. While there is evidence that synthetic drugs are being produced in Nigeria, this has not yet been observed in Benin. However, imports of chemical precursors should be monitored extremely closely.

II.2.2. Drug consumption in Benin

<i>(value in kg)</i>	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Cannabis	35.76	1 333	1 685	1 758.3	391.9
Heroin	0.041	200.28	7	148.6	7.3
Cocaine	13.16	425.36	69.8	34.90	93.87
Methamphetamine	9.95	24.13	34.9	47.30	1.316
Ephedrine				226	
Nitric acid					22 080
TRAMADOL			61 000	7 532	10 421
TOTAL*	58.911	1 982.8	1 796.7	2 215.1	494.4

*Excluding Tramadol and nitric acid

II.2.3. Trends in routes and modi operandi

No official study has been conducted by the Benin authorities. However, whereas previously Benin was primarily considered a transit country, it now appears that criminal organisations have been working to create local demand for other drugs in addition to cannabis. In disadvantaged areas of the major urban centres, it is becoming increasingly common to find very small doses of very heavily cut cocaine and heroin on sale for between FCFA 50 and 500 (between EUR 0.07 and 0.75). Sometimes, the weight of those 'dosettes' cannot even be measured. If that trend persists, it will expose the country to increased risk both in terms of crime and in terms of public health and governance.

As for modes of transport, while the use of air routes is on the rise, sea transport remains predominant, in particular as regards the quantity of drugs transported. Seizures of cocaine in Morocco and West Africa, on airlines arriving from São Paulo airport (Brazil), have been multiplying since the end of 2013. In most cases, they point to the involvement of Nigerian networks. Concerning methods, the organisations circumvent the systems put in place by the authorities by using new modi operandi such as the air 'rip-off' (conveying drugs in another passenger's luggage, unbeknownst to them), 'transshipments', modifying registered reservations (despite the extra cost involved) or buying decoy tickets.

II.2.4. Local authority actions

The government has declared its determination to fight organised crime, particularly that related to drug trafficking. In practice, however, human resources and equipment are sorely lacking and the authorities have too great a tendency to rely on potential allocations of equipment from donors.

The Beninese armed forces occupy a privileged position within the state apparatus and are omnipresent when it comes to internal security, despite criticism from leading members of the police and gendarmerie. Without going so far as to suggest that military personnel are directly involved in organising trafficking, it is said that they have a propensity for corruption.

The DSLD (Documentation and Liaison Services Department), an intelligence body attached to the military cabinet and president of the Republic, models itself as Benin's umbrella structure for intelligence, including on the subject of drugs, yet it does not organise information sharing with the civilian forces. Airspace management for light aircraft is the responsibility of the military cabinet, a fact which can hinder the proper conduct of certain investigations.

The armed forces regularly intervene in tasks outside their remit (cotton harvest, crime-fighting operations, combating petrol trafficking, etc.), frequently going beyond the mere provision of equipment. In such conditions, operations are still carried out under the direct command of the armed forces chief of staff, in an opaque, corporatist atmosphere that erodes their efficacy. Thus, although several alerts have been transmitted, the establishment of a signal station at Grand Popo has yet to produce concrete results, and it seems that operational information is not being transmitted to the competent police departments.

Similarly, the military retains a strong presence and involvement at the airport in the absence of any transparency, potentially giving reason to believe that trafficking could go unnoticed by the civilian authorities in charge of the site.

The only concrete achievements can be put down to action by OCERTID, the Central Office Against Illegal Drug Trafficking (and the units which are, insofar as can be expected, attached to it). Even though OCERTID has made real progress in terms of its operational capacity and is a reasonably reliable operational interface, its results are still far from satisfactory and are overly dependent on the goodwill of a number of elements and the daily involvement of foreign liaison officers.

Corruption remains a major obstacle to resolving the situation. Provisions on the seizure of criminal assets have never been implemented, and, while theoretically delegated to CENTIF (national body for processing financial information founded in 2006), financial flow monitoring is inoperative.

II.2.5. State of play on cooperation

There is considerable bilateral cooperation, in particular with US, French, UK and German services. It takes the form of advisory and training actions or the provision of resources (vehicles, IT equipment, etc.), which are in high demand among the Benin authorities. Local efforts are being made to achieve synergies between donors' actions, which have already led to concrete results (e.g. joint French-American conference for the Benin security forces, funded by the US and including addresses by a public prosecutor and a police officer from France).

As part of the informal Fontanot Group, the French cooperation services in Benin organise regular meetings to exchange and share information on ongoing technical cooperation actions so as to ensure their proper coordination and to streamline projects by meeting the local authorities' needs.

II.2.6. Salient points and updates

An order was issued to destroy (incinerate) 129 tonnes of Tramadol seized at the autonomous port of Cotonou in 2012. That case is still bearing fruit as several disciplinary measures were taken against police officers. It was also decided, in accordance with past recommendations by the Dublin mini group, to give legal status to the joint units (UMCC – Joint Unit for the Control of Containers at the port of Cotonou, and CAAT – Cotonou airport anti-trafficking unit), link them with OCERTID and allocate them sufficient human resources and equipment.

However, the developments in the joint units (OCERTID, UMCC and CAAT) – the latter two of which are direct offshoots of the Aircop and Seacop programmes (European Union and UNODC) – should not cover up their weaknesses or the question marks still hanging over Benin's actual commitment to those programmes.

II.2.7. Expectations of members of the Dublin mini group in Cotonou

With its legal framework and expanding human and material resources, Benin should have the tools needed to deal with the surge in drug trafficking, yet its results to date are disappointing.

The general feeling among members of the Dublin mini group in Cotonou is that Benin's commitment to combating drug trafficking still leaves something to be desired, despite a number of initiatives introduced at the insistence of its main donors. Beyond the lack of resources cited by our partners to justify the unsatisfactory results, the decisive factors are actually the shortage of political will and the poor organisation of the police and justice services.

The members of the mini group also reiterate their concern that combating crime in general and drug trafficking in particular should remain the responsibility of the civil authorities, including as regards the operational aspect.

II.2.8. Dublin mini group's recommendations

Regarding past recommendations, the members of the mini group are pleased with the progress that has been made: a decree has been adopted introducing a national strategy for maritime security, as have the legislative texts required to fight criminal activity linked to serious organised crime; decrees have been published implementing law 2011-20 of 12 October 2011 on corruption, money laundering and the seizure of criminal assets, etc.

However, they deem it necessary to reiterate most of their past recommendations and ask that Benin make a stronger commitment to combating corruption and money laundering, in particular by:

- providing OCERTID with the appropriate resources, and ensuring that the departments of the national gendarmerie, the customs and excise play an effective role in its activities;
- giving CENTIF, the body responsible for processing financial information, more staff and more resources;
- involving the staff of OCERTID, customs and criminal police in the surveillance and response patrols in territorial waters organised by the navy;
- effectively and rigorously applying the law on the seizure of goods and assets of traffickers;
- introducing a new legislative measure making it possible for part of the funds generated from the legal sale of seized goods and assets or part of the goods and assets themselves to be used for the direct benefit of OCERTID;

- giving Cotonou airport's CAAT and the port's UMCC appropriate human and financial resources and continuing to integrate them in the national system for combating organised crime;
- carrying out drug destruction operations more frequently and at the instigation of the competent Benin authorities. Destruction operations, as well as drug seizures and storage conditions, must be governed by a strict framework and comply with the laws in force.

II.3. NIGERIA

The vast majority of drug-related cases in Nigeria involve the cultivation, consumption and trafficking (between Nigeria's federal states) of herbal cannabis, local consumption of which is considerable. That does not affect international trafficking of drugs to western countries: as herbal cannabis has a very low production cost and sale price, very few traffickers take the risk of transporting it abroad by plane. However, Nigeria is most certainly a transit country for cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine.

II.3.1 The main airport

With a daily average of 150 domestic and international flights, and an annual footfall of around 6.1 million passengers, Lagos international airport is the nerve centre for importing and exporting small quantities of drugs (ingested, in hand luggage or checked-in luggage, accompanied or unaccompanied).

The port of Lagos, for its part, is a hub for trafficking larger quantities. Very few seizures are made there, in particular due to the collusion of control officers.

As regards exposure to drug trafficking, Lagos international airport serves the most sensitive destinations, where there is generally a large Nigerian diaspora. There are not, however, any direct flights to South or Central America. Apart from domestic flights, which account for some 75 % of daily traffic (Port Harcourt and Abuja), the air routes from Lagos airport are primarily to Europe (London, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Paris, Rome), the United States (New York, Houston), East Africa (Nairobi, Addis Ababa) South Africa (Johannesburg) and the Middle East (Dubai).

II.3.2. Trafficking trends

According to statistics produced by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the volume of drug trafficking increased from 234 000 kg in 2012 to 340 000 kg in 2013. 8 843 individuals involved in drug trafficking were arrested in 2013, as against 8 052 in 2012. About 95 % of those arrested were men.

The largest seizures were of cannabis (205 000 kg, produced locally), followed by methamphetamine (340 kg), cocaine (290 kg), heroin (25 kg) and amphetamine (20 kg).

Cocaine is imported primarily from Brazil (in particular from São Paulo airport and the port of Santos). Heroin is imported via the main air hubs in East Africa, the Middle East (the most sensitive point of transit being Dubai in the United Arab Emirates) and, more recently, India.

There is a Nigerian emigrant community in Brazil numbering tens of thousands of people, some of whom are involved in cocaine trafficking, as is the case in the United Kingdom (which has a population of about 1 million persons of Nigerian origin or nationality) and the United States (where there is a diaspora of some 2 million people). The Nigerian diaspora plays a key role in the organisation of drug trafficking. The Nigerian networks, which extend across the countries of origin, transit and final consumption, typically consist of individuals from the same ethnicity, village, or even family, which serves as a guarantee of reliability and efficiency. These cells are powerful, responsive, mobile, resourceful and fully operational. They are present in Nigeria and in other countries – Benin, Ghana, Cameroon, Angola, South Africa, Togo, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry – where Nigerian nationals are involved in a significant number of seizures.

The Nigerian networks thus operate largely outside Nigeria, and have realised the advantages of doing so. Lax controls at borders, and the possibility of crossing them without a visa, within the ECOWAS area, facilitate trafficking and allow those engaged in it to take refuge in Nigeria when they are detected. In addition, the proportion of legal proceedings which are referred between States (e.g. Benin and Nigeria) is negligible. As a result, even when they have been identified, traffickers can escape prosecution. Language, and differences between legal systems, are the main obstacles to combating impunity in the region.

II.3.3. Modi operandi

The Nigerian networks use traditional methods ranging from the "mule" system (which consists in swallowing packets of drugs and subsequently returning them) to hiding drugs in tubers [such as yams], works of art, cool boxes, luggage handles or laptop bags, etc.

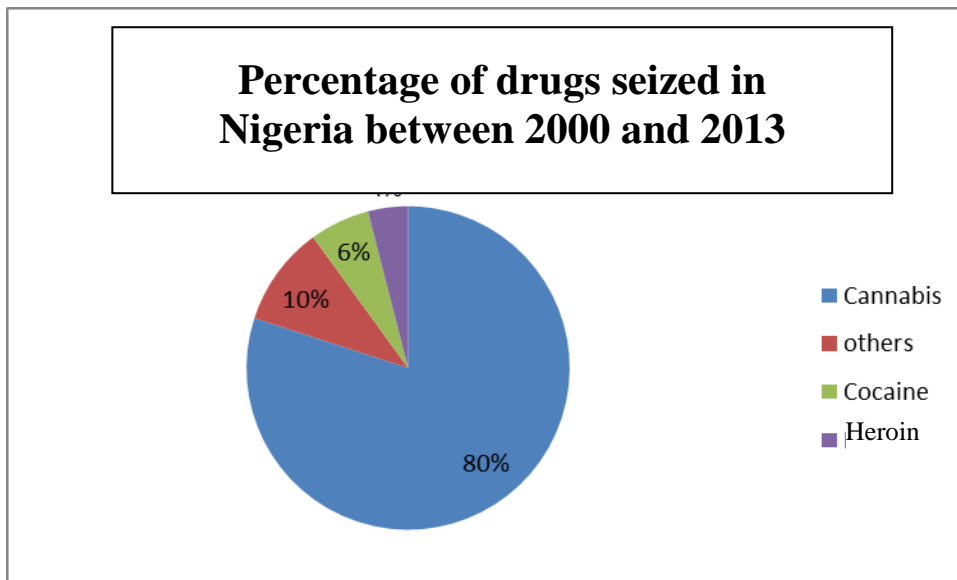
The three airlines most commonly used by drug traffickers are Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways and Emirates, followed by Ethiopian Airlines, South African Airways, Arik, Turkish Airlines and Kenya Airways. KLM and Air France rank 9th and 10th.

The volume of drugs imported for final consumption in Nigeria is less than that of drugs in transit. Persons arrested at Lagos airport are generally bound for China, Malaysia and South Africa. France ranks 11th among the countries of destination, accounting for 1.27 % of seizures. Nigeria is thus primarily a transit country. It should be noted that traffickers prefer to avoid direct flights in order not to attract attention and/or to keep transport costs to a minimum.

II.3.4 Current pattern of drug seizures in Nigeria

Drug seizures in Nigeria mainly involve cannabis (see chart).

Although Nigeria is a transit country, it is beginning to become a drug-producing country: a number of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories have been discovered since 2010.



II.3.4 Current state of international cooperation

The NDLEA maintains a close relationship with the European Union, in particular through the NGAV 16 project, the aim of which is to provide Nigeria with all material and non-material support necessary to enable the agency to fulfil its remit. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is also very active, as well as the United States Embassy, with a number of training programmes. France, for its part, is envisaging setting up a joint training module together with the United States Embassy, as part of the ALCAO project to support the fight against drug trafficking in West Africa.

II.4. SENEGAL, CAPE VERDE, GAMBIA AND GUINEA-BISSAU

The main point of entry for cocaine in West Africa is no longer Guinea-Bissau but the Cape Verde archipelago, where criminal activities, and the recycling of their proceeds into the legal economy, are growing. Nigerian organised crime's domination of the cocaine traffic in continental West Africa is becoming increasingly clear. The rise of Cape Verdean organised crime in the archipelago is also evident. Contrary to certain allegations, which have occasionally been reported in the press, no systematic link has been established between cocaine trafficking and terrorist movements in West Africa.

It should be noted that there has been a significant deterioration in relations with the Gambian and Guinean internal security services, whose cooperation with their foreign counterparts is virtually non-existent.

Production of, and trafficking in, synthetic drugs is also growing in West Africa, while consumption of high-quality herbal cannabis has appeared in Senegal, which could be an early indication of Moroccan producers' interest in the West African market. In Senegal, the internal security services still show too little engagement in dismantling trafficking networks, as does the judiciary in implementing procedures for extraditing traffickers / criminals arrested in the country.

This report also includes an overview of the current state of cooperation between France and the various partners in Senegal in the fight against trafficking and organised crime, together with the operational recommendations made by the French drugs liaison officer responsible for the region in Dakar. Lastly, it includes assessments of cooperation with Cape Verde, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau – for which the Internal Security Attaché (*attaché de sécurité intérieure – ASI*) and liaison officer (*officier de liaison – ODL*) responsible for drugs in the [French Embassy's] Internal Security Department have geographical competence, and Guinea-Conakry, which falls within the liaison officer's sphere of responsibility.

II.4.1. Trends in trafficking and regional production

Cocaine

The appearance of West African cocaine routes, leading to Europe, goes back to the end of the 1990s. The volume of this traffic, which is constantly evolving, is difficult to estimate, for two main reasons. Firstly, the internal security services in West Africa are law enforcement bodies which do not have a well-developed culture of intelligence-gathering and investigation. Secondly, the European law enforcement agencies are focused on the main routes for the supply of cocaine to Europe, from Central and South America, and do not devote sufficient resources to the African supply routes. Consequently, estimates concerning the African cocaine routes are generally approximate, or indeed fanciful. Based on the legal cases processed in Europe and on technical sources, it can reasonably be estimated that the proportion of cocaine consumed in Europe which has passed through West Africa is a little under 10 %.

Brazil is the main platform for the distribution to West Africa of cocaine carried by air (commercial flights). The arrests of couriers in recent months, at Dakar and Bissau international airports, bear witness to this. The mules are mostly nationals of Nigeria and Guinea-Bissau. They travel to West Africa from São Paulo via Addis Ababa (Ethiopian Airlines), Lisbon (TAP) or Lomé (ASKY).

In the early stages of cocaine trafficking in West Africa, the South American (primarily Colombian) cartels controlled all the traffic in the sub-region. When Nigerian criminal groups began to work as intermediaries for the Colombian cartels, they were paid in cocaine. The "need" to market the drug in order to cash in their profits served, as it were, as the Nigerians' apprenticeship in this traffic, in which they have become highly adept.

Nigerian groups now dominate the cocaine market in West Africa. The diaspora, which is firmly established in Brazil, especially in São Paulo, facilitates the growth in the supply of drugs to Europe and East Africa via West Africa. The legal proceedings brought by the law enforcement agencies in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau against couriers travelling from São Paulo show that most of the suppliers are Nigerian and, in fewer and fewer cases, Brazilian or South American.

Since the second half of 2013, the frequency of flights from São Paulo via Casablanca to West Africa and from Dubai to Dakar has increased. The traffickers use the technique known as "transshipment". On the transatlantic leg of the journey, the drugs are hidden in luggage and landed in the United Arab Emirates. On the shorter continental flight, they are swallowed by other couriers. Swallowing pellets of drugs is the preferred means of concealment on these Middle East-Africa routes. When the drug is carried in the body, a mule can typically swallow up to 150 pellets (each weighing about 10 grams). In recent months, Nigerian Customs officers have detained several mules at Lagos international airport to whom the consignment had been passed by an accomplice who had flown from São Paulo to Dubai. In these cases, the handover had occurred in Dubai. There was no information available concerning the initial departure from Brazil of the courier and the consignment, making it difficult for the law enforcement agencies to trace.

Major seizures have also been made, since the beginning of the year, at Casablanca international airport. Nigerian couriers travelling from São Paulo (drugs hidden in the hold baggage) were detained on 18 March (8 couriers on two flights, with RAM and Ethiopian Airlines); a total of 75 kg of cocaine was seized. On 22 March, 17 couriers were detained; a total of 40 kg of cocaine was seized on two RAM flights.

The fact that the cocaine routes pass through West Africa acts as a destabilising influence. In Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia and even Senegal, the traffic gives rise to corruption among the armed forces, the internal security services and the judiciary. It is also astonishing that, at the beginning of October, the Senegalese judicial authorities released a French drug trafficker arrested in July 2014 in Dakar on the basis of a Mauritanian international arrest warrant (the case relates to 761 kg of cocaine seized in Mauritania, where he was sentenced to 10 years in prison). This is not an isolated case. Two other French nationals, arrested for criminal acts in recent months in Senegal on the basis of French international arrest warrants, were also released before their extradition.

Cocaine trafficking is a factor leading to the criminalisation of the economy. In Cape Verde the phenomenon, which is no doubt more conspicuous there than elsewhere in the sub-region, is reflected in money-laundering operations in real estate and in business. The archipelago has become the main point of entry for the drug in West Africa by sea (fishing boats, recreational vessels), taking over from Guinea-Bissau. This development can be explained by the DEA operation in April 2013 which led to the arrest of Rear-Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto, and by the fact that, for several months, foreign observers and ECOWAS security forces (ECOMIB) were present in Bissau. The recent dismissal of General Antonio Indjai, the Chief of Defence Staff and a major player in the narco-military complex in Guinea-Bissau, should confirm this trend. Cape Verde, which is closer to the coast of Spain and Portugal, can scarcely control its territorial waters. Only one of its security forces' ships is capable of carrying out operations on the high seas. Currently, the archipelago is the area in West Africa where the price of cocaine is lowest: between EUR 9 000 and 11 000 per kilogram wholesale, as against EUR 18 000 in Senegal (by way of comparison, about EUR 35 000 in France and EUR 45 000 in the United Kingdom).

The murder, on 17 September, of the mother of the head of an anti-drugs unit, probably linked to the affair of the Lancha Voadora (seizure of 1.5 tonnes of cocaine on the island of Santiago in October 2011), set off shock waves among the Cape Verdean police. The murder can be seen as objective evidence of the establishment in the archipelago of criminal groups, among whom there are many Cape Verdeans from the diaspora.

Further to the south, the lack of cooperation between the Gambian and Guinean (Conakry) internal security services and their foreign counterparts is cause for concern. And yet these two countries constitute transit corridors for cocaine trafficking in West Africa, especially for the disposal of stock remaining in Guinea-Bissau. Exchanges between drugs liaison officers in Dakar highlight the difficulty now being encountered when it comes to cooperation with these two countries. The relationship which had previously been established with the Gambian and Guinean Customs services is deteriorating. For about a year now, officers from the UK NCA (National Crime Agency) have been meeting with obstacles when working with the Gambian services, among whom they nonetheless had many contacts.

As for seaborne trafficking, the autonomous port of Dakar, like other ports in West Africa, remains vulnerable to the use of containers by cocaine traffickers. In the absence of X-ray machines for containers, it is difficult for countries in the sub-region, which have in any case devoted little attention to profiling techniques, to check the containers. The "rip-off" technique (sending illicit goods without the knowledge of legitimate players in the transport industry) is especially well-suited to conveying drugs through the ports in West Africa. In Europe, the Spanish, Dutch, Belgian and French ports are destinations which are particularly exposed to the risk of receiving containers which have been loaded in this way. It should be noted that a Joint Container Inspection Unit [*Unité Mixte de Contrôle des Containers – UMCC*], consisting of Customs officers and an officer from the Central Anti-Drugs Office [*Office central pour la répression du trafic illicite de stupéfiants – OCRTIS*] has been established in the autonomous port of Dakar. This unit has not made any seizure since the beginning of 2013.

It seems that traffickers are no longer using light aircraft. It was previously discovered that twin-engine planes (Avro 748, adapted Cessna, Beechcraft 300) and jets (Falcon 50) had crossed the Atlantic from Brazil and Venezuela to the Sahel, the Bissagos Islands and Conakry. There has been no recent seizure or reliable information to confirm the current use of this means of transport, although there are clues that some residual trafficking by air may be continuing (but we only have minimal information on trafficking in Guinea). The last seizure to take place from a light aircraft in this area was in August 2012, when a Bombardier aircraft transporting 1.5 tonnes of cocaine was intercepted in the Canary Islands. The "Ailes Africaines" ("African Wings") operation, organised over several days in April by the World Customs Organisation and UNODC to inspect light aircraft in nine West African countries, did not result in any major seizure of narcotics.

This type of trafficking is only possible with the collusion of members of the security forces. With the exception of the "Air Cocaine" Boeing which came down in northern Mali in the autumn of 2009, it does not seem that wide-bodied aircraft capable of transporting several tonnes of cocaine from Venezuela or Brazil to West Africa are currently being used.

Methamphetamine

It is now clear that methamphetamine is being trafficked from The Gambia both to Europe and to Asia and Australia. Here again Nigerian networks are clearly involved and are proving their capacity to sell from West Africa a synthetic drug produced in clandestine laboratories in the region itself.

Two recent cases in which French and German nationals were apprehended at Jakarta international airport (Indonesia) shed light on a new type of courier: European, aged between 40 and 50, using a plane ticket bought with cash as close as possible to the flight's departure from agencies in Banjul (The Gambia), without the courier ever having been in the country.

These cases illustrate the ability of criminal organisations to circumvent the strategies aimed at thwarting their actions. The use of European couriers will throw the security forces' investigators off the track, since they are focusing their efforts on people from West Africa. The UK's National Crime Agency reports that 45 British couriers were apprehended in 2013 having transported methamphetamine from Banjul to South-East Asia or Australia, twice as many as in 2012.

Cannabis

Currently unaffected by the trafficking of cannabis resin, Senegal is a country in which people use "yamba", the local name for poor-quality herbal cannabis with low levels of THC. This trade involves production in Ghana (then transit through Burkina Faso and Mali before reaching Senegal) and in Casamance and distribution in the local area, but does not involve large sums of money. Unlike the cocaine trade, it does not threaten the stability of countries in this region. It is however a constant source of concern for the region's law enforcement authorities whose anti-drugs actions all too often consist of arresting lorry drivers transporting cannabis and seizing the goods, which are then destroyed in solemn and highly-publicised ceremonies, without police investigators doing any real in-depth work to identify the networks behind this trade.

II.4.2. State of play on the use of various drugs

The Senegalese OCRTIS (Central Office Against Illegal Drug Trafficking) reports that, in addition to the common use of "yamba", the previously marginal use of crack cocaine has been increasing in Senegal over the past two years.

This year there have been the first seizures of better quality herbal cannabis with a higher THC content. This "new herbal cannabis" is produced in Ghana. The demand for it seems to come from young Senegalese people who have lived in Europe or who travel often and are used to herbal cannabis with a higher THC content. If this trend develops, it could open the way for Moroccan cannabis resin to be brought into the Dakar peninsula.

Cocaine use is still minimal and exclusive to wealthy young people in Dakar or on the Petite Côte who take the drug at private parties. So far the authorities have not questioned these users, whose families often have a privileged relationship with the local powers that be.

II.4.3. Progress report on international cooperation

UNODC: the ECOWAS Action Plan, which received EUR 16 million in funding from the European Commission in 2009, should finally be launched this year (operated by the UNODC on behalf of the beneficiary). The plan is now outdated and must be brought up to date. The initial planned measures related to the justice system and steps to reduce demand, within the framework of a regional approach to the drugs problem. The UNODC also plans to set up a regional drugs monitoring body in the Sahel, financed by France.

France: For several years, France has been working to strengthen the capacities of OCRTIS, which is a fully-fledged directorate of the national police force (through the provision of training in investigative techniques and donation of equipment). This work is funded by the French government's Interministerial Mission for the Fight Against Drugs and Addictive Behaviours (MILDECA) (contributing EUR 30 000 in 2014) and the Priority Solidarity Fund in Support of the Fight against Cocaine Trafficking in West Africa (FSP ALCAO, contributing EUR 25 000 in 2014). In 2014, this money is being used to fund training in investigative techniques for the criminal police in Cape Verde and for the criminal investigation division of the Senegalese police force. France is also kept informed of international letters rogatory relating to drugs trafficking, and plans to donate operative and IT equipment and an underwater surveillance vehicle to Senegal.

Spain: No anti-drugs action was planned for 2014, since Spanish cooperation is focusing on migration issues and on stepping up border controls (involvement in the West Sahel regional plan, financed by the EU to the amount of EUR 2.2 million; border measures are being implemented by the Guardia Civil).

Canada: Canadian cooperation is concentrated on support for ECOWAS, which is the only regional institution identified as a discussion partner. Fighting terrorism and irregular migration are Canada's stated priorities for cooperation on internal security matters. Canada did however organise a regional training course on interview techniques in Dakar in August 2014 for the Senegalese gendarmerie and criminal investigation division.

Japan: The fight against drug trafficking in West Africa is not a central part of Japan's cooperation work, which prioritises counter-terrorism, assistance for the region's stabilisation and furthering dialogue with Muslim countries in Africa.

Italy: Amongst other things, Italy organised the following events in 2014: a two-week training course on dog handling for two officials from the Senegalese gendarmerie, in Dakar; the same type of course for two officials from the Cape Verde criminal police, in Praia; a two-week coaching programme for Ghanaian customs officers in Accra, and the same programme for Gambian customs officers in Banjul (October 2014), both under Operation COCAIR.

United Kingdom: The UK organised a training course under Operation WestBridge for Gambian customs officers (identical to the training provided in Ghana). The course was run in March by two instructors from the UK Border Force stationed in Ghana. A training course for Gambian police officers on powder detection (HEMISER) has been scheduled for the end of 2014 in Banjul. Lastly, a week-long training course on software for analysing mobile phone memories (XRY) has been organised for the second half of 2014 for police officers working at the OCRTIS.

Belgium: The Senegalese Director-General of the National Police (DGPN) was invited to spend a week in Belgium, and this visit is planned for the second half of 2014. Belgium will also provide a week-long training course for Senegalese police officers on professional ethics (date to be confirmed).

USA: We have received no information about planned or implemented cooperation actions, even though the USA currently has a very active policy of identifying the best elements of the counter-narcotics services in the region. (The Deputy Head of the OCRTIS will visit Texas in January 2014).

II.4.4. Operational recommendations

1. Build up the capacity of the justice system by training prosecutors, examining magistrates and judges.
2. Ensure that qualified and available liaison officers are assigned to the Dakar regional drugs platform.
3. Support and promote the Senegalese OCRTIS' work to fight the trafficking of drugs likely to be re-exported (cocaine and methamphetamine) and to dismantle networks trafficking cocaine and synthetic drugs, and encourage it to stop focusing only on sending drug mules to court.
4. Ensure that investigators have access to technical material (telephony, centralised filing).
5. When cooperating on technical matters, ensure that local services obtain the necessary skills (i.e. by training trainers).
6. Encourage the authorities to develop a proper human resources policy which will allow them to retain qualified agents who can specialise in the fight against drug trafficking.
7. Make a particular effort regarding the port of Dakar, which is a major weak point in the fight against drug trafficking.
8. Increase the role of Interpol's National Central Bureau in Dakar in order to improve international cooperation.

II.5 TOGO

Togo remains a reliable and responsive partner in the fight against drug trafficking, although its investigations could still be improved. Regional cooperation, facilitated by drugs liaison officers working at regional platforms, allows operational information to be circulated quickly. Cocaine trafficking using the flight link between São Paulo and Lomé remains the major cause for concern in relation to Togo.

Drug seizures are mainly made by the Central Office for the Fight against Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering (OCTRIDB) and the central division of the criminal police.

II.5.1. Trends in trafficking and production

There have been seizures of herbal cannabis, cocaine and methamphetamine in Togo.

(a) Herbal cannabis

Due to its geographical location, Togo is a country of transit between Ghana and Benin, both of which produce herbal cannabis. Law enforcement agencies have not discovered any cannabis-growing facility in Togo, despite the country having a similar climate to its two neighbours mentioned above. Since the start of 2014, six cases have led to the seizure of 226 kg in total of herbal cannabis. The amount seized has decreased in 2014, but this does not reflect the reality of cannabis trafficking, since the number of users is on the increase (see below).

(b) Cocaine

Cocaine trafficking is increasing significantly, with 24 cases of the drug being imported in the first nine months of 2014, leading to the seizure of 164 kg of cocaine. Most of these seizures took place at Lomé international airport, from passengers using the São Paulo-Lomé flight and transiting through Togo in order to reach Nigeria or other countries in the region. Various methods were used to smuggle cocaine by air (cocaine swallowed in packets, impregnated into clothing or concealed in suitcases). Sea routes are also used to traffic large quantities of cocaine from South America (Lomé has the only deep-water port in the local area). In 2014 one single case involved the seizure of 33.2 kg of cocaine. Earlier seizures were made back in 2011.

(c) Methamphetamine

Given that there are laboratories producing methamphetamine in the region, mainly in Nigeria, the Togolese law enforcement authorities remain vigilant, particularly when dealing with passengers on flights to Asia (China, Japan, etc.) where these drugs are used. However, no seizure of methamphetamine has been made since the start of 2014.

II.5.2. Current drug use in Togo

There are no reliable statistics on drug use in Togo, making it difficult to have an accurate picture of the situation. However, the specialised services are reporting an increase in the number of herbal cannabis users. Cocaine use is difficult to gauge, because the cases in which action was taken in 2014 involved only couriers or traffickers, not users. The same is true for methamphetamine, which seems to be destined exclusively for the Asian market.

II.5.3. International cooperation on the fight against drugs

(a) Multilateral cooperation

Regional intelligence platforms, run by drugs liaison officers in Ghana and Dakar, make this cooperation more effective. More specifically, they allow operational intelligence from different countries to be shared securely with Togo's specialised services, and this regularly leads to drug seizures.

(b) Regional cooperation

Networks of liaison officers based in different countries in the region allow information to be circulated quickly and efficiently and therefore assist the Togolese services when their investigations involve nationals of other countries.

In Togo, the OCRTIDB is systematically involved in all training activities in order to consolidate its role as coordinator.

France provides support through the FSP ALCAO. This project promotes the regional approach to tackling cocaine trafficking in West Africa and allows participant countries to benefit from training tailored to their needs and location. Tackling the financial flows connected to drug trafficking is also part of this project.

This training, based on sharing experience and good practice between the donors' central structure and the authorities in Togo and in neighbouring countries responsible for fighting drug trafficking, allows the OCTRIDB to establish relationships of trust, thus laying the groundwork for particularly effective and responsive operational cooperation.

II.4.4. Operational recommendations

Although the exchange of intelligence often leads to drug seizures, the subsequent criminal investigations rarely allow supply chains to be identified and need to be improved.

It is therefore important to continue providing training and advice to the services responsible for fighting this type of organised crime. This is particularly relevant since the port of Lomé is expanding rapidly.

II.6. EQUATORIAL GUINEA

In the absence of official statistics we cannot have an accurate overview of the situation, but so far Equatorial Guinea does not seem to be affected by organised, large-scale drug trafficking. Only a few cases of drug use and detention have been recorded by the security forces. We must nevertheless monitor this central African country, particularly since several factors (its geographical position, "Hispanic nature", weaknesses in state apparatus, etc.) could in the short to medium term make it a springboard for cocaine arriving from Latin America.

It is also difficult to assess the trafficking situation and the level of drug-related crime in Equatorial Guinea without any official statistics. However, the information gathered does indicate that there are small quantities of herbal cannabis and cocaine in the country's urban centres. On the other hand, heroin, cannabis resin and synthetic drugs seem to be completely absent.

II.6.1. Current trafficking situation and trends

Only **two confirmed cases of drug trafficking** were reported in 2014:

- In August, a package containing 40 kg herbal cannabis was seized on a bulk commercial vessel arriving from Cameroon. The discovery led to the arrest of the two smugglers, who were Nigerian nationals. No further information is available concerning their degree of involvement in the trafficking or the exact origin of the drugs.

On 15 September 250 grams of cocaine (purity unknown) was seized at London Gatwick airport, concealed in a parcel on its way from Bogotá (Colombia) to an individual living in Malabo.

In addition to these cases, local rumours report that body-packing is being used by Nigerian nationals to traffic unspecified drugs by air. While this appears likely, given the porosity of the air border and the shortcomings of international cooperation (in particular information sharing), there is no objective data to confirm it.

The rare occurrences and the relatively low quantities seized therefore mean that Equatorial Guinea cannot be considered the site of large-scale, organised drug trafficking.

II.6.2. Local production trends

Although there is no objective evidence, it seems that Equatorial Guinea does not produce any natural or chemical psychotropic substances.

II.6.3. Consumption

Two types of consumption have been identified on the basis of the evidence collected:

- domestic use of herbal cannabis within working-class environments;
- recreational use of cocaine by affluent youth, generally in nightclubs.

II.6.4. International cooperation

Equatorial Guinea is not sufficiently involved in the development of police or judicial cooperation with its neighbours, either in Central Africa or West Africa. The few agreements in place are generally "empty shells" that have not resulted in any practical measures.

It is worth noting that within the Ministry of National Security there is no **specialised contact point**, service or expert for combating drug trafficking.

II.6.5. Operational recommendations

Although Equatorial Guinea seems only marginally affected by drug trafficking and consumption, **certain factors** could nevertheless raise concerns that it might become a springboard for cocaine from South America in the short or medium term.

Ideally situated on the Gulf of Guinea at the confluence of transatlantic cocaine flows, Equatorial Guinea, the only Spanish-speaking country in Africa, could become an alternative for traffickers keen to evade anti-drug measures and the growing police pressure in other countries, especially West African countries.

The deterrent effect of a notoriously tough crackdown by local police is largely offset by deficient customs controls and the resultant ease with which the borders (air, sea and land) can be crossed. Officers (at all levels) are easily corruptible, poorly trained and supplied with mediocre and often faulty equipment. Given that measures can be easily circumvented, Equatorial Guinea could therefore offer a new gateway into Africa for cocaine trafficking. Furthermore, Equatorial Guinea has not been identified as an at-risk State for this type of trafficking, and so vessels loading in and even transiting through its ports could more easily evade the European countries' targeting system.

At this stage, and in the light of the above, the only notable recommendation would be to better integrate Malabo liaison officers into the networks for sharing information on routes and seizures in West and Central Africa. It would then be possible, on the one hand, to better evaluate the risk and, on the other, to increase local authorities' awareness of the need to remain vigilant and possibly reinforce border control.

III. Issues raised by the mini groups

III.1. International and regional cooperation is of paramount importance

International and regional cooperation is vital in order to cope with the scale of the trafficking and to carry out effective interception at sea, such as the interception (off Cape Verde) of a consignment of two tonnes of cocaine bound for Portugal by the Spanish navy, in cooperation with British and Portuguese services.

Such cooperation has to be carried out in a context where the means of concealment and modi operandi used by traffickers are constantly being adapted, as evidenced by seizures in South America of cocaine headed for Benin – 327 kg in a soap-powder container in November 2012, and 121.5 kg of liquid cocaine in tins – and by the increased professionalism of couriers who, to increase their profits, are exporting and importing different products (methamphetamine out of West Africa, and heroin into West Africa) at the same time.

It must at all times take account of changes in drug-trafficking routes and the presence of major transport or transshipping infrastructure. In this regard, ports and airports should be better monitored. For example, it cannot fail to be noted that no cocaine seizures have been made at the port of Abidjan, through which containers from South America transit.

Given the limited equipment available to the law enforcement authorities, their considerable training needs, the size of the maritime, air and land borders to be patrolled, the small number of checks carried out and the insufficient capabilities of the criminal justice system, the needs expressed by mini group members have been identical. The groups note that the work undertaken must be long-term and that the international community's ability to meet the expectations of West African law enforcement authorities in terms of training and the allocation of resources is a way of mobilising them and motivating them in the performance of their duties.

The mini groups' reports also highlight the need for State authorities to demonstrate long-term willingness to make the fight against drugs a priority. Guinea has set out on this path. The members of the Cotonou mini group submitted a joint statement of 17 September 2012 to the President, calling on the Beninese authorities to make the initiatives taken in support of the fight against drugs a priority and to implement them effectively.

Good practices must be encouraged and shared. The examples provided by some countries should be replicated. Ghana in particular has succeeded in developing good working methods.

These methods are based on sharing skills among anti-drug bodies and intelligence services, targeting goods or persons coming from or bound for sensitive localities and improving bilateral operational cooperation between the countries of the sub-region, thanks to the information provided by the international anti-drug liaison officers platform (*ILU*).

Ghana has also committed itself to combating money laundering and terrorist financing, to comply with the international legislative and structural standards laid down by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Thus, having eliminated its strategic deficiencies as regards combating illicit financial flows, Ghana was able to leave the FATF monitoring process in February 2013.

III.2. Regional and multilateral initiatives to combat drug trafficking in West Africa must be coordinated

West Africa is the focus of a number of bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation initiatives in the fight against drugs.

In 2013 the members of the G7 Roma-Lyon Group repeatedly emphasised the need to coordinate donors' efforts in the region to combat organised crime and terrorism.

In 2012, the UNODC launched the WACAP programme (Western Africa central authorities and prosecutors against organised crime). The programme has the dual aim of establishing regional judicial cooperation in West Africa and building the capacities of the national judicial authorities. Through the creation of a network of public prosecutors, this project could eventually support the other technical or judicial cooperation initiatives in the region. The fourth WACAP meeting, to which Eurojust should be invited, will take place in Accra from 18 to 21 November 2014. A meeting of the Justice Ministers of the ECOWAS countries will take place on the previous day, 17 November 2014.

France's FSP ALCAO (Priority Solidarity Fund in Support of the Fight against Cocaine Trafficking in West Africa) currently covers Guinea, Mauritania, Benin, Togo, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and now also Cape Verde, the intention being to extend its activities to other countries in the region that demonstrate strong political will. It has three objectives:

- 1) structural reinforcement of the measures to combat cocaine trafficking;
- 2) capacity-building for the investigative services;
- 3) improved regional and international cooperation.

Launched in October 2012 in Conakry, it started its work in 2013. Activities undertaken as part of this programme include a regional training seminar on interview techniques held in Lomé (Togo) in June 2013, and workshops for customs officers, gendarmes, police officers and judicial officials. In addition to practical and operational training, the fund contributes to the purchase of equipment which is essential for the services on the ground.

Similarly, in order to respond effectively to the threats from terrorism and large-scale trafficking, a seminar was held in late 2013 on the identification, seizure and confiscation of criminal assets, as part of FSP **JUSSEC** (Priority Solidarity Fund "Justice and security in the Sahel-Saharan region", 2009-2013), which was intended to reinforce the capacities of the target states (Mali, Mauritania and Niger).

These mobilising projects aim to prevent initiatives from overlapping by improving complementarity and synergy between projects and thereby increasing efficiency.

The **fight against money laundering** is an essential complement to the fight against trafficking, given that trafficking generates illicit financial flows whose reinvestment into legal economies is a source of destabilisation. In this respect, in March 2013 **the EU launched a project to combat money laundering (at a cost of EUR 1.8 million) in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Cape Verde.** This project complements and reinforces the EU's **Cocaine Route** Programme, launched in 2009. One of its main objectives is to ensure the security of electronic information exchange and set up a database. It will help law enforcement authorities improve their investigations into money-laundering cases and combat organised crime more effectively. It will also help reinforce regional cooperation between those countries.

IV. Place and dates of mini Dublin groups

On 16 April 2014, representatives of the mini Dublin group member countries and Switzerland met in the French embassy in Cotonou. The meeting resulted in a joint statement by the mini Dublin group (annexed to this report), which was delivered by hand to the Head of State on 13 May 2014. However, the general feeling among members of the mini Dublin group in Cotonou is that Benin's commitment to combating drug trafficking still leaves something to be desired, and that most of the previous recommendations should be renewed (see II.2.8 above).

V. Mini groups' recommendations

1. Contribute to capacity-building for the justice system by training prosecutors, examining magistrates and judges, and then the prison and probation services.
2. Support regional and international cooperation on the structures in place in the region, such as the Dakar and Accra regional drugs platforms, Interpol offices, UNODC and ECOWAS regional offices, etc.
3. Make the fight against international drug trafficking and the dismantling of organised transnational trafficking networks a priority for the specialist anti-drugs services.

4. Promote the development of technical materials (telephony, centralised filing) for specialist investigators.
5. Ensure that local services obtain the necessary skills, with a particular focus on technical cooperation such as training for trainers.
6. Encourage the authorities responsible for the fight against drug trafficking to develop proper human resources management policies so that they can retain and develop the expertise of officers qualified to combat drug trafficking.
7. Organise the control services at strategic drug trafficking points (notably international ports and airports).

VI. Follow-up of previous recommendations

A certain number of past recommendations by the Cotonou mini group have been followed and the members of the mini group are pleased with the progress that has been made: a decree has been adopted introducing a national strategy for maritime security, as have the legislative texts required to fight criminal activity linked to serious organised crime; decrees have been published implementing law 2011-20 of 12 October 2011 on corruption, money laundering and the seizure of criminal assets, etc.

STATEMENT

by the representatives of the member countries of the Dublin group in Benin

Mini group

16 April 2014

The representatives of the member countries of the Dublin group in Benin, having met in a working session on Wednesday, 16 April 2014, submit the following observations and recommendations to the Beninese authorities.

The members of the mini group take note of the progress made since the last meeting. However, they also note that certain recommendations made on 17 September 2012 have not been translated into action. The legislative and operational efforts undertaken must be continued, and sufficient human and material resources must be made available to meet the ambitions of the country's authorities.

The group considers that the implementation of these recommendations must be a priority for the Beninese authorities, particularly in the light of events in the sub-region, which must be met with the utmost resolve to combat all forms of trafficking likely to pose a risk to the stability of the region's States, especially the financing of activities that undermine democracy and development.

The members of the mini Dublin group in Cotonou particularly anticipate **the swift implementation of recommendations 2, 3 and 9** on the functioning of OCERTID and CENTIF, as well as on drug destruction operations, which were made in the previous joint statement.

In relation to **recommendation 2**, they particularly stress their wish for OCERTID to be provided with all the resources appropriate for the accomplishment of its tasks. This request extends to the joint units (CAAT and UMCC), which should also be sufficiently empowered to fulfil their tasks. Texts should also be adopted which clearly define the work of UMCC and its role within the existing legal system. With regard to **recommendation 9**, recent events show that drug seizures, storage and destruction operations must continue to be regularly undertaken at the instigation of the competent Beninese authorities and to be governed by a strict framework.

The group welcomes Benin's adoption of the decree introducing a national strategy for maritime security as well as the legislation necessary to fight criminal activity linked to organised crime. It is now up to the Beninese authorities to ensure their continued implementation. This applies in particular to **recommendations 7 and 8 on corruption, money laundering and the seizure of criminal goods and assets**.

Benin's willingness to combat international drug trafficking will further demonstrate its credibility and engagement, thereby boosting the support of technical and financial partners.

The representatives of the mini Dublin group in Benin will pay very close attention to the efforts, initiatives and achievements of the Beninese authorities in this area. The group also reminds the Government of its particular commitment to having the fight against crime, including the operational aspects thereof, remain under the aegis of the civil authorities.
