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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs
- La Paz declaration

Delegations will find in the Annex the La Paz declaration endorsed at the XXIVth High-Level Meeting of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs, which took place in La Paz (Bolivia) on 22 February 2024.

**La Paz declaration of the
XXIVth High Level meeting of the
EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs
22 February 2024, La Paz (Bolivia)**

HAVING MET in La Paz (Bolivia) on 22 February 2024, under the co-presidencies of Belgium and Bolivia, at the XXIVth High Level Meeting of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs ¹ ('the Mechanism').

WE REAFFIRM the importance of the Mechanism as a bi-regional forum for dialogue and cooperation built on mutual understanding on the basis of the principle of common and shared responsibility, a balanced, comprehensive, integrated and evidence based approach, in full conformity with the three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments that constitute the cornerstone of the international drug control system, and with the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, all human rights, fundamental freedoms, the inherent dignity of all individuals and the principles of equal rights and mutual respect among States.

WE NOTE that the declaration following the third Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the European Union (EU) and of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission, having met in Brussels on 17 and 18 July 2023, states "we agree to consolidate and strengthen EU-CELAC cooperation initiatives in the field of citizen security and social justice (...). We, recognise the significant challenge and the efforts made in the fight against international criminal groups, especially those involved in illicit drugs production and trafficking (...). We welcome the work of the EU - CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs, and wish to continue it".

¹ Hereinafter, referred as "The Mechanism"

WE COMMIT to reinforce the Mechanism as the main platform for bi-regional cooperation to promote and intensify political dialogue, coordination and cooperation, including operational and technical cooperation between both regions, in effectively addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem, including addressing the links with organized crime, firearms trafficking, money laundering and corruption, as well as responses to reduce health and social vulnerabilities, and to protect and improve the well-being of society and of the individual, in accordance with national legislations and with the principle of common and shared responsibility, with a balanced, comprehensive, integrated and evidence-based approach.

WE RECOGNISE the value of the bi-lateral cooperation between EU and CELAC countries, to enhance, promote and strengthen the implementation of effective drug policies at multilateral, regional, sub-regional, national and local level, and the importance of EU programmes, such as COPOLAD III on drug policies, Eurofront on border management, EL PAcCTO and the future EL PAcCTO 2.0 on transnational organised crime, as well as the Global Illicit Flows Programme (GIFP) on organised crime in relation to global illicit flows, to intensify all joint efforts in a comprehensive manner.

WE RECOGNISE the fundamental role of international cooperation in preventing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem and to this end, underline the importance of addressing, tackling and effectively responding to international and regional challenges and barriers.²

² CELAC recalls its position on measures that hinder international cooperation to address and counter all aspects of world drug problem

WE AGREE to focus our bi-regional cooperation on the Mechanism for the next five years by addressing in particular the following topics of common interest, ensuring the appropriate follow-up and taking the necessary action in accordance with their domestic law, consistent with the applicable international law, and the evolution of the situation:

- Addressing and countering the illicit production and trafficking of drugs, including cocaine, their consequences on citizen security and public health, and their social and economic impact on people and communities.
- Addressing and countering the manufacture and trafficking of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs, their consequences on citizen security, and their social, health and economic impact on people and affected communities, including via early warning.
- Addressing substance use and substance use disorders, including abuse, issues related to health, including mental health, and social vulnerabilities, focusing on prevention and treatment quality standards.³
- Addressing the link between drugs and crimes that affect the environment, countering such crimes and tackling their negative impacts, including the effects of illicit cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, the effects of drug manufacturing, and waste disposal on the environment, on local communities, and providing corresponding drug policy responses.
- Addressing and countering other forms of organised crime related to drug trafficking such as money laundering and firearms trafficking and their negative effect on the economy and citizen security.

WE AGREE to convene the next XXVth EU-CELAC High Level Meeting of the Mechanism in 2025.

3 UNODC/WHO International Standards for Treatment and Drug Use Disorders, UNODC/WHO International Standards for Drug Use Prevention and COPOLAD Quality Standards.

1. Addressing and countering the illicit production and trafficking of drugs, including cocaine, its consequences on citizen security and public health, and their social and economic impact on people and communities:

WE RECOGNISE that disrupting illicit drug trafficking requires joint strategies and actions based on the bi-regional cooperation between the EU and CELAC.

WE ENCOURAGE

- The strengthening of our bi-regional and international-cooperation to successfully deal with drug trafficking, including through existing operational platforms, such as the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), the Latin American Committee on Internal Security (CLASI), Europol, Ameripol and Interpol, with a focus on the different land, sea, and air routes and their variations. Special attention must be paid to the potential vulnerabilities of ports' and airports' access and the analysis of risk profiles, therefore reinforcing national, regional and international cooperation, in particular with port authorities, law enforcement and customs agencies.
- The strengthening of mechanisms that allow the training and improvement of technical capacities to improve strategies to effectively address illicit drug trafficking, through cooperation and the principle of common and shared responsibility.
- The adoption of appropriate measures to identify and reduce violence linked to the trafficking of cocaine and other drugs, with a focus on high-risk criminal networks.
- The adoption and implementation of preventive and law enforcement measures to identify, impair, and dismantle organised transnational criminal groups engaged in drug trafficking and any other criminal activities that may be linked to the trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

- In the framework of the existing cooperation programmes and mechanisms, such as EMPACT, the Latin American Committee on Internal Security (CLASI) and its dedicated operational working group on drug trafficking, Europol and Ameripol, the implementation of joint operational activities and facilitation of the exchange information, development and promotion of technologies that may assist law enforcement agencies in addressing drug trafficking and in identifying international routes of money laundering and diversion of precursors.
- Strengthening police and judicial cooperation and assistance in order to guarantee the success of investigations on criminals and organisations, including as regards extradition.
- The strengthening of our bi-regional and international cooperation in the field of drug policies within programmes such as COPOLAD, to improve the design and implementation of policies dealing with the reduction of drug demand and supply, including to promote research, and information- and knowledge-sharing.
- The provision of integral and sustainable alternative development opportunities and viable economic options for local communities that are affected by or vulnerable to the illicit cultivation of crops used for production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and to related illicit drug economies in urban, rural and protected environmental areas, while mainstreaming a gender perspective and taking into account gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities.
- Increasing exchanges of data, information and best practices between both regions to address the use of internet for trafficking and distribution of illicit drugs.
- The cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the scientific community, academia, the private sector, to address the illicit production and trafficking of drugs.

2. Addressing and countering the manufacture and trafficking of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs, their consequences on citizen security,-and their social, health and economic impact on people and affected communities, including via early warning.

WE RECOGNISE the growing threat arising from the trafficking of new psychoactive substances and other synthetic drugs, that requires strengthened cooperation between EU and CELAC.

WE ENCOURAGE

- The strengthening of our bi-regional and international operational cooperation to successfully deal with trafficking of new psychoactive substances and other synthetic drugs, including to exchange on best practices in national and regional approaches concerning chemical precursors.
- The support of gender-based public health interventions for people who use drugs with a focus on harm reduction measures, rehabilitation, social integration and voluntary access to treatment, such as ensuring sufficient access to the opioid antagonist treatment, and establishing other harm reduction capacities, such as the drug consumption rooms for people who use drugs.
- The adoption and implementation of preventive and law enforcement measures to identify, impair, and dismantle transnational criminal groups engaged in drug trafficking and any other criminal activities that may be linked to the trafficking of new psychoactive substances and other synthetic drugs, including to exchange on best practices in national and regional approaches concerning chemical precursors.
- The adoption and improvement of Early Warning Systems as a tool for generating timely and quality technical information in the detection of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances.

3. On addressing substance use and substance use disorders, including abuse, as well as issues related to health, including mental health, and social vulnerabilities, focusing on prevention and treatment quality standards:

WE RECOGNISE

- That substance use and substance use disorders, including abuse, are health issues requiring inclusive, comprehensive and coordinated evidence-based public policy responses to reduce vulnerabilities, and to protect individuals, communities and societies as a whole.
- The importance of the evidence-based critical reviews carried out at international level by the World Health Organization that contribute to the effective implementation of the treaty system and acknowledge the actions that countries are taking to promote such reviews for substances, products and plants.

WE ENCOURAGE

- The promotion, in National Drugs Strategies, of health, safety, welfare and well-being of all individuals, families, communities and societies as a whole, prioritizing persons in vulnerable and marginalised situations, to enhance healthy environments and lifestyles through effective evidence-based measures, including innovative and tailored ones, at all levels of prevention, community resilience, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, and social reintegration. These measures should guarantee the involvement of women and mainstream a gender perspective in drug-related policies and programmes and address specific gender-based needs and inequalities in all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies and programmes.
- The implementation of the available UNODC-WHO International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders, and the UNODC-WHO International Standards for Drug Use Prevention.

- The investment in strengthening the capacity of workforce in the field of substance use and substance use disorders, through training based on the most recent scientific research in the field, to enhance knowledge, competencies, and build the necessary skills to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the latest and most effective evidence-based practices.
- The implementation of the right to equitable and available access to public health, social services, basic treatment and continuity of care that is gender-sensitive and respects, protects and fulfils human rights, and guarantees broad coverage for people with substance use disorders and persons in vulnerable situations, including protocols for pregnant women and treatment for persons in prison and other custodial settings.
- The implementation and sharing of best practices in the field of prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, mental health disorders related to substance use and substance use disorders, including abuse, in line with human rights.
- The promotion of bi-regional cooperation between EU and CELAC, to share best practices, scientific research and evidence-based programmes on prevention, treatment, recovery and social reintegration.
- The cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the scientific community, academia, and the private sector, to address substance use and substance use disorders, and other health related issues.

4. Addressing the link between drugs and crimes that affect the environment, countering such crimes and tackling their negative impacts, including the effects of illicit cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, the effects of drug manufacturing, and waste disposal on the environment, on local communities, and providing corresponding drug policy responses

WE RECOGNISE

- The negative impact of the cultivation, manufacturing and trafficking of illicit drugs and related crimes on the environment and environmental sustainability, effects on the use of land, livelihoods, and management systems in favor of the conservation of biodiversity.
- The principle of common and shared responsibility as a key element to ensure bi-regional cooperation between EU and CELAC to address the link between illicit cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances the drug manufacturing and the environment.
- That integral and sustainable alternative development programmes contribute to the efforts of States to address social, economic and other vulnerabilities, discrimination and social marginalization, and environmental degradation, as well as mutually reinforce endeavors to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

WE UNDERScore that the measures adopted shall respect the fundamental human rights and take due account of the legitimate and traditional licit cultivation and use of plants, as well as the protection of the environment.

WE ENCOURAGE

The maintenance of the efforts in the context of long-term and sustainable development programmes to address environmental aspects, such as conservation, recovery and sustainable use of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems.

- Examining, addressing and countering the harmful impact on the environment and biodiversity of illicit cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and of illicit laboratories that manufacture narcotic drugs, within the efforts of integral and sustainable alternative development, as well as the drugs demand and supply reduction.
- The promotion of bi-regional cooperation, including partnerships with international organisations, the private sector and financial institutions, for the implementation of integral and sustainable alternative development projects that enable and foster environmental protection and sustainability.
- Addressing illicit crops by a renewed and strong commitment to integral and sustainable alternative development measures and practices that are in harmony with nature.
- The adequate dismantling of illicit laboratories, including those that manufacture cocaine and synthetic drugs, and harm the environment.
- The elimination in the shortest possible time and under standards of respect for the environment, of seized drugs and chemical precursors used in the illicit manufacture of drugs, through mechanisms that guarantee the impossibility of their restitution to illicit markets, while ensuring that these procedures do not impact negatively on possible criminal proceedings.
- The promotion of bi-regional cooperation between the EU and CELAC and sharing of best practices for final disposal of seized illicit drugs and chemical substances used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.
- The consideration of environmental aspects within the framework of drug supply reduction programmes, including but not limited to the law enforcement against drug trafficking-related crimes that affect the environment.

5. Addressing and countering other forms of organised crime related to drug trafficking such as money laundering and firearms trafficking, and their negative effect on the economy and citizen security

WE RECOGNISE

- That actions tackling money laundering constitute one of the main fighting mechanisms against criminal organisations, including those involved in drug trafficking.
- That drug traffickers accept or demand firearms as payment in kind for illicitly trafficked drugs, and this poses a significant threat to society and of the individual, including members of the law enforcement entities, judicial personnel, and demands efforts from the health-care and civil society personnel and volunteers who dedicate themselves to countering and addressing this threat⁴.
- The consideration of the links between illicit drug trafficking and other forms of organised crime, in particular money laundering and firearms trafficking.
- In particular in relation to money laundering linked to drugs trafficking:
 - ❖ Bi-regional cooperation between the EU and CELAC to address and counter money laundering linked to drugs trafficking.
 - ❖ Bi-regional cooperation between EU and CELAC to conduct investigations on the use of cryptocurrencies as a modality of money laundering.
 - ❖ The design of national schemes that allow the institutions involved in the prevention, investigation and prosecution of money laundering to function in a coordinated, integrated and interconnected manner in line with international standards.

⁴ As stated in CND Resolution 65/2: Strengthening international cooperation to address the links between illicit drug trafficking and illicit firearms trafficking.

- ❖ The development and strengthening, as appropriate, of mechanisms of coordination and timely and efficient information sharing between authorities involved in identifying and countering drug trafficking and related money laundering, to integrate financial investigations more thoroughly into interdiction operations, so as to identify individuals and companies involved in such activities.
- ❖ Comprehensive strategies for subsequent use of the forfeited properties and assets derived from illicit activities linked to drug trafficking, for example, their return to the national bodies responsible for drug supply and demand reduction and their use in support of drug demand and supply reduction measures, when in accordance with the national law, with due regard to the use of precautionary measures preventing the concealment of assets.
- ❖ The investigation on money laundering as part of a wider investigation on the economic dimension of any form of organised crime and notwithstanding the volume of the amount of money generated.
- ❖ Financial investigations on the basis of the ‘follow the money’ approach, relying on robust asset recovery and confiscation measures, including on non-conviction based confiscation measures. Robust asset recovery and confiscation measures should also be complemented by efficient tracing measures and structures to manage frozen and confiscate assets being able to give back to the legal economy the confiscated criminal assets.
- ❖ The strengthening of efficient communication channels between police and judicial authorities and financial intelligence units of all countries and international networks, to facilitate the exchange of strategic and operational information on money movements derived from illicit activities. We highlight the important role that regional and international organisations and networks, public prosecutor offices and judicial bodies play in this specialised field of criminal activity.

- In particular in relation to firearms trafficking linked to drugs trafficking:
- ❖ Bi-regional cooperation between the EU and CELAC to take the appropriate measures to address, prevent and combat the links between illicit drug trafficking and illicit firearms trafficking, involving all the relevant stakeholders and law enforcement agencies, to undermine the capabilities of drug traffickers.
- ❖ Addressing the human dimension of the challenges posed by the links between illicit trafficking in drugs and illicit trafficking in firearms, and recognizes the importance of considering the situation of the victims of those crimes, including the families of law enforcement personnel who los their lives.

ANNEX: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- The UNODC-WHO International standards: for the treatment of drug use disorders⁵
- The UNODC-WHO International Standards for Drug Use Prevention ⁶
- 66th CND Session - Conference room paper: “The relationship between quality of specialist treatment for substance use disorders and patient outcomes: A scoping review of the literature”⁷
- 66th CND Session - Conference room paper: “A call for action to positively redirect the developmental trajectory of children through “Promoting comprehensive and scientific evidence-based early prevention”⁸
- 66th CND Session - Conference room paper submitted jointly by Germany, Peru, Thailand, and UNODC: “Towards more inclusive Alternative Development”⁹
- The UNODC 2021-2025 Strategy¹⁰.
- EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025)
- World Drug Report. Booklet 5 - Drugs and the environment¹¹

⁵ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/international-standards-for-the-treatment-of-drug-use-disorders>

⁶ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/international-standards-for-drug-use-prevention-second-edition-2018>

⁷ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_66/ECN72023_CRP9_23037_92E.pdf

⁸ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_66/ECN72023_CRP8_23036_57E.pdf

⁹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_66/ECN72023_CRP7_23031_81E.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/strategy/index.html>

¹¹ https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/wdr-2022_booklet-5.html

- The Sofia Declaration (2018) of the High Level Meeting of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs, in which both regions committed to continue efforts to develop alternative development measures in order to address socio-economic issues and inequalities.¹²
 - CND Resolution 66/4: Promoting alternative development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment and recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples¹³
 - CND Resolution 65/2: Strengthening international cooperation to address the links between illicit drug trafficking and illicit firearms trafficking
 - EU Drug Market Cocaine. Europol and EMCDDA¹⁴
 - European drug prevention quality standards¹⁵
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¹² http://sisco.copolad.eu/web/uploads/documentos/Sofia_Declaration_2018.pdf

¹³ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_66/ECN72023_L3_approved_in_CoW.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/cocaine_en

¹⁵ https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2015/eu-minimum-quality-standards_en