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NOTE

From:	Spanish Regional Chair of the Dublin Group
To:	Dublin Group
Subject:	Regional report for North Africa

ALGERIA

The local mini Dublin group met at the Spanish Embassy in Algeria on 3 May to discuss the approaches in the Presidency's report and this draft was distributed to the members.

1. General situation

Since 2000, there have been a large number of seizures of **cannabis resin** in Algeria.

The official statistics, provided by the National Anti-Drugs and Drug Addiction Office at the Algerian Ministry of Justice, confirm that during the first 11 months of 2015 there was a **36.91 % drop** in the quantity of cannabis resin seized by the Algerian security forces (the GN and DGSN) and customs officials in comparison with the same period in 2014. These statistical data can do no more than confirm trends, because it is impossible to compare them with the statistics of every one of the security forces involved in the fight against drug trafficking.

During the reference period, **109 244.628 kg** of cannabis resin was seized, 60.35 % of which was seized in the country's western region. The majority of the drug seizures occurred in the wilaya of Tlemcen, which is in north-western Algeria on the border with Morocco, the world's biggest cannabis producer. The region with the next-highest level of seizures is to the south, where surveillance is much more complicated.

The **Tlemcen route** is the favoured one for bringing drugs into Algeria, although the border remains closed and security there has been strengthened by the Algerian authorities in response to the rise in drug trafficking in that part of the country. Recently, drug trafficking has also been on the increase in the wilaya of Bechar. Within Algeria, the roads linking **Ghardaïa** with **Ouargla** and Ouargla with **El-Oued** have been seeing a rise in seizures of large quantities of cannabis resin in transit.

The **routes identified** in Algeria by the enforcement authorities involved in fighting the drugs trade run from the west of the country to the borders with Tunisia and Libya.

The strong pressure within the country, including a considerable strengthening of security at the borders and across the road network, has led traffickers to start bringing drugs into Algeria from Morocco **by sea**, as can be seen from the seizures made by the Algerian coast guard and national gendarmerie. Such seizures are always of small packages of approximately 30 kg.

After cannabis, **psychotropic drugs** form the second largest group by volume of seizures, **down by 45.44 %** compared with the reference period in 2014. These drugs, which may be destined for the French market, are apparently transported using 'mules', who carry them in small quantities on commercial flights between Algeria and France.

The amount of **cocaine and heroin** in the country **increased** considerably in 2015 as compared to 2014. The total amount of **cocaine** seized in the period referred to was **86 127.53 g**, 85 kg of which was seized in a single operation.

The total amount of **heroin** seized in 2015 was **2 573.75 g**.

It is estimated that there are over **300 000 drug addicts in Algeria**, and the number is growing each year. It is therefore becoming increasingly common for some of the drugs entering the country to be destined for domestic consumption.

2. Institutional framework

In recent years the Algerian authorities have strengthened their mechanisms for combating drug trafficking and contraband in general by means of legislation. They continue to emphasise the close link between drug-trafficking networks and terrorism in the region and that the former is one of the main sources of funding for the latter; terrorism, arms trafficking, money laundering, corruption and smuggling are all closely connected. At the same time, Algeria appears to be a **transit** zone for sending drugs to the **Middle East and Europe**, though in recent years the number of people consuming drugs in Algeria has also risen.

Algeria is part of the MedNET Euro-Mediterranean cooperation network (Pompidou Group, Council of Europe), which was set up in 2006 with the aim of developing north-south cooperation plans and activities in order to combat drugs. Other members include France, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia.

In this respect, the **complexity of the Algerian institutions involved** in combating drugs must be taken into account. On the one hand, control of the borders (border wilayas) is handled mainly by the units of the ANP, including the gendarmerie and its border guard, which are all part of the Ministry of National Defence, as well as the customs service under the Algerian Finance Ministry. Most of the organised crime and smuggling activities affecting Algeria originate in these extensive border areas. In the country's interior, operations are primarily handled by the DGSN and GN through their judicial police units.

From 18 to 20 March 2016, an **international colloquium** was held in Tlemcen on **'the drugs phenomenon, its consequences and the resources that should be mobilised to fight it'**.

More than 1 000 experts, researchers and high-level officials from the justice, security and health sectors took part, representing 13 Arab countries.

Algerian legislation

In the situation described, the following laws have been passed:

- Law No 04-18 of 25 December 2004 on the prevention and suppression of the consumption and unlawful trafficking of drugs.
- Law No 05-01 of 6 February 2005 on the prevention and combating of money laundering and of the funding of terrorism. Supplemented on 13 February 2012.
- Law No 06-01 of 20 February 2006, on the prevention and combating of corruption. Supplemented on 20 August 2011.
- Ordinance No 12-02 of 13 February 2012 amending and supplementing Law No 5-01 of 6 February 2005 on the prevention and combating of money laundering and of the funding of terrorism.

3. International cooperation

The different countries have not provided any input on possible international cooperation instruments that could be put in place with Algeria.

In the case of Spain, cooperation with the Algerian authorities is organised in the framework of the protocols for cooperation between the Directorates-General of the Police and of the Guardia Civil with the National Security Directorate-General (Interior Ministry) and the National Gendarmerie Directorate-General and the National Coastguard Service of Algeria (these last being Defence Ministry bodies).

The protocols address activities related to training and operational information exchange among the signatory bodies.

According to the information available, Spain is the only country that is planning to carry out any specific activities with the Algerian institutions in relation to drug trafficking.

4. Evaluation and recommendations

Evaluation

In the light of the above, it can be stated that:

- Seizures of cannabis resin on Algerian territory fell in 2015 compared to the previous year, presumably owing to the gradual sealing of the border with Morocco through the increased deployment of personnel by the security forces engaged in combating drugs and smuggling, and support from army units.
- The international cooperation situation described in the previous point has evolved with the consolidation of narco-terrorism as a concept, it being a permanent and secure source of financing for armed groups operating in the Sahel region. Now that there is a clear link between terrorism and organised crime, Algeria has strengthened its legislation on combating money laundering and the funding of terrorism.
- As in previous periods, the fact that Europe has been identified as a destination for drugs transiting the country – given their proximity to Algeria, the countries in question are essentially Spain, France, Greece and Italy – means that closer analysis is needed of the foreign currency trafficking generated by this illegal activity and of the way in which such money is returning to the networks involved. In the case of Algeria, the existence of the informal market makes it easier to launder this currency.

Recommendations

- Increase cooperation on training, operations and prevention to address the use of drugs and psychotropic substances, and step up cooperation on treating addiction. It is very important for this anti-drugs cooperation to incorporate the Sahel region, of which Algeria is part, through regional cooperation mechanisms.
- Propose amending Algeria's legislation (the code of criminal procedure) to accommodate coordination mechanisms for developing controlled deliveries, in order to identify the structure of the networks operating at the points of departure, transit and final destination of drugs, and thus enable comprehensive action to be taken.
- Boost international coordination mechanisms for anti-drug operations in the Mediterranean, with particular emphasis on money laundering as the legislation in this area has recently changed.

Algiers, 9 May 2016.

EGYPT

In accordance with instructions received in its 621, a meeting of the local mini Dublin group chaired by the Embassy Secretary, Ms Rossana Roselló Bas, and the Home Affairs Attaché, Mr Trinitario Sánchez, was held in this Embassy on Tuesday 10 May. The Egyptian chair was Brigadier Hesham Elzoghby, the director of the International Cooperation Department of the national anti-drugs agency (ANGA) under the purview of the Egyptian Interior Ministry.

Also attending were representatives from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as the regional representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

As has become customary, the ANGA representative focused his presentation on a primarily factual description of the seizures per substance in 2015, as well as some of the routes used. Following on from the information set out in the last report dated 3 November 2015, he reviewed the major developments.

1. General situation

a) Egypt is considered a transit country for drugs, and not a producer country. This is reflected in the quantities seized, which have fallen in absolute terms and only rose significantly in the case of hashish. Responding to questions from this Embassy, ANGA stated that the low number of seizures was due to increased control at Egypt's borders, particularly given the political turmoil in recent years.

b) Hashish is usually imported from West Africa and North Africa over land and by sea. 33.5 tonnes were seized in 2015. ANGA highlighted an operation carried out in cooperation with the Italian authorities, which resulted in the seizure in Italian territorial waters of 12 tonnes destined for Egypt. According to ANGA's estimates, 75 % of the drugs produced/imported are consumed in Egypt, while the remaining 25 % are intended for export.

With regard to marijuana and bango (a local variety), which are produced mainly in the Sinai peninsula and southern Egypt, the ANGA representative noted that 321 feddans of crop (approximately 760 hectares) had been identified and 360 tonnes seized.

c) With regard to psychotropic substances, 9.5 million pills of various types were seized. In the Mediterranean port of Damietta, one operation resulted in the interception of a consignment of 8 million Captagon pills destined for Saudi Arabia. The widespread use of Tramadol continues to be a problem, with pharmacies occasionally complicit in its illegal distribution.

d) Heroin is not produced locally; it originates in Afghanistan and arrives in the Sinai peninsula by way of the Gulf of Aqaba. 516 kg were seized in 2015.

e) Opium is produced locally in southern Egypt and Sinai, albeit in modest quantities. 159 kg were seized in 2015.

f) Cocaine consumption is very low among the Egyptian population because of its price (around USD 100 per gram). Images were displayed from a number of operations in airports in Cairo and Alexandria, showing Latin American traffickers carrying two or three kilograms on their bodies or in their luggage. In total, 23 kg were seized last year.

g) It was mentioned that Ecstasy is consumed among terrorist groups. 5 089 tablets were seized last year.

h) Reference was made for the first time to the laundering of proceeds from drug trafficking, in the context of five operations carried out in 2015 which resulted in the interception of EGP 130 million (approximately EUR 13 million).

2. Institutional framework

Trafficking of cocaine and heroin is subject to the death penalty, which can be commuted to life imprisonment for trafficking of other substances. No notable legal or institutional changes have occurred since the group's last meeting.

3. International cooperation

Brigadier Elzoghby referred to Egypt's membership of numerous fora and regional and international conventions on investigation and cooperation as regards the fight against drug trafficking.

The ANGA representative welcomed the close collaboration with countries such as Bulgaria, France and Italy, which had resulted in the seizure of hashish shipments such as the one discovered in Italian waters.

On several occasions he reiterated Egypt's readiness to work with foreign authorities on combating drug trafficking, calling for information to be shared by the authorities of the countries represented at the meeting.

4. Recommendations

a) Despite the existing smooth cooperation, a more accurate analysis of the current situation would require going beyond quantitative exercises and examining other elements, such as drug-trafficking networks, their sources of funding, their relationship with other illegal networks and money-laundering methods.

b) Also, we would again recommend reinforcing the preventive aspects – through social and educational awareness-raising – and improving mechanisms for treating and rehabilitating drug addicts, alongside the coercive and punitive operations/legislative amendments aimed at combating drug trafficking and production in the region.

MOROCCO

As scheduled, on 6 May the mini Dublin Group met again to update the report prepared in March.

In accordance with the meeting agenda, the different sections were reviewed:

1. General situation

The most noteworthy development with respect to previous reports concerns the public debate launched regarding the possible modification of the legislative framework, with a move from punitive to regulatory legislation. This was among the proposals put forward at the international colloquium on cannabis and drugs held in Tangiers on 18 and 19 March, organised by the Council of the Region of Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima. The conclusions reached by this colloquium, set out in the Rif Declaration, are in line with the above approach (progressive abandonment of punitive policies - in particular in relation to consumption -, promoting the exchange of experiences on national policies, proposed policies to support farmers affected by poverty). It was planned to present the conclusions at the United Nations' Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS), scheduled for 19 to 21 April.

Even without having the official figures at their disposal, participants at the meeting of the mini Dublin Group were able to confirm previous trends as regards the production and trafficking of drugs. As already mentioned, that assessment relies on partial data which may, in some cases, be checked against information in the media.

Morocco remains one of the world's major cannabis producers. There are no updated official figures on the reduction in the area under cultivation. The data provided by UNODC in its 2015 report indicate a decrease of approximately 70 %, from 134 000 hectares in 2003 to 47 196 hectares in 2013. Despite this reduction in the area under cultivation, the level of production has remained stable owing to the introduction of high-yield varieties (three to five times the traditional yield). Trafficking to Europe has stabilised owing to increased local production in several European countries.

Cocaine remains at the levels indicated in previous reports, with two main entry routes: from Latin America on transatlantic flights, and through West Africa. No increase in the level of seizures has been reported, but trafficking in cocaine continues.

The level of trafficking of industrially-produced psychotropic substances remains in line with that mentioned in earlier reports. Seizures and arrests occur on a regular basis, and these are reported in the press.

2. Legislative amendments

As already mentioned, a debate on changing the legislative framework has been re-launched in the public arena with the initiative referred to above. However, this approach does not enjoy unanimous support across the political spectrum, and faces outright opposition from some political forces, which have publically criticised the initiative. In any case, there is a perception that this new initiative was prompted by the general elections scheduled for this autumn, with such initiatives being put forward regularly in the context of elections. It should be borne in mind that there have been no changes to the legislation on production, trafficking and consumption.

As regards the broader legislative framework, it should be noted that the first legislature under the 2011 Constitution is drawing to an end, and work on justice reform is therefore nearing completion. The purpose of that reform is to bring the judicial system into line with the new constitutional framework and modernise its structures and operations with a view to affirming the independence of the judiciary.

3. International cooperation

The level of cooperation between the Moroccan police authorities and the EU Member States and the Dublin Group participants has continued, in particular at operational level. The creation of the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation has not significantly altered the arrangements and instruments for cooperating at local level. This new police body focuses primarily on aspects of the fight against terrorism; its activities therefore affect aspects of the fight against drug trafficking when there are implications for terrorist operations or actions.

4. Miscellaneous

As part of a general strategy, the Moroccan authorities have, in recent months, implemented a number of significant measures to combat cases of corruption at police level and with implications for drug trafficking. The press has reported on these actions.

Recommendations

Monitor initiatives and public debate regarding possible changes to the current legislative framework.

MAURITANIA

The most recent meeting of the mini Dublin Group in Mauritania took place in the Spanish Embassy in Nouakchott on 12 May 2016. The participants were France, Spain, Germany, the EU Delegation and Japan. There was no United States representative.

After discussions, the group approved the following report:

1. General situation

Mauritania is still a transit country for cannabis resin and cocaine, although seizures, particularly of cocaine, have remained rare and been on a small scale. This lack of seizures is presumably due to a shortage of appropriate equipment and technology.

The country has no tradition of growing or processing drugs. Indian hemp is still the only drug consumed on a significant scale, and this is linked to traditional practices. No evidence suggests that laboratories producing synthetic drugs are operating in Mauritania. **Consumption of cannabis resin remains low, while consumption of cocaine is negligible.** However, **trafficking in counterfeit medicines** has recently become a serious problem for Mauritania.

It should be recalled that Mauritania has signed the principal international agreements on combating drug trafficking, including the Vienna Convention. The following anti-drugs laws exist: the law of 18 July 1993 which lays down very stiff penalties, including the death penalty, if the offence is repeated; and the law of 27 July 2005 which criminalises the laundering of the proceeds of drug trafficking. **The set of legal instruments against trafficking in such products remained unchanged in 2016.**

Mauritania was the driving force behind the creation of the 'G5 Sahel' group, whose members, apart from Mauritania, are Mali, Chad, Niger and Burkina Faso. The group became an international organisation when its members' Heads of State adopted its founding agreement in Nouakchott on 19 December 2014. Expressing their desire to strengthen cooperation on security matters, they created the platform for security cooperation: a shared space for dialogue and exchanges of operational information in the fields of security and border management (terrorism, illegal immigration, all types of trafficking).

2. Trafficking trends

Cocaine trafficking: Mauritania is regarded as **a transit country for cocaine**. Several reports indicate that drug trafficking is closely linked to the funding of terrorism in northern Africa, but the current pattern of seizures offers no confirmation of that information.

It is nonetheless acknowledged that cocaine arrives from South America by air and sea at ports in the Gulf of Guinea (Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone, Togo, etc.) and other West African countries such as Senegal and Cape Verde.

It is then transported to Mauritania by road or by boat, directly from Guinea, the east of Mali or Senegal. The cocaine is then transported primarily by sea for delivery in Europe via the ports of Nouakchott or Nouadhibou and the surrounding area, including the no-man's land in the south-west of Western Sahara.

Since 2008-2009, however, **there have been no noteworthy seizures**, probably **as a result of the establishment of a security mechanism as part of the fight against terrorism**. The group also posited that this may be due to the **lack of training and professional incentives for Mauritanian customs staff**.

Cannabis trafficking:

Mauritania is above all **a transit country** for cannabis originating from Morocco en route to the whole of West Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and the eastern Mediterranean.

More precisely, the cannabis resin comes mostly from the Moroccan Rif, bound for Egypt and Libya (via northern Mali and northern Niger) and for countries in the Arabian Peninsula (via Chad and Sudan). Upon entering Mauritania, two main routes are used, one in northern Mauritania and the Sahara along the border with Algeria, then via northern Mali and northern Niger, bound for Libya and later Maltese ports (which, according to our contacts, are a safer port of entry into Europe), and the other to the south-east via Nouakchott, following the 'road of hope' to the Malian border.

On the first route, drugs are apparently transported from the Sahara across the area controlled by the Polisario Front, which has nine allegedly easily bribed nahiya (area command posts) along the Mauritanian border. It is believed that convoys cross the Mauritanian border around Bir Moghreïn and Ain ben Tili, after which they follow the Algerian and Malian borders into Libya. Temporary stores are said to have been set up in Mauritania around Bir Moghreïn and Ain ben Tili.

However, **the security measures put in place by the Mauritanian authorities since President Abdel Aziz came to power in 2009, as part of the fight against terrorism, also benefit the anti-trafficking mechanism, making it more difficult for drugs to transit.** Since the **Serval intervention** in Mali, this mechanism has been stepped up considerably.

There has been an increase in trafficking of Indian hemp (marijuana) originating from Senegal but consumed in Mauritania, as well as an increase in Indian hemp consumption in Nouakchott.

OCLCTISS (Mauritania's Office for Combating Illegal Trafficking in Drugs) and the gendarmerie are beginning to provide more regular and reliable statistics.

The following official statistics are currently available:

2015

From the gendarmerie

- 17 g cocaine
- 178.705 kg Indian hemp
- 79 kg cannabis resin
- 36 people arrested

First half of 2016

From the gendarmerie

- 90 kg Indian hemp
- 525 kg cannabis resin
- 13 people arrested

From OCLCTISS

- 1 900 kg cannabis resin
- 540 kg Indian hemp
- 6 vehicles seized
- 200 g cocaine

39 cases initiated by OCLCTISS, with 88 suspects handed over to the judicial authorities.

3. Progress report on international cooperation

French cooperation

France continues to work alongside the Central Office for Combating Illegal Trafficking in Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (OCLCTISS), in particular in providing staff training courses (four per year). The support and assistance project for the opening of branches of OCLCTISS has been approved. EUR 37 900 will be allocated to opening the first two branches in Nouadhibou and Rosso.

Spanish cooperation

The Spanish Guardia Civil's project within the EU's WEST-SAHEL Mauritania programme, to enlarge the dog-handling unit, continues. In 2015, eight new dog units were purchased and training for trainers and dog-handlers was concluded successfully.

Finally, the expansion of the unit to other places in Mauritania, including Aioun and Pk 55 (close to the northern frontier with the Sahara), was supported by Spanish cooperation.

European Union cooperation

The European Union continues to support the 'integrated border management system' in Mauritania, which contributes to the fight against drug trafficking, through support for the country's police and national gendarmerie.

In addition, a EUR 7 million project to strengthen the Sahel G5 regional structure is currently being implemented, which will have a very important role in coordinating border control in the Sahel region, with Senegal as an observer.

At regional level, the European Union has been developing the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) Cocaine Route programme, which has recently been extended to the Sahel G5. The aim is to combat (organised) crime and the threats posed by terrorism by setting up a regional police information system (WAPIS), and to establish a connection between the countries of the region and the rest of the world using Interpol's tools and services. Mauritania, though invited to participate, has still not given the green light for this system to be set up, but it will have to position itself as part of the Sahel G5.

German cooperation

Since January 2016, GIZ (German Agency for International Cooperation) has been implementing phase II of the project for capacity-building of the national police. This project is part of a programme funded by the German Federal Foreign Office to help improve the national police structures of several African countries (in particular Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad and Nigeria). One of the programme's main objectives is to improve national and sub-regional (e.g. G5, Afripol) schemes for combating cross-border and organised crime.

In Mauritania, GIZ's support is intended to: 1) improve the drug-detection skills of police officers posted at the country's border posts; 2) improve coordination between the aforementioned border posts and the scientific crime detection laboratory; 3) create a 'psychotropic substances and drugs analysis' department in the scientific crime detection laboratory in partnership with the GIZ police project in Côte d'Ivoire.

Japanese cooperation

At the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), **the Japanese government** announced that in the context of the priority areas for Japanese cooperation in the Sahel, **it had committed itself to training 2 000 people, with a view to capacity-building to fight terrorism, including illegal drug trafficking.**

As a measure expressing that ambition, **the Japanese government gave financial support worth in total around USD 1.3 million to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for projects to strengthen the capacity of criminal justice to combat organised crime, including drugs-related crime, in West African countries including Mauritania.** In the context of that project, those responsible for criminal justice were trained to increase international cooperation to combat terrorism and cross-border crime.

Japan also funded several projects that contribute to combating terrorism, executed by international organisations such as the UNDP, which also connects with fighting the drugs trade.

6. Operational recommendations

The members of the mini group have identified flaws in the investigation strategy. **The authorities do not follow up cases where trafficking is detected and there is no subsequent analysis of drug seizures.** Besides that, **there is a significant shortfall in terms of judicial processing and a lack of coordination between the various police bodies involved in fighting this scourge** (the national gendarmerie, the national police, customs and, most recently, the road security service or GSSR); for instance there is no common database. In addition, the public prosecutor should have a bigger role in supervision and coordination. Magistrates, investigators and the services monitoring the financial system and the health and pharmaceutical services all need specialist training.

Mauritania still has very significant needs in all areas, ranging from basic personnel training to logistical support. Both the Mauritanian police and the gendarmerie have repeatedly stressed the need for technical resources for surveillance, communications, investigation and toxicological analysis. Training is an absolute priority, starting with training for the instructors themselves.

Mauritania has no overall view of the drugs trade either locally or internationally. That makes it difficult to draw up a strategy to combat the phenomenon. The OCLCTISS (Central Office for Combating Illegal Trafficking in Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) does not centralise data on the subject sufficiently; the Mauritanian gendarmerie and customs do not keep it regularly informed of drugs cases. As a result, the OCLCTISS does not really know the full extent of drug trafficking.

Other more specific recommendations are listed below:

- **Continue to raise the Mauritanian authorities' awareness of the need to step up their commitment to the fight against trafficking and against the laundering of the proceeds of trafficking.**
- **Promote and support the establishment of a central office for combating trafficking in drugs (for the coordination of the security forces) and a national drug-trafficking database** with input from the police, the gendarmerie, customs and the army.
- **Support the framing of a national anti-drug-trafficking policy** on that basis.
- **Improve and optimise the material resources of the Mauritanian security forces with responsibility in the area.**
- **Ensure the continuity of training by setting up a permanent centre with specialised professional trainers.** Emphasise on-the-spot training for trainers. Encourage agents to specialise from the time they enter into service.
- **Promote a regional cooperation framework,** in particular by encouraging the work of the **G5 Sahel security platform,** which could become a new arena for regional cooperation in combating the drugs trade among the Sahel countries, and also the West African liaison officers' platform based in Dakar.
- Promote an evaluation of the national Interpol bureau and improve its capabilities, as a means of increasing international cooperation.

- **Improve effective border control capacities and, in that context, encourage implementation of the Stability Instrument.**
- In addition to the action taken, **there should be a special focus on Mauritania's chief ports, Nouadhibou and Nouakchott**, as there are few or no checks there and they are a major loophole in the anti-drug smuggling effort.
- Continue providing financial support to the Directorate-General for National Security in its effort to create branches of OCLCTISS in big cities and areas where there is increased activity by drug trafficking organisations.
- **Schedule regular (perhaps even quarterly) meetings between the partners and the units of the security forces involved in the fight against drug trafficking (gendarmerie and customs)**, to coordinate work and avoid overlaps.

TUNISIA

1. General situation

1.1. Production and trafficking

We maintain the hypothesis, put forward in previous years, that Tunisia is not a drug-producing country, but rather a country of transit and consumption. The transit is mainly of cannabis to Europe, in moderate amounts, and to Libya and Egypt. This can be inferred from the limited data available on seizures and the activity of the Tunisian security forces in this area.

In the last 12 months, the Tunisian authorities have not provided official data on drug seizures in Tunisia.

Most known seizures of hashish, based on open source reports, occur during the inspection of vehicles travelling on public roads in governorates near the borders with Libya and Algeria and in the coastal region in the east of the country, primarily in the governorates of Tunis, Nabeul, Sousse and Sfax. In recent months there have been at least five seizures of bales of cannabis which were found abandoned on beaches on the north coast (Bizerta) and in the east of the country (Mahdia, Sfax and Nabeul). Seizures of substances in the form of pills intended for consumption in Tunisia continue to be reported.

1.2. Consumption

In the absence of official data from the Tunisian authorities or reliable statistics, our assessment is that drug use in Tunisia remains fairly limited, with the majority of consumers believed to be aged between 18 and 35, and hashish being the main substance consumed.

2. Institutional framework

Following the approval of the new Tunisian constitution on 26 January 2014, numerous initiatives have been announced to modernise the legal framework applicable to the prevention and suppression of drug use. But where drug production, consumption and trafficking are concerned, there has been no change as yet to the existing legal framework - Law No 52/92 of 18 May 1992, a highly repressive text reflecting the oppressive character of the Ben Ali dictatorship.

However, on 4 January 2016 draft legislation to reform Law 52/92 was finally tabled, the main aim being to improve measures to prevent addiction. The most eagerly-awaited aspect of the reform is the decriminalisation of drug consumption. It is estimated that there may be between 7 000 and 7 500 persons in prison for drug consumption, mostly young people, often middle-class students without a previous criminal record, who are subjected to the harsh living conditions in Tunisia's dilapidated prisons.

The legislative proposal referred to above would apparently introduce alternative sentences for consumers who are not repeat offenders, avoiding criminal sanctions for cases which only involve consumption. These sentences could consist in an obligation to undergo treatment and carry out community service.

It is also envisaged to create a drugs commission which would monitor activities directed towards known consumers.

3. International cooperation

Nothing to report.

3.1. *Technical assistance*

Nothing to report.

3.2. *Statistics*

Nothing to report.

4. Recommendations

In view of the lack of official data provided by the Tunisian authorities, it is difficult to make a precise assessment of the situation in Tunisia and to issue recommendations on prevention of drug addiction and combating drug trafficking; consequently, the first recommendation would be for the authorities to improve the transparency of information in dealing with these matters.

Other recommendations could be as follows:

- Draw up a national strategy to combat drug addiction using a multi-sectoral approach, including the decriminalisation of soft drugs, circulate it to Tunisia's civil society and international partners, and then implement it.
- Encourage participation, by senior members of the Tunisian security forces whose remit focuses on combating organised crime, in seminars and activities organised by international bodies and other countries in the Mediterranean basin.
- Promote international police cooperation in combating serious crime, normally encompassing criminal organisations engaged in drug trafficking. For this it is necessary to modernise the outdated structures and operational procedures of the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior, with regard to both combating organised crime and police cooperation.