MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM

REPORT OF THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP (IWG)
Distinguished Commissioners,

In accordance with the Commissioners’ decision at the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) sixty-sixth regular session (2019), I am pleased to convey, on behalf of the Inter-Governmental Working Group (IWG), that we have completed our task set out by this Commission, and therefore, present for your consideration, the remaining components that constitute the instruments to be used in 2022 and 2023 for the eighth round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM).

The eighth round of the MEM, which started in February of this year, identifies the current situation that each member state faces regarding the implementation of the objectives of the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2021-2025 of the OAS Hemispheric Drug Strategy 2020, with annual thematic evaluations.

As you know, the MEM is the only multilateral evaluation of its kind in the world; a unique mechanism that, based on a peer review process, highlights strengths and challenges of OAS member states in its national reports and hemispheric briefs.

Over 20 years, seven MEM rounds have been completed. With adjustments being made based on lessons learned and best practices, this evaluation ensures that the information is accurately collected with respect to member states’ approaches to the drug problem, and clearly outlining the challenges encountered, the strengths, and the collective progress in implementing drug policies.

Last year, the IWG made improvements to the MEM for the eighth round, and, in December 2020, this Commission approved the operational process and the components for the 2021 evaluation of the drug demand reduction area: “Measures of Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Support,” along with the OAS Hemispheric Drug Strategy 2020 and corresponding Plan of Action 2021-2025. During this year, the IWG discussed and reached consensus on the remaining components for this round for the 2022 and 2023 thematic evaluations.

The IWG included the participation of all OAS member state representatives. Due to the current COVID-19 context, all five IWG meetings were held virtually through an online platform. These took place in September, October, and November 2020, and in March and April 2021.
The IWG drafted the questionnaires, related manuals, and supporting material. As a result of our work, the member states are now provided with an effective hemispheric tool to use in the formulation of drug policies, increasing the MEM’s relevance at a national, hemispheric, and international level. Also, this round is a more rigorous process, in which the countries are asked to provide valid means of verification to support the information submitted and ensure compliance with the respective priority actions.

As I previously mentioned, the thematic evaluation for this year focused on Measures of Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Support, followed by Measures to Control and Counter the Illicit Cultivation, Production, Trafficking, and Distribution of Drugs, and to Address their Causes and Consequences in 2022; and finally Institutional Strengthening; Research, Information, Monitoring, and Evaluation; and International Cooperation in 2023. Following the evaluation of all thematic areas, in 2024, there will be a comprehensive evaluation, which will assess any updates to the national reports that were published during 2021 to 2023.

Similar to previous rounds, the Governmental Expert Group (GEG) identifies the progress, setbacks, and shortcomings of each member state (except their own) to provide an objective view of their current situation and their approach to the drug problem, though this time alongside the MEM Independent Technical Consultants. These Consultants provide additional expertise in the various drug-related areas being evaluated and reducing the resource constraints on member states throughout the evaluation process.

During 2021, the IWG drafted the following eighth round documents, here presented for your consideration:

1) Evaluation Questionnaires (2022 and 2023)

These documents are the key components of the evaluation process that contain questions for countries to respond and include the corresponding means of verification. The information received is used by the GEG (supported by the Consultants) to analyze the reality of the country.

The questionnaire for 2022 will cover the thematic area of “Measures to Control and Counter the Illicit Cultivation, Production, Trafficking, and Distribution of Drugs, and to Address their Causes and Consequences” (Annex I); and the questionnaire for 2023 will cover the thematic areas of “Institutional Strengthening;” “Research, Information, Monitoring, and Evaluation;” and “International Cooperation” (Annex II).

2) Evaluator’s Manuals (2022 and 2023)

These manuals guide the GEG, in accordance with the Procedural Manual (already approved in CICAD 68), in the assessment of member states’ progress in the implementation of the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2021-2025.
Like the evaluation questionnaire for 2022, the manual for next year will focus on the evaluation of the thematic area: “Measures to Control and Counter the Illicit Cultivation, Production, Trafficking, and Distribution of Drugs, and to Address their Causes and Consequences,” (Annex III), and it will include interpretive notes for each priority action. Lastly, the manual for 2023, like its corresponding questionnaire, focuses on the evaluation of the following thematic areas: “Institutional Strengthening;” “Research, Information, Monitoring, and Evaluation;” and “International Cooperation” (Annex IV).

Before concluding, I would like to thank the efforts of all IWG members for their dedication and arduous work in this MEM eighth evaluation round. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we have succeeded and completed our task, most importantly, with the ongoing participation of representatives from all member states.

I would also like to thank the CICAD Executive Secretariat, and especially the MEM Unit, led by Adrian Noble. Adrian and his team, including Martin Cubas, Karen Sanjines, and Ilka Walker, have continuously provided us support and guided us along the way these past two years.

Thank you.