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MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM

REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP (GEG) 2022

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REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP (GEG) 2022

Carmen Batres, GEG General Coordinator

Distinguished Commissioners, delegates, and government officials of this seventy-second regular session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), I greet you on behalf of the members of the Governmental Expert Group (GEG) of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), in my capacity as General Coordinator.

As you know, the MEM process was modified in its eighth round to focus on the evaluation of specific thematic areas during its first three years and a comprehensive evaluation in its fourth and final year. This year we are in the second year of evaluation, in which the evaluation of the thematic area "Measures to Control and Counter the Illicit Cultivation, Production, and to Address their Causes and Consequences" was carried out, focusing on the issues related to drug supply reduction.

For this year's evaluation, each member state designated its experts, principal and alternates, thus forming the GEG. Of these designations, three quarters corresponded to experts new to the process. In accordance with the new modality implemented for this evaluation round, focused on one thematic area per year, this time the countries were asked to designate professionals specialized in drug supply reduction. Consequently, 33 countries initially participated.

The work of the GEG began with a preparatory meeting, which, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was held virtually on April 19 and 20, and in which all the designated governmental experts participated. At this meeting, the main characteristics of the MEM process and the particularities of the eighth round were presented, and experiences and good practices were shared by experts who had participated in previous rounds. The achievements of this meeting included: organizing the group's drafting work, reviewing their roles and responsibilities, distributing the respective assignments to each expert, and defining the calendar of activities for the 2022 evaluation.

Additionally, during this meeting, Dr. Gustavo Camilo Baptista, General Coordinator of Investments, Projects, Monitoring and Evaluation of the National Secretariat for Drug Policies (SENAD), designated lead expert from Brazil, and myself, were elected Deputy General and General Coordinator, respectively.

In early May, the narrative documents were distributed to the GEG experts. These documents were based on the responses to the evaluation questionnaires (which were sent out to countries in January), previously reviewed and analyzed by the MEM's independent technical consultants, who presented their observations and suggestions through "Technical notes to the GEG" to be considered by the experts.

With these inputs, the governmental experts drafted preliminary country reports, which were duly translated and distributed to all the experts in preparation for the first GEG Plenary meeting.

The First Plenary Drafting Session of the GEG was held virtually from June 20 to 24. During those days, the designated experts met to review in detail the content of the 33 draft reports. For their evaluation, the experts took into account the reality of each country and the responses to the evaluation questionnaire, which requested that affirmative answers be supported by valid means of verification to ensure compliance with the respective priority actions. The experts also discussed the substantive content of the draft reports and exchanged ideas based on their experience in the subject.

At this meeting, the GEG experts made key decisions on the data and information to be included, as well as raised questions on the content through the inclusion of "Notes to country" in cases where it was necessary to clarify or elaborate on the information provided by the country.

Once the experts had made the changes requested by the Plenary, the "first draft reports" were formally obtained and sent to the countries in mid-July, through their National Coordinating Entities, for review.

Subsequently, member states provided comments and responses to the "Notes to country." This information was reviewed by the independent technical consultants, who provided valuable comments to the GEG for consideration during the evaluation. With this input, the experts updated the country reports between the end of August and the beginning of September, which were submitted to the MEM Unit for translation and distribution in preparation for the Second Plenary Drafting Session of the GEG.

During this session, which was held virtually from October 3 to 6, 2022, a final review of the 33 national reports was carried out, emphasizing those sections of the reports where changes were made based on the new information provided by the member states. It should be noted that one country did not respond to the "Notes to country," thus the group was unable to carry out an accurate evaluation or finalize the evaluation of that report.

Once the experts made the changes requested by the Plenary, a thorough editing process was carried out by the MEM Unit, resulting in the final draft reports, which were transmitted to the member states' Commissioners during the first week of November, in preparation for this regular session of the Commission.

I would like to take this opportunity to recall that this eighth round seeks to measure the implementation of a new Hemispheric Drug Strategy and its Plan of Action, consequently the evaluation process has been rigorous and compliance with each priority action was subject to the submission of adequate means of verification, which supported the answers provided.

I would also like to remind you all that one of the main purposes of MEM evaluation reports is to serve as a useful diagnostic tool to identify opportunities for improvement in drug policies and

strategies, both at the national and hemispheric levels. In this regard, I take this opportunity to invite countries to disseminate their national report internally, once it is formatted and published on the CICAD website.

Lastly, I would like to thank the GEG experts for their unwavering commitment to the evaluation process. Moreover, on behalf of the GEG, I would like to acknowledge the support provided by the independent technical consultants to the experts, as well as the valuable guidance provided by the staff of the MEM Unit, headed by Mr. Luis Adrián Noble, Chief of the MEM Unit, without whose support it would not have been possible to complete this work.

Distinguished Commissioners, I wish to thank all your member states for your continued support for this important multilateral process, based on a mandate from the 1998 Summit of the Americas.

Thank you so much.

Carmen Batres
General Coordinador
MEM Governmental Expert Group