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Position Statement of the Russian Inter-Ministerial Delegation at the 70th Session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (Washington, 19 November 2021)

Mr. Chairman! Ambassador Namm! Ladies and Gentlemen!

The Russian delegation would like to reiterate its gratitude for the opportunity to comment on national, regional, and global drug control and anti-drug efforts in the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As outlined by our delegation at the previous session of CICAD, the COVID-19 crisis has been a catalyst for further growth in drug production, trafficking, and consumption. Drug gangs have actively and successfully adapted the algorithms of their criminal activity, continuing to use secure channels of communication and adjusting their transportation channels. Under these circumstances, we especially appreciate the cooperative attitude of our overseas counterparts in suppressing their activities. In August this year, one of the alleged leaders of a criminal network, a citizen of the Russian Federation suspected of organizing a channel for smuggling drugs from South America through the Kingdom of Spain to Russia for subsequent sale, was detained in Medellin, Colombia. His possible links with Colombian drug cartels are currently under investigation. Two other accomplices to the crime have been placed on the international wanted list. We would like to thank our Colombian counterparts for their assistance in making this operation a success.

At the same time, we consider it important to continue an open exchange of views among LAC law enforcement agencies on the most serious changes in the drug market during the pandemic. A pilot online seminar with the
participation of the relevant officials from the countries of the region has already been held on September 16 this year at the centre of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs in Managua.

We would also like to note the high degree of constructiveness shown by the countries of the Western hemisphere in the negotiation process of the omnibus resolution of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly in New York in October and November of this year. We would especially like to thank Mexican coordinators for their inclusive approach in discussing it, and like-minded delegations of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela who made it possible to achieve a balanced "composition" of its content. We hope that this spirit of consensus will also be maintained during the upcoming resumed 64th session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in December and the 65th session of the CND in March 2022, where the Russian delegation is planning to introduce a draft resolution on countering high-technology drug offenses.

We continue to appeal to all countries to strictly comply with their obligations to control all drugs under the three UN anti-drug conventions. We also believe it essential to cooperate as openly and fully as possible with the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) in the implementation of its monitoring functions. We welcome the interest of Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela in the Board's training workshop, which will be held via videoconference from 6 to 10 December of this year with the aim of building their national capacities to implement the UN drug control conventions. The Russian Federation will sponsor this training to assist Latin American countries in need in improving the quality of their reporting to the INCB.

In conclusion, we would like to express our concern about the current situation in Afghanistan. The Russian Federation strongly supports the establishment of the IRA as a peaceful, secure, economically developing, and stable state, free of terrorism and drug-related crime.
We are compelled to note that drug production in Afghanistan, which has steadily increased over the past few years, has not declined after the change of the political regime. Furthermore, given the sharp deterioration of the socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the country, the risks associated with Afghan drug trafficking are growing exponentially.

Countering the aforementioned threats to the security of Afghanistan and the wider region, as well as the threats extending to other regions of the world, requires a timely response, including from external partners. Noting the growing activity of various regional and international forums for Afghanistan, we would like to emphasize the need to achieve their complementarity. In this regard, the growing demand for the Paris Pact Initiative as a unique international platform for a depoliticized discussion of illicit trafficking of drugs from Afghanistan and curbing the drug threat emanating from that country is reaffirmed. Taking into account the global nature of the initiative, we invite our partners from Latin America and Canada to consider joining it, including as donors.

Currently, we are actively preparing for the meeting of the Paris Pact Expert Working Group on Cross-border Cooperation, which will be held in Moscow from 15 to 16 December of this year. We invite you to participate in this event, which, we are convinced, will contribute significantly to our common efforts to stem the Afghan drug threat.

We are committed to making sure that our cooperation leads to tangible results in reducing drug crime in the Western and the Eastern hemispheres.

Thank you.