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**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE  
CONTROL COMMISSION**

**CICAD**

Secretariat for Multidimensional  
Security

**SIXTIETH REGULAR SESSION  
November 2-4, 2016  
Nassau, The Bahamas**

**OEA/Ser.L/XIV.2.60  
CICAD/doc.2263/16  
4 November 2016  
Original: Portuguese**

**Update Report on the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction**

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

Guests:

Brazil is pleased to lead once again the joint action of the American countries in implementing the recommendations of the Hemispheric Drug Strategy and, therefore, in developing effective measures for carrying out important actions to address the different manifestations of the world drug problem in the Hemisphere.

It should be noted that the countries are undertaking different actions to address, in their different realities, this issue. This is the commitment of the Brazilian State, which joins its actions with those of other member states to generate the activities and results that will be presented. Those actions, distinguished delegates, aim at uniformity among the variety of national institutions and their different professionals for the identification of effective and economically viable measures for the protection of all member state citizens from the consequences of substance abuse.

Note that the Americas have been mobilized as an appropriate setting in which to promote changes to the drug policy approach. Continuous efforts for a regional characterization of this issue have led to a quest for a more comprehensive and balanced approach focused on health and human rights as a sounder footing on which to address the heavy burden of illness and violence closely associated with this issue, especially for the most vulnerable populations.

Therefore, Mr. Chair, in its recent activities, this group has sought to consolidate those efforts and to promote the delivery of sound products

that incorporate existing evidence and local knowledge, so as to facilitate the implementation of measures and actions in a careful and assessable manner, based on the highest standards.

This exemplifies the approach taken to the planning and evaluation of the actions carried out, which I now present in the initial delivery of this work. The aim of the manual on public health policies on psychoactive substances: a health care planning guide is to address the need to formulate actions in this area, both from a health perspective and from a perspective of drug policy implementation itself. Intended for health and national drug policy authorities, it is especially useful for professionals of agencies carrying out planning at its different levels: national and local – for actions ranging from prevention to brief intervention to care in a broad sense, and even to mitigation of effects of use.

Therefore, it can serve as a tool for those responsible for decision-making and resource allocation, for professionals directly involved in implementing activities, and even for civil society organizations. Its content was produced with participation by countries during prior activities, as well as through ongoing partnerships of Pan American Health Organization consultants with Organization of American States specialists.

Throughout its sessions the manual aims to promote, in its use by those different action levels, an appropriate definition of the drug problem and its relationship to public health, for effective inclusion on national public policy agendas.

It also describes how to manage, obtain, and analyze the information available for the formulation of appropriate responses to the problem as it

stands – giving special consideration to existing differences among localities.

Therefore, it even facilitates learning about the complexity of the process of defining proposals, implementing actions, and evaluating results—as part of that policy—for the improved implementation thereof.

All those objectives are discussed throughout a publication of practical format which, if fully used, is expected to improve ownership of the process by its different stakeholders and even optimize results and resource use.

This *initial* delivery, this manual, is the first of three products, all based on the same premise: potential practical application, in the national context—based on national realities and specificities.

That is the context in which the next activities to be reported are being developed. The second activity directly entails the definition of a procedure for implementing programs for early detection and brief intervention in cases of risks associated with psychoactive substance use, based on existing programs in the Hemisphere. Accordingly, a guide will be prepared that consolidates and updates the most effective thematic and methodological content for addressing community and primary care needs. That process is being implemented in partnership with the Juiz de Fora Federal University, in Brazil, and should be completed in March next year.

And lastly, Mr. Chair and Commissioners, the most challenging product, which takes into consideration the need not only to implement evidence-based programs and projects, but also to consolidate the evaluation framework: the “long-term monitoring protocol,” which is now being developed as a sequel to the brief intervention model for

problematic psychoactive substance users. That protocol is being developed in partnership with the University of Mexico, and its greatest challenge will be to conduct a pilot study in strategic localities.

The latter two products are expected to be presented to the specialists of the countries at an attendance-based meeting early next year.

Accordingly, Mr. Chair and Commissioners, Brazil, in exercising the chairmanship of CICAD's Demand Reduction Expert Group, submits to you for your consideration this executive summary and the manual on public health policies on psychoactive substances as outputs of the activities thus far undertaken, reiterating its appreciation to the countries for their support and participation in that process.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.