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**REPORT OF IN-SITU VISIT
BY THE GOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP (GEG)
OF THE MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM (MEM)
TO SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**



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OCTOBER 17-19, 2006

A. Background

An OAS/CICAD/GEG (Governmental Expert Group) delegation visited Saint Vincent and the Grenadines during October 17 – 19, 2006, in response to a request by the country's representative, Ambassador Ellsworth John, during CICAD's Thirty-Ninth regular session. The GEG was unable to conduct an evaluation of the country's implementation of the Third Evaluation Round recommendations, as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines did not provide the necessary information. The main objective of the visit was to discuss with government officials and other stakeholders in drug control, the obstacles that have been impeding the authorities' adequate compliance with the requirements of the Third Evaluation Round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism.

B. Objectives

This in-situ visit had the following objectives:

- To build political support for and promote full participation in the MEM process.
- To inform the national anti-drug stakeholders of the MEM and seek their support for and commitment to the process.
- To encourage an improvement in the dialogue between the different anti-drug agencies and the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' National Coordinating Entity for the MEM.
- To inform Government Officials and agencies about the MEM recommendations which were assigned to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the ways in which CICAD can help the country to fulfill them.
- To acquire first-hand knowledge as to the situation in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, analyze the reality of the country, and thus understand the reason behind its lack of participation in the Third Evaluation Round and determine the obstacles faced.

C. Delegation and Counterpart

This mission was led by Ambassador James Mack, CICAD Executive Secretary, accompanied by Mr. Martin Cubas (Specialist - Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism) and Mr. Primnath Ritoe, GEG Expert for Suriname. The in-country counterpart team was led by the Hon. Dr. Douglas Slater, Minister of Health and the Environment, Mr. Lanceford Weekes, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Health, Dr. Amrie Morris-Patterson, Senior Registrar of the Mental Health Center, and Dr. Saint Clair Thomas, Chief Medical Officer. High-level authorities in other institutions were included in the program, and they fully cooperated with the visiting team's efforts.

D. Methodology

The visit was programmed for two days. The first day and half of the second day consisted of meetings with high level government officials to provide an overall explanation of the MEM process and the benefits it offers to the country, as well as to assess the difficulties facing the institutions in the provision of information and communication with the designated national coordinating entity. On the afternoon of the second day of the visit, a workshop was held to explain in detail how the MEM process works, the calendar of activities for the Fourth Evaluation Round, and provide examples of how other countries in the region have benefited from the MEM. The participants also had the opportunity to discuss the obstacles that they have been facing.

E. Findings

- Currently, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines does not have a national drug council in charge of coordinating drug control policies.
- The country does not have an Anti-Drug Plan. A previous version of the plan was developed in 2000 and submitted for Government approval. This plan did not pass Cabinet approval because it did not reflect the country's reality and financial possibilities.
- The Ministry of Health and the Environment has appointed one official who is committed to continue with the coordination duties, under the guidance of the Permanent Secretary and the Chief Medical Officer of the Minister of Health and the Environment.
- The stakeholders met were not fully aware of the MEM and related activities. Many of the authorities were new to the subject and needed more information on the evaluation process and what their responsibilities were in order to comply with the Fourth Evaluation Round of the MEM.
- Questionnaires of the indicators for the Fourth Round were only recently distributed to the stakeholders, thus not allowing them to meet the established October 20th, 2006 deadline for submission to the MEM Unit.
- Some stakeholders were given MEM indicators for which they did not have the information to answer appropriately, which revealed a lack of communication, and a clear misunderstanding of areas of responsibility among the institutions of the country.
- There is no current information on the extent of the drug abuse problem in the country. The Ministry of Health however, is eagerly working towards the implementation of the Inter-American Drug Use Data System (SIDUC) Secondary School Survey under the supervision of CICAD's Inter-American Observatory on

Drugs (OID). To this end, technical expertise from CICAD will be provided to the country in preparation for implementation of the survey.

- Meetings with the Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police, the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Comptroller of Customs and Excise Department revealed a well functioning internal reporting and analysis system. However, there are still weaknesses in interagency collaboration which need to be addressed.
- Official communications sent by OAS/CICAD to the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines once received have not always been directed to the appropriate agency for action.
- During the workshop, institutions involved in drug control became aware of the benefits that the MEM offers and expressed their support in cooperating with the process.

F. Conclusions

- By the end of the mission, the authorities and respective agencies involved in the MEM process were identified and expressed their willingness to participate in future activities of the MEM.
- The anti-drug plan urgently requires updating and modification, so as to reflect the country's reality and financial possibilities, and a national council needs to be established as soon as possible. A functioning national drug council guided by an approved National Drug Plan is the best way of ensuring coordination of anti-drug efforts and opening communication channels with all the institutions that are responsible for drug control activities.
- The gathering of drug use statistics is a basic component to orient anti-drug policies, and in this regard the OID is working with the country on a secondary school survey on drug prevalence. The country is encouraged to continue its efforts to measure drug use in other specific populations.
- The country should bring together all the stakeholders to determine their areas of responsibility with respect to the MEM, and clearly indicate which agencies are responsible for providing which type of information.
- Proper channeling of communications received from CICAD would help the country take advantage of the many opportunities that the Commission offers its member states, such as fully funded training courses for customs authorities.

G. Final Comments

The Government of Saint Vincent & the Grenadines expressed its concern for being unable to fully comply with the third evaluation round and has committed itself to full participation in the next round of the process.

The Governmental Expert Group wishes to thank the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for its support during the preparation and implementation of this mission, and looks forward to improved cooperation in the country's participation during the Fourth Evaluation Round.