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**Report of the Inter-Governmental Working Group (IWG) of the  
Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM)**

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**REPORT OF THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP (IWG) OF THE MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM (MEM)**

**Alvaro Ahumada San Martin, IWG Chair**

**Introduction**

In fulfillment of the mandate entrusted during the 60th CICAD regular session, the Inter-governmental Working Group (IWG) is pleased to present for consideration of the Commission, a set of documents to carry out the Seventh Round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM).

For this Seventh Round, the dynamics of evaluation will be carried out taking into account the objectives of the Plan of Action 2016 – 2020 of the CICAD Hemispheric Drug Strategy and the priority actions to achieve them. The main purpose is to identify the particular situation that each member state faces regarding the implementation of each one of those objectives. As you will recall, the Plan of Action is an overall reference guide for drafting drug policies in our Hemisphere.

Accordingly, the work of the IWG was to draft the questionnaire and the manuals for the Governmental Expert Group (GEG) to identify progress, setbacks and shortcomings in order to provide an objective view of the current situation of the approach to the drug problem in each country.

The IWG included the participation of 31 member states' representatives. To carry out its work, the IWG divided into five thematic sub-groups, each group responsible for an area of the current Plan of Action. The sub-groups being institutional strengthening, demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures and international cooperation. Each group was headed by a Coordinator and a vice-chair was elected to support the coordination of the IWG.

Most of the IWG meetings were held virtually through an online platform which represents a step forward in using new technology in the work of CICAD. This creates a new communication environment and facilitates interaction among participants, as well as the necessary cost savings for the countries and the OAS. There were 16 virtual meetings of which three were plenaries, 10 of thematic sub-groups and three of thematic sub-group coordinators. There were three in-person meetings of which two were of thematic sub-group coordinators and one was the last plenary meeting.

Notwithstanding, do note that for the virtual feature to work, countries still have technological resources limitations which are challenges that need to be taken into account for the future work of the MEM.

As part of their work, the IWG drafted the following three base documents: evaluation questionnaire; evaluator's manual; and the procedural manual. Additionally, a calendar of activities is presented for your consideration for the seventh round. Following are the details of all:

## **Evaluation Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is the principal instrument of the evaluation process. It includes the questions that countries should respond to by submitting the necessary information so that the GEG can analyze the reality of the country in regards to each one of the thematic areas that form part of the Hemispheric Drug Strategy and its Plan of Action 2016-2020. Likewise, each country should include an Introductory Document to put into context its situation, setbacks and challenges regarding the drug problem.

The questionnaire covers 30 objectives of the plan of action through 139 total questions. The questions are meant to attain useful information for the evaluative process and look at the progress reached by countries after six evaluation rounds of the MEM.

## **Evaluator's Manual**

It's the guidance document for the Governmental Expert Group (GEG). The document includes 30 objectives of the Plan of Action, corresponding to five thematic areas of the Hemispheric Drug Strategy, stating each objective priority actions that the evaluator should take into account while evaluating the status of fulfillment of the objectives. Moreover, each priority action refers to the corresponding numbered questions in the Evaluation Questionnaire and there is an interpretive note that explains the meaning of the priority action. Said notes outlines the criteria that should be taken into account during the assessment.

## **Procedural Manual**

This manual includes a description on the process of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), the actors that form part of the evaluation process and their respective responsibilities, such as the general aspects on the drafting of reports by the GEG.

## **Calendar of Activities**

This component outlines the activities of the evaluation process of the MEM's Seventh Evaluation Round, including benchmarks such as submitting information by member states, GEG meetings, training activities and approval of reports and official publications.

Distinguished Commissioners,

Putting into practice a unique and objective mechanism of a governmental and multilateral nature, to evaluate individual and collective progress of countries of the Hemisphere in midst of all the manifestations of the drug problem, undoubtedly important, has shaped the institutional and political multidimensional framework to address drug use and trafficking within our Hemisphere.

Such framework is considered within CICAD as the forum for common action and fosters mutual cooperation; in the Hemispheric Drug Strategy and its Plan of Action as indicators that outline principles and guidelines of general common policies; and, such framework completed within the MEM as the necessary technical instrument to measure progress in the implementation of the Hemispheric Strategy's guidelines.

As known, in the drug area, the increasing globalization determines that successes of each one of the national strategies, in any of the aspects of the phenomena, be closely linked to the progress or setbacks of those strategies of other countries and, therefore, the future of each one of those strategies and as a group, determining the hemispheric level of success.

The aforementioned, reiterates the value and necessity of the MEM as the instrument to follow-up on policies, whose legitimacy is based in that it is applicable to all and has procedures, principles and jointly agreed norms.

After six evaluation rounds there is baseline information that enables assessment of progress in countries and in the Hemisphere in addressing the drug problem. Now we can compare, as available, trends of behaviors of diverse aspects of the phenomena which enriches the evaluative process.

Evidently, the reality of the progress of drug strategies in the countries is very diverse in terms of development levels. Also, the phenomena manifestations are different in each country, whether there are a higher number of related aspects in demand reduction, or there is a more pressing need to address related gaps in supply reduction.

The working documents of the Governmental Expert Group (GEG), being presented for your consideration, were drafted in a logical manner to measure progress in addressing the drug phenomena in member states and also demonstrate existing challenges and shortcomings that hopefully can be overcome through national policy decisions.

Distinguished Commissioners,

I'd like to highlight three points in the procedural manual, which this Chair deems necessary, in order to make most use of the questionnaire and the manuals, presented for your consideration.

The first being the technical drug policy expertise of governmental experts representing member states, it is desirable that the designated experts have knowledge in evaluation of public policies or have worked or work in designing, implementing, management or monitoring of drug policies in any of the drug-related areas in your countries.

Likewise, the experts should be allotted the time to work in their respective capitals on MEM tasks in conjunction with other duties.

Along the same lines, another element to consider is the continuity of experts in carrying out their tasks, given that their absence in a GEG drafting meeting creates an imbalance of work and therefore adds on extra work to other experts. In this regard, the continuity of experts during a whole evaluation cycle would seem a vital requisite.

Second, I would like to highlight the role of the National Coordinating Entities (NCEs), the institutions in each country responsible for collecting the information requested in the evaluation questionnaire. The institution needs to have the ability to review and analyze the collected information while ensuring its accuracy, consistency and quality, which is a key aspect in the evaluation process, also, enriching dialogue among experts and strengthen the credibility of the whole process.

Third, the need to re-position the MEM in the hemispheric agenda, necessary to keep in mind it is the responsibility of member states to acknowledge the importance of the mechanism and make public the respective country report. Taking into the account that the drug problem affects society as a whole, disclosing the results from the reports serves a basis for formal discussion on the priorities and challenges to be addressed in each country. In turn, contributing to consensus on policies and actions required to address the drug problem.

Lastly, I want to thank the commitment and efforts of Roberto Canay of Argentina who was IWG vice-chair, the thematic sub-group coordinators, Elena Lagomarsino of Uruguay, Marcela Ortiz of Costa Rica, Marcia Edwards of Antigua and Barbuda and Karimu Byron of St. Kitts and Nevis, as well as, all the country representatives that participated in the Inter-governmental Working Group that concludes their work today.

I would not wish to end without recognizing and highly valuing the supportive work carried out by the MEM Unit headed by Sofia Kosmas. The added knowledge and experience of Adrian Noble, Martin Cubas, Karen Sanjines and Daniela Hidalgo is an asset to CICAD that is important to preserve and strengthen while bearing in mind the new challenges of this century in confronting the drug problem.

Thank you!