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FINAL REPORT CICAD GROUP OF EXPERTS ON DEMAND REDUCTION



Final Report
CICAD Group of Experts on Demand Reduction
2021

Chair: Paraguay

Vice Chair: Mexico

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) is to provide technical expertise, facilitate collaboration among countries, and submit recommendations to the Commission on implementing the lines of action that derive from the Hemispheric Strategy on Drugs.

The meetings of the Group of Experts allow the member states to tighten their ties of collaboration, share experiences, and generate technical documents on priority topics for the Americas.

During the sixty-eighth regular session of CICAD, which took place in Bogota in semi in-person format from December 9 to December 11, 2020, the Commission elected Paraguay as the Chair of the Group of Experts and Mexico as the Vice-Chair, for the period 2020-2021.

Actions developed during the Chairmanship of Paraguay

Within the Group of Experts framework, Paraguay, as Chair of the Group, Mexico, as Vice Chair, and the Executive Secretariat of CICAD (ES/CICAD) developed the following actions during the period:

- **Survey on Psychoactive Substance Use Patterns during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Colombia and Paraguay, in their roles as Chair and Vice Chair of the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction during the period 2019-2020, and ES/CICAD, coordinated on developing the “*Survey on Psychoactive Substance Use Patterns during the COVID-19 Pandemic*,” to learn about the pandemic’s effects, the measures taken by the countries to control its spread, changes in consumption, the supply of psychoactive substances, and associated factors.

The methodological approach included a basic questionnaire and two technical meetings (August 10 and September 1, 2020) with delegates from the member states for revision and validation of the questionnaire and methodological aspects.

At the ES/CICAD level, the construction process relied on the participation of the Demand Reduction Unit and the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs; at the member states’ level it relied on delegates with expertise in demand reduction and from the National Drug Observatories.

The questionnaire was designed to be self-administered on-line using the Survey Monkey platform and was enabled to collect data between September 16 and October 30, 2020. A total of 51,568 questionnaires were obtained from 33 countries.

The database was revised and scrubbed by the ES/CICAD, and the respective databases were sent to the participating countries. At the Twenty-Second Meeting of the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction, held in October 2021, Colombia presented the final report on that survey.

- **Side Event – the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

A side event was held in April 2021 in the context of the 64th Regular Session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, coordinated by Paraguay's National Anti-Drug Secretariat (SENAD, by its Spanish acronym), in its role as the Chair of the CICAD Group of Experts on Demand Reduction. Its title was "From Pandemic to Prevention: the Way to Further Demand Reduction in the Americas."

In addition to Paraguay as Chair of the CICAD Group of Experts on Demand Reduction, a representative from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) participated as a presenter.

- **Twenty-Second Meeting of the CICAD Group of Experts on Demand Reduction**

The Twenty-Second Meeting of the CICAD Group of Experts on Demand Reduction was held October 19-20, 2021, in virtual format and with the participation of 25 member states and an OAS permanent observer.

The twenty-second meeting was opened by Ambassador Adam E. Namm, Executive Secretary of CICAD; Zully Graciela Rolón Esquivel Esq., Minister Executive Secretary of Paraguay's SENAD, Chair of the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction; and Dr. Gady Zabicky Sirot, National Commissioner against Addictions of the National Commission against Addictions (CONADIC)-Mexico, Vice-Chair of the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction.

The meeting's main topic was the mental health impact and approach and drug use in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the development of plenary sessions with the participation of delegates from the member states, who shared on the development of topics that generated interventions in response to the different challenges.

During the first day, CICAD's work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: "Challenges in Drug Demand Reduction," was presented by the Chief of the ES/CICAD Demand Reduction Unit, Mrs. Jimena Kalawski. In addition, Colombia's Drug Observatory presented the final report on the study on patterns of psychoactive substance use during the COVID-19 pandemic

Experiences and successful practices were then shared during the panel on "Addressing the impact of mental health and drug use in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic", based on presentations given by Chile, Jamaica, and Guatemala. The panel on "Global Dialogue on Drug Demand Reduction" was developed with the participation of the African Union Commission, the International Technology Transfer Center-Ukraine, and the Colombo Plan-Asia.

On the second day of the meeting, the panel on "Recreational Use of Cannabis: Challenges for Drug Demand Reduction," was developed with interventions from Mexico and a presenter from Uruguay. Other presentations during the second day included: the results of a systematic review of preventive interventions on the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs among young people in Latin America and the Caribbean, prevention programs in the context of national drug strategies, updating of the work of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) in the Hemisphere, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and substance abuse policies.

- **Collaboration with Civil Society**

The Twenty-Second Meeting of the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction included the participation of civil society organizations, through representatives from the Ibero-American Network of NGOs Working on Drugs and Addictions (RIOD) and the Latin American Federation of Therapeutic Communities (FLACT), in a panel on good practices and the work of civil society organizations in drug demand reduction during the pandemic.

- **Proposed output of the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction**

In the context of the mental health impact and approach and the use of drugs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chair from Paraguay proposes as an output of the Group of Experts the drafting of the document on “Recommendations for Drug Use and Mental Health Treatment Programs,” for health implementers, with an approach that respects people’s dignity and promotes human rights in mental health and addictions services. To this end, consultations will be held on drug use and mental health problems with focal points in the region’s countries.

The document will be prepared with the support of Mexico and delegates from the OAS member states to CICAD’s Group of Experts on Demand Reduction.