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**REPORT OF THE PANAMANIAN CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON DEMAND
REDUCTION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION (CICAD)**

UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

Report of the Panamanian Chair of the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)

- Mr. Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the Organization of American States.
- Mr. Ivan Contente Marques, Secretary for Multidimensional Security of the Organization of American States.
- Ambassador Adam Namm, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.

I offer my greetings to the new authorities who will assume today as the Chair and Vice Chair of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, as well as to the new authorities of all the CICAD working groups.

Distinguished members of the Commission:

The following is the report of the Panamanian Chair of the **CICAD Group of Experts on Demand Reduction**.

We are honored to present, on behalf of the Chair of the Group of Experts on Demand Reduction, the report of the activities carried out this year, with the support of Brazil as Vice Chair and the valuable support of the CICAD Demand Reduction Unit.

In March 2023, we participated at the **Sixty-sixth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)** and organized a hybrid format side event called “**Practical Approaches to Polyconsumption**,” with the objective of providing practical resources for identifying and characterizing the use of multiple substances to address the needs of people who, either simultaneously or sequentially, use combinations of substances.

The topic was selected because, traditionally, research on substance use disorders (SUD) has focused on **individual substances**, considering separate profiles and neglecting the use of multiple substances.

In addition, clinical studies often exclude people with multiple drug use histories, and the guidelines generally address **substance use disorders separately and individually**.

Through that panel session, the work done in Panama in the treatment of substance use disorders in the different areas of care (public and private) was shared with the CICAD member countries, with a view to promoting the exchange of best practices based on scientific evidence. Similarly, the event reflected on the importance of health, emphasizing the series of actions that can be taken from within public health systems, with a priority focus on issues of comprehensive health care for our populations' vulnerable people and groups.

This activity was carried out in a hybrid format, which allowed 120 participants to attend. The primary objective of the activity was achieved, and the member states were urged to develop practical resources for identifying the use of multiple substances, thereby addressing the needs of people who use combinations of substances, either simultaneously or sequentially.

Subsequently, since March 2023, the Chair has held several meetings in conjunction with the Brazilian Vice Chair and the team of the CICAD Demand Reduction Unit. Through them we continued our organization and coordination efforts, with the specific objective of drawing up an agenda that would include the current challenges facing the region and allow the member states to exchange experiences, with a view to the 24th meeting of the CICAD Group of Experts on Demand Reduction, which was held in hybrid format in the Republic of Panama on September 12 to 14.

That meeting was attended by 28 delegations from different countries in the region, as well as government experts and regional and international organizations that were part of the working agenda.

The outcome of the extensive days of dialogue and exchange was the instrument called “**Recommendations of the Demand Reduction Experts Group,**” which urges the member states to recognize the importance of improving access to treatment programs for women and expanding their supply, guided by international quality standards and considering the special needs of women caregivers, to support children and adolescents re-entering the school system and strengthen care and prevention activities, and to encourage a comprehensive, balanced, multidisciplinary, and evidence-based approach to deal with the growing problem of non-medical use of fentanyl and other drugs. That instrument is attached to the documents provided by CICAD at this meeting.

We are satisfied with the achievements made, and we are certain that these events have allowed us to present the progress made by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in raising the quality of drug demand reduction (DDR) efforts, in the understanding that the quality assurance of programs and services is a fundamental aspect of national drug policies, given their direct impact on improving the population’s quality of life and living conditions, health, and life expectancy.

Finally, we thank all of you for your backing, support, and invaluable participation in the work carried out during Panama’s time as chair, and we wish every success to the future Chair and Vice Chair of this important Group of Experts on Demand Reduction.

Recomendaciones del Grupo de Expertos en Reducción de la Demanda para enfrentar los retos y desafíos actuales en el hemisferio

Recommendations of the Demand Reduction Experts Group to address current hemispheric challenges

<p>The Chair of the CICAD Demand Reduction Experts Group exhorts OAS member states to continue striving toward strengthening and expanding the coverage of programs and services relative to the prevention, treatment, and recovery of substance use disorders to minimize the adverse public health effects of drug use in the education, family, work, and community settings, giving special attention to women, children, and adolescents through measures and initiatives such as:</p>	<p>La Presidencia del Grupo de Expertos en Reducción de la Demanda de la CICAD exhorta a los Estados Miembros de la OEA a continuar esforzándose por fortalecer y ampliar la cobertura de programas y servicios relativos a la prevención, tratamiento y recuperación de los trastornos por consumo de sustancias, para minimizar los efectos adversos en la salud pública del consumo de drogas en el ámbito educativo, familiar, laboral y comunitario, con especial atención a las mujeres, la niñez y la población adolescente a través de medidas e iniciativas como:</p>
<p>Improve access to and expand the offer of women’s treatment programs, guided by international quality standards and considering the special needs of women who are caregivers.</p> <p>According to the World Drug Report 2023, barriers to accessing treatment are multiple, but women are most affected. Women who use drugs tend to progress to drug use disorders faster than men and continue to be underrepresented in drug treatment, remarkably women who use certain substances, such as amphetamine-type stimulants. Besides dealing with family expectations and social roles, women may experience barriers in accessing treatment, including increased social stigma, lack of childcare, and fear of losing custody of</p>	<p>Mejorar el acceso y ampliar la oferta de programas de tratamiento para mujeres, con la guía de estándares internacionales de calidad y considerando las necesidades especiales de las mujeres que proveen cuidados.</p> <p>Según el Informe Mundial sobre Drogas 2023, las barreras para acceder al tratamiento son múltiples, pero las mujeres son las más afectadas. Las mujeres que consumen drogas tienden a progresar hacia los trastornos por consumo de drogas más rápidamente que los hombres y siguen estando insuficientemente representadas en el tratamiento por consumo de drogas, en particular las mujeres que consumen ciertas sustancias, como los estimulantes de tipo anfetamínico. Además de lidiar con las expectativas familiares y los roles</p>

<p>children while receiving treatment services. Women who use drugs and are also part of specific population groups like trauma and violence survivors, people with comorbidities, sex workers, prisoners, and members of ethnic minorities, face more severe vulnerabilities, including higher levels of stigma and discrimination.</p>	<p>sociales, las mujeres pueden experimentar barreras para acceder al tratamiento, incluyendo mayor estigma social, falta de servicios de cuidado para sus hijas e hijos y miedo a perder la custodia de sus infantes mientras reciben los servicios de tratamiento. Las mujeres que consumen drogas y que también forman parte de grupos de población específicos, como sobrevivientes de traumas y violencia, personas con comorbilidades, trabajadoras sexuales, prisioneras y miembros de minorías étnicas, enfrentan vulnerabilidades más graves, incluyendo niveles más altos de estigma y discriminación.</p>
<p>To support children and adolescents returning to the school system and strengthen care and prevention activities.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions to contain the spread of the virus shocked education systems in most countries around the world, constraining educational opportunities, especially for students living in poverty and with disabilities. The rippling effects of these disruptions dented the substance use disorders prevention interventions that countries implement in school settings. Because of the influence that educational attainment has on people’s health and well-being, interventions in the education sphere can integrally improve people’s lives. In this post-pandemic era, member states have a unique opportunity to improve the population’s quality of life by supporting children and adolescents returning to the school system and strengthening care and prevention activities that address their needs.</p>	<p>Apoyar a niñas, niños y adolescentes que se reincorporan al sistema escolar y fortalecer las actividades de atención y prevención.</p> <p>La pandemia de COVID-19 y las restricciones para contener la propagación del virus conmocionaron los sistemas educativos en la mayoría de los países del mundo, limitando las oportunidades educativas, especialmente para estudiantes que viven en pobreza y con discapacidades. Los efectos dominó de estas interrupciones afectaron las intervenciones de prevención de los trastornos por uso de sustancias que los países implementan en los entornos escolares. Por la influencia que tienen los logros educativos en la salud y bienestar de las personas, las intervenciones en el ámbito educativo pueden mejorar integralmente la vida de las personas. En esta era pospandemia, los Estados Miembros tienen una oportunidad única de mejorar la calidad de vida de la población apoyando a niñas, niños y adolescentes que regresan al sistema escolar y fortaleciendo</p>

	<p>las actividades de atención y prevención que atienden sus necesidades.</p>
<p>Encourage a comprehensive, balanced, multidisciplinary, and evidence-based approach to deal with the growing problem of non-medical use of fentanyl and other drugs.</p> <p>The non-medical use of fentanyl and other drugs imposes current challenges due to the role such substances can have as adulterants in unintentional exposure and when people consume them intentionally to experience their psychoactive effects, with an added complexity in polysubstance use cases. Traditionally, research on substance use disorders has focused on individual substances, considering separate profiles and overlooking polysubstance use. Clinical studies often exclude individuals with multiple drug use backgrounds, and guidelines usually address substance use disorders separately. As Chair of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) Demand Reduction Experts Group, Panama aims to develop practical resources to identify and characterize polysubstance use to address the needs of people who consume substance combinations, either concurrently or sequentially. These tools will aid in developing initiatives and measures to minimize drug use's adverse public health effects.</p>	<p>Fomentar un enfoque integral, equilibrado, multidisciplinario y basado en la evidencia para abordar el creciente problema del uso no médico del fentanilo y otras drogas.</p> <p>El uso no médico del fentanilo y otras drogas impone desafíos actuales por el papel que tales sustancias pueden tener como adulterantes en la exposición no intencional y cuando las personas las consumen intencionalmente para experimentar sus efectos psicoactivos, con una complejidad añadida en casos de policonsumo. Tradicionalmente, la investigación sobre los trastornos por uso de sustancias se ha centrado en sustancias individuales, considerando perfiles separados y pasando por alto el uso de varias sustancias. Los estudios clínicos a menudo excluyen a las personas con múltiples antecedentes de uso de drogas, y las pautas generalmente abordan los trastornos por uso de sustancias por separado. Como Presidente del Grupo de Expertos en Reducción de la Demanda de la Comisión Interamericana para el Control del Abuso de Drogas (CICAD), Panamá apunta a desarrollar recursos prácticos para identificar y caracterizar el policonsumo para abordar las necesidades de las personas que consumen combinaciones de sustancias, ya sea de forma simultánea o secuencial. Estas herramientas ayudarán a desarrollar iniciativas y medidas para minimizar los efectos adversos para la salud pública del uso de drogas.</p>

