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**MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM**

**REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP (GEG) 2023**

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**74<sup>th</sup> regular session, Washington, D.C., December 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP (GEG) 2023**  
**MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM (MEM)**

**Gilda Francisco, GEG General Coordinator**

Distinguished Commissioners, delegates, and government officials of this seventy-fourth regular session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). In my capacity as General Coordinator, I greet you on behalf of the members of the Governmental Expert Group (GEG) of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM).

As you know, the MEM process was modified in its eighth round to focus on the evaluation of specific thematic areas during its first three years and a comprehensive evaluation in its fourth and final year. This is the third evaluation year, in which the thematic areas of Institutional Strengthening; Research, Information, Monitoring and Evaluation; and International Cooperation were reviewed.

For this year's evaluation, each member state designated its experts, principal and alternates, thus forming the GEG. Of these designations, about half corresponded to experts new to this evaluation year but not to the process in general. In accordance with the new modality implemented for this round, focused on thematic evaluations, this time the countries were required to designate professionals specialized in the specific areas to be evaluated. Consequently, 32 countries participated in all stages of the evaluation.

The work of the GEG began with a preparatory meeting, which was held virtually on April 18 and 19, and in which all the designated governmental experts participated. At this meeting, the main characteristics of the MEM process and the particularities of the eighth round were presented, and experiences and good practices were shared by experts who had participated in previous rounds. The achievements of this meeting included: organizing the group's drafting work, reviewing their roles and responsibilities, distributing the respective assignments to each expert, and defining the calendar of activities for the 2023 evaluation.

Additionally, during this meeting, Ms. Uki Atkinson, designated principal expert from Jamaica, and myself, were elected Deputy General Coordinator and General Coordinator, respectively.

In early May, the narrative documents were distributed to the GEG experts. These documents were based on the responses to the evaluation questionnaires (which were sent out to countries in January) and previously reviewed and analyzed by the MEM's independent technical consultants, who presented their observations and suggestions through "Technical notes to the GEG" to be considered by the experts.

With these inputs, the governmental experts drafted preliminary country reports, which were duly translated and distributed to all the experts in preparation for the first GEG Plenary meeting.

The First Plenary Drafting Session of the GEG was held virtually from June 19 to 22, 2023. During this session, the designated experts met to review in detail the content of the 32 draft reports. For their evaluation, the experts took into account the reality of each country and the responses to the evaluation questionnaire, which requested that affirmative answers be supported by valid means of verification to ensure compliance with the respective priority actions. The experts also discussed the substantive content of the draft reports and exchanged ideas based on their experience in the subject.

At this meeting, the GEG experts made key decisions on the data and information to be included, and raised questions on the content through the inclusion of "Notes to country" in cases where it was necessary to clarify or elaborate on the information provided by the country.

Once the experts had made the changes requested by the Plenary, the "first draft reports" were formally obtained and sent to the countries in mid-July, through their National Coordinating Entities.

Subsequently, member states provided comments and responses to the "Notes to country." This information was reviewed by the independent technical consultants, who provided valuable comments to the GEG for consideration during the evaluation. With this input, the experts updated the country reports between the end of August and the beginning of September, which were submitted to the MEM Unit for translation and distribution in preparation for the Second Plenary Drafting Session of the GEG.

During this session, which was held virtually from October 2 to 4, 2023, a final review of the 32 national reports, covering the period 2019-2023, was carried out and decisions were taken in those sections where changes were made, based on the new information provided by the member states.

Once the experts made the changes requested by the Plenary, a thorough editing process was carried out by the MEM Unit, resulting in the final draft reports, which were transmitted to the member states' Commissioners in the second half of November, in preparation for this regular session of the Commission.

I would like to take this opportunity to recall that this eighth round seeks to measure the implementation of a new Hemispheric Drug Strategy and its Plan of Action, consequently the evaluation process has been rigorous, and compliance with each priority action was subject to the submission of adequate means of verification, which supported the answers provided by countries.

I would also like to remind you that one of the main purposes of MEM evaluation reports is to serve as a useful diagnostic tool to identify opportunities for improvement in drug policies and

strategies, both at the national and hemispheric levels. In this regard, I take this opportunity to invite countries to disseminate their national report internally, once it is published on the CICAD website.

Lastly, I would like to thank the GEG experts for their unwavering commitment to the evaluation process. Moreover, on behalf of the GEG, I would like to acknowledge the support provided by the independent technical consultants to the experts, as well as the valuable guidance provided by the staff of the MEM Unit, headed by Mr. Luis Adrián Noble, Chief of the MEM Unit, without whose support and follow-up, it would not have been possible to complete this work.

Distinguished Commissioners, I wish to submit for your consideration, the approval of the final draft MEM evaluation reports 2023 and to thank all member states for your continued support for this important multilateral process, based on a mandate from the 1998 Summit of the Americas.

Thank you so much.

Gilda Francisco  
General Coordinator  
MEM Governmental Expert Group 2023