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MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM (MEM)

*Evaluation Report on Drug Policies:
Institutional Strengthening; Research,
Information, Monitoring, and Evaluation;
and International Cooperation*

Panama

Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)
Secretariat for Multidimensional Security (SMS)

2023



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EIGHTH EVALUATION ROUND

2023

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PREFACE

The Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), established by a mandate from the Second Summit of the Americas (Santiago, Chile - 1998), is a unique multilateral evaluation tool designed to measure the progress made and challenges faced by the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) in implementing the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs of the OAS Hemispheric Drug Strategy, currently in force.

The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security (SMS) is the OAS specialized agency in charge of implementing this Mechanism.

The current MEM round is based on the objectives of the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2021-2025 of the Hemispheric Drug Strategy 2020 and their respective priority actions. These documents take into account the recommendations of the outcome document of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS 2016) and the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, as well as cross-cutting issues, such as the gender perspective and human rights, cultural context, and social inclusion approaches, among others.

Seven evaluation rounds have been completed from 1998 to 2019 and, during 2020, the MEM Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG), composed of member state delegates, agreed on a new methodology for the eighth round, consisting of annual thematic evaluations with the support of independent technical consultants, as follows: 2021 – Measures for Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Support; 2022 – Measures to Control and Counter the Illicit Cultivation, Production, Trafficking, and Distribution of Drugs, and to Address their Causes and Consequences; 2023 – Institutional Strengthening; Research, Information, Monitoring, and Evaluation; International Cooperation; and 2024 – Comprehensive Evaluation based on updated information from all thematic areas.

MEM evaluations are carried out based on information provided by the member states' National Coordinating Entities (NCEs), which is analyzed by the MEM Governmental Expert Group (GEG), composed of experts designated by the countries, who do not participate in their own country's evaluation, thus ensuring the transparency and impartiality of the process. The GEG is always supported by the group of independent technical consultants and the MEM Unit. The eighth round represents a more rigorous evaluation process, in which countries are requested to provide valid means of verification to support the information submitted and ensure compliance of each priority action.

Specifically, the GEG's work for the thematic assessment for the areas of "Institutional Strengthening; Research, Information, Monitoring, and Evaluation; and International Cooperation" was conducted during 2023, and covers the 2019 to 2023 period (unless otherwise specified). This work was adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic with the use of technology and virtual tools, as well as taking it into consideration in the evaluation assessments.

Finally, it should be noted 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 regional levels.

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

OBJECTIVE

1

ESTABLISH AND/OR STRENGTHEN NATIONAL DRUG AUTHORITIES, PLACING THEM AT A HIGH POLITICAL LEVEL AND PROVIDING THEM WITH THE NECESSARY CAPABILITIES, RESOURCES, AND COMPETENCIES TO COORDINATE FORMULATION, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION OF NATIONAL DRUG POLICIES.

Priority Action 1.1: Place national drug authorities at a high political level.

Panama has the National Commission for the Study and Prevention of Drug-Related Crime (CONAPRED), established in 1986, as its national drug authority. CONAPRED is chaired by the Attorney General of the Nation. This collegiate body is made up of the following commissioners with the right to speak and vote: the Minister of Public Security, Minister of Education, Minister of Health, Minister of Economy and Finance, Chief Justice of the Court for Children and Adolescents, President of the Panamanian White Cross, Chair of the University of Panama, Head of the Catholic Church, Chair of the National Assembly Committee on Government, Justice, and Constitutional Matters, and a Coordinator appointed by the Executive Branch (Director of the Financial Analysis Unit).

Priority Action 1.2: Grant national drug policy entities the authority to guide and coordinate the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of national drug policies.

The national drug authority of Panama has a legal basis, through the Single Text of the Drug Law (Law 23 of December 30, 1986, hereinafter Law 23 of 1986).

Priority Action 1.3: Allocate the necessary resources (material, financial, and human) for the effective functioning of the national drug authorities.

Panama does not have an annual budget for the national drug authority. The human and material resources for the implementation of national drug policies are financed in accordance with Law 23 of 1986, through a fund which is supplied with the proceeds of the money that has been seized or obtained from the auction of goods associated with crimes against the public administration, money laundering, financial crimes, terrorism-related offenses, drug trafficking and related crimes, and regulatory offenses.

In accordance with Law 23 of 1983 modified by Law 13 of July 27, 1994, the operational financing of the Executive Secretariat of CONAPRED is earmarked in the operational budget of the Attorney General's Office, through the salaries of the officials who work there and other categories of operational expenses such as vehicles, fuel, and travel expenses for officials as needed to cover monitoring and tours.

Furthermore, CONAPRED has a fund that is financed with the money and assets seized from drug related crimes, for use in prevention projects and programs.

With the declaration of Law 343 of November 2022, a trust account was set up for the seized assets allocated to CONAPRED by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. In accordance with the law, this trust account will be used to finance studies and prevention and control projects submitted to the CONAPRED commissioners. Once the commission has approved the projects, the applicable disbursements are made.

Priority Action 1.4: Design or optimize mechanisms to facilitate effective coordination and collaboration among government institutions for the formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and updating of evidence-based national drug policies and/or strategies.

Panama has an ongoing coordination and collaboration mechanism among agencies and other levels of government (national and subnational), to formulate, implement, monitor, evaluate, and update national drug policies and/or strategies. In this sense, the Executive Secretariat of CONAPRED convenes the institutions, according to their area of work, and establishes a technical committee with the participation of their focal points, who have the responsibility of participating in the formulation of the national drug policy. Once the process is completed, the policy is submitted for consideration by the CONAPRED members for approval, and then to the high level of the national government for signing and issuing of the executive decree that will enact it. Then, it is promulgated in the official gazette. Subsequently, the National Drug Policy is published in the official gazette. For this new period, the Panamanian Drug Observatory (OPADRO) coordinated the convocation.

The country's national drug authority coordinates the areas of demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures, drug observatories, program evaluation, and international cooperation.

**OBJECTIVE
2**

FORMULATE, IMPLEMENT, EVALUATE, AND UPDATE COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL DRUG POLICIES AND/OR STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE BALANCED, MULTIDISCIPLINARY, AND EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES, WHILE FULLY RESPECTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, UNDER THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMON AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY, CONSISTENT WITH OBLIGATIONS OF PARTIES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND TAKE INTO ACCOUNT GENDER, AGE, COMMUNITY, CULTURAL CONTEXT, AND SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT.

Priority Action 2.1: Collect and use evidence as a basis for the formulation and updating of national drug policies and/or strategies.

In Panama, the Panamanian Drug Observatory (OPADRO) collects and uses evidence as a basis for formulating and updating national drug policies and/or strategies. In this sense, updated information is requested from the institutions and nongovernmental organizations through the National Drug Network (RENADRO) point persons; exhaustive searches are conducted of the information published on State institutions’ web pages; research conducted by the academic institutions that form part of RENADRO is forwarded; and bibliometric searches are performed in the databases of academic and nonacademic institutions.

Priority Action 2.2: Promote and establish collaborative relationships with the scientific community, public policy experts, community and/or civil society actors, and other relevant stakeholders, to contribute to the evidence-based development, implementation, evaluation, and updating of national drug policies.

In Panama, the following relevant actors from the priority areas are involved in the development, implementation, evaluation, and updating of national drug policies and/or strategies:

Relevant actors	Development	Implementation	Evaluation	Updating
Health Ministry	X	X		X
Ministry of the Interior	X	X		X
Justice Ministry	X	X		X
Education Ministry	X	X		X
Regional and/or local governments	X	X		X
Scientific community/academia	X		X	X
Civil society	X	X		X
Private sector	X	X		X
Others:				
CONAPRED	X		X	
Social Affairs Ministry (MIDES)	X			
Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF)	X			

Ministry of Government (MINGOB)	X			
Judicial Branch	X			

Priority Action 2.3: Promote sub-national/local management of drug policies and/or strategies through greater coordination and/or delegation of responsibilities, as appropriate, between sub-national/local and national agencies, taking into account the socio-cultural, demographic and other differences of each region.

Panama has not delegated partial or full responsibility on drug issues to the sub-national/local governments to implement concrete actions related to drug policies and strategies.

The country’s national drug authority has, in its central structure, a demand reduction team, which coordinates community trainings and drug outreach and prevention activities to provide technical support on drug-related issues to sub-national/local governments.

Panama’s national drug authority does not have coordinators, offices, or representatives within the sub-national/local territories as part of a decentralized operational and coordination structure at the local level, to respond to the drug problem.

The country has a specific and ongoing mechanism to transfer funds or finance counterdrug initiatives and projects carried out by sub-national/local governments. All initiatives are financed through projects first submitted to the CONAPRED Executive Secretariat for technical review and then to the CONAPRED plenary for approval. Once the project has been approved, the administrative process established for the use of funds continues, in accordance with the country’s legal regulations.

Priority Action 2.4: Engage private sector entities to develop innovative approaches to implementation of drug policy, including the exchange of information on emerging substances and new drug trafficking modalities that may affect the private sector, and best practices for denying criminals access to the private sector platforms and technologies that facilitate international trade.

Panama does not engage private sector entities to develop innovative approaches in the implementation of drug policies or the exchange of information and best practices.

Priority Action 2.5: Formulate or update national drug policies and/or strategies in line with the 2020 OAS Hemispheric Strategy on Drugs and this accompanying Plan of Action, taking into account the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Panama takes into account the OAS 2020 Hemispheric Strategy on Drugs and its corresponding

Plan of Action to formulate or update national drug policies and strategies.

The country's national drug policies and strategies take into account the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The country has submitted the 2030 Vision Strategic Plan in line with the 2030 Agenda. All State institutions, including CONAPRED, review their plans, strategies, and/or policies to ensure the objectives and actions are geared towards achieving the indicators defined therein.

All the pillars of the Government Strategic Plan (PEG) 2019-2024 are aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The new drug policy likewise aligns with both plans and therefore with the 2030 Agenda.

Priority Action 2.6: Integrate a human rights, gender, and social inclusion approach, particularly with respect to at-risk populations, in the process of formulating, implementing, and updating national drug policies and/or strategies.

Panama's national drug policies and strategies do not take the human rights approach, the gender perspective, or the social inclusion approach into account.

Priority Action 2.7: Provide adequate financial and other necessary resources for the implementation of drug policies and programs.

Panama has the necessary resources to implement drug policies and programs.

OBJECTIVE
3**DESIGN AND COORDINATE NATIONAL DRUG POLICIES, THAT CAN BE HARMONIZED ACROSS RELATED GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND/OR STRATEGIES, THAT ADDRESS THE FUNDAMENTAL CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE DRUG PROBLEM.**

Priority Action 3.1: Establish and/or strengthen interagency and multisectoral policy and technical coordination mechanisms, to achieve a comprehensive, balanced, and multi-disciplinary approach to the drug problem, including its causes and consequences.

Panama has interagency and multisectoral policy and technical coordination mechanisms to address the drug problem through a comprehensive, balanced, and multidisciplinary approach, including its causes and consequences. In this sense, the country coordinates multi and intersectoral initiatives through the national drug network with discussion forums on the various aspects of the drug problem, in research, and in the formulation of the new National Drug Policy, as well as in the various committees in which public security and financial oversight organizations participate.

Priority Action 3.2: Design, implement, and evaluate multisectoral plans and programs based on the principles of human rights, public health, and development, to address and counter the socioeconomic causes and the consequences of the drug problem.

Panama does not have concrete multisectoral plans or programs to address the socioeconomic causes and consequences of the drug problem.

Priority Action 3.3: Participate in international cooperation programs at the bilateral and multilateral levels to strengthen policies, programs, institutions, and their internal processes.

Panama participates in international cooperation programs at the bilateral and multilateral levels to strengthen policies, programs, institutions, and their internal processes, for example:

- Signing of the Mutual Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Panama and the Government of the United States of America for Reducing Demand, Preventing Illicit Use, and Combatting the Production and Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs. Actions taken in connection with this agreement include training sessions, the donation of drug samples for expert analysis, and the development of special investigative techniques. Furthermore, the countries formed a joint task force to combat money laundering and corruption
- The Public Ministry is part of the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors Network of Anti-Drug Prosecutors and of the Network of Central American Drug Prosecutors.
- Trainings for governmental and nongovernmental collaborators through the Colombo Plan
- Active participation in the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFILAT) regional organization; organization of several courses and training sessions offered by GAFILAT for civil

servants in all countries of Latin America

- Participation in the GAFILAT Asset Recovery Network (RRAG) network of contact points
- The Financial Analysis Unit participates in bilateral and multilateral activities.
- The Panama Insurance and Reinsurance Authority (SSRP) cooperates and exchanges information with local and regional insurance supervisory authorities.

Priority Action 3.4: Promote comprehensive and cross-cutting public policies to reduce and prevent crime, violence, social exclusion, and corruption.

Panama promotes comprehensive and cross-cutting public policies to reduce and prevent crime, violence, social exclusion, and corruption. Cabinet Resolution 149 of August 30, 2019, establishes the Government Strategic Plan, whose Pillar 2, Rule of Law and Law and Order includes, as a necessary reform of the State that will entail adapting institutions to the public service mission, law and order and a trustworthy, efficient justice system to fight corruption head on and enable citizens to live in a secure society. This approach is geared towards comprehensively combatting and preventing the existing issues of crime, violence, social exclusion, and corruption.

Along these lines, the country established the “Comprehensive Plan for Citizen Security” as an initiative designed to first and foremost serve the communities and general population, together with advocates, community leaders, security agents, among others, through a number of actions on public health, formal and informal education, and building democratic citizenship, that target the entire population to ensure citizens can reach their full potential and to minimize or keep at bay the social risk factors associated with violence and crime.

Priority Action 3.5: Implement measures that promote equal access to justice and due process, taking into account gender, age, community, and cultural context.

Panama implements measures that promote equal access to justice and due process, taking into account gender, age, community, and cultural context. Accordingly, in Resolution 60 of June 1, 2020, the Secretariat for Human Rights, Access to Justice, and Gender established, as one of its functions, to “provide technical assistance to the Head Office, as well as to all the units of the Public Ministry, on human rights, equality of opportunity, access to justice, and gender equality”.

Furthermore, Resolution 01 of January 15, 2018, “Establishing the guiding principles of the institutional policy on human rights, access to justice, and gender of the Public Ministry” establishes principles like equality and equity, nondiscrimination, equalization, and respect for diversity applicable to access to justice and gender equality.

Moreover, under Resolution 63 of December 4, 2017, “Establishing the operational structure of the Secretariat for Human Rights, Access to Justice, and Gender, assigning its functions, and modifying Resolution 25 of March 19, 2013,” the assigned functions include creating forums for debate, outreach, and training.

This Secretariat for Human Rights, Access to Justice, and Gender has organized and held training sessions for Public Ministry officials to raise awareness of several topics and expand their knowledge on human rights; leading to the establishment of care criteria for at-risk individuals and the eradication of socially exclusive behaviors from the culture, based on the legal foundations of the international instruments, including the conventions, charters, guides, rules, declarations, and protocols, as well as the international treaties and national laws, executive decrees, and codes that govern the subject of the outreach or training.

Priority Action 3.6: Implement measures that foster citizen participation in crime prevention, build community cohesion, increase public safety, and emphasize social inclusion.

Panama implements measures that foster citizen participation in crime prevention, build community cohesion, increase public safety, and emphasize social inclusion through the programs executed by the Community Prevention Unit of the Panama National Police, which is a unit attached to the National Directorate of Operations that is implemented in poor neighborhoods with a high risk of violence and crime.

OBJECTIVE

4

DESIGN, ADOPT, AND IMPLEMENT ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION FOR MINOR OR NON-VIOLENT DRUG OR DRUG-RELATED OFFENSES, WHILE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT NATIONAL, CONSTITUTIONAL, LEGAL, AND ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS.

Priority Action 4.1: Adopt alternative measures to incarceration for minor or non-violent drug-related offenses, where appropriate, while safeguarding the sovereignty of states, and ensuring individual accountability, respecting human rights and the gender perspective.

Panamanian law provides for alternative measures to incarceration for minor non-violent drug-related offenses. Article 224, numbers (1) to (9), of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Law 63 of August 28, 2008) establishes the personal precautionary measures to be used as alternatives to pretrial detention. Article 12 of the Code stipulates that detention is an exceptional measure and restricts it to a reasonable time period that may not exceed one year, except for in the cases set forth in the Code.

On the other hand, Article 215 of the same Code of Criminal Procedure enshrines conditional suspension of the process.

As for the measures adopted as alternatives to the incarceration of the convicted party, Panama’s criminal regulations provide for suspended sentences and the replacement of short sentences with public or private reprimands (Articles 98 and 102 and 112, respectively, of Consolidated Law 14 of May 18, 2007 (Criminal Code)), security measures (Articles 123-127), and multidisciplinary therapeutic treatment (Article 50, section (c), in accordance with Article 62-A). The Criminal Code also provides for house arrest (Article 63) and community work (Article 65).

For the prison population, the country’s criminal law provides for probation (Article 103 and subsequent) and release on parole (Article 113).

These measures respect human rights and take into account the gender perspective in accordance with the relevant international instruments. Judges, in evaluating applications for alternatives to incarceration at any stage of a criminal action, are constitutionally obliged (under Article 17 of the Political Constitution of the Republic of Panama) to abide by the agreements and treaties signed by the Republic of Panama, including (human rights and gender perspective standards). Likewise, according to the law (Articles 1 and 5 of the Criminal Code and 1, 2, 12, 14, and 238 of the Code of Criminal Procedure), regulations that protect fundamental rights must adhere to the measures regarding criteria of exceptionality, proportionality, and reasonability.

Priority Action 4.2: Develop mechanisms to monitor and evaluate alternative measures to incarceration for minor or non-violent drug-related offenses, in collaboration with academic and research institutions, as well as civil society.

Panama develops mechanisms to monitor and evaluate alternative measures to incarceration for minor or non-violent drug-related offenses. The Public Ministry, through the Precautionary Measure Monitoring Unit, is responsible for implementing these monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the investigation and prosecution stage. The Compliance Section verifies adherence to and the efficacy of the alternate measures that have been handed down, by monitoring and following up on them.

Furthermore, the judicial branch due process judges are responsible for the control of alternatives to incarceration in the investigation stage (Article 44(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure - Law 63 of August 28, 2008; while the compliance judges are responsible for controlling and supervising the alternatives to enforcement of sentences and conditional suspension of the process (Articles 46(2) and 228 of the Code of Criminal Procedure).

Through certificates issued by the Education Ministry, these mechanisms involve civil society, academic and research institutions that provide educational programs used as alternative measures. The country's health institutions and community councils are also involved, through the community work measures. Civil society participates through various resocialization programs.

Priority Action 4.3: Promote common understanding of national legal norms, regulations, and internal procedures for the implementation of alternatives to incarceration.

Panama promotes a common understanding of national legal norms, regulations, and internal procedures for the implementation of alternatives to incarceration. The country piloted the Judicial Drug Treatment Program, which it developed in the Province of Coclé, in 2014. Currently, only the criminal procedural law that stipulates alternatives to incarceration is applied. In addition, forums, meetings, and different types of outreach programs have been held for this purpose.

OBJECTIVE
5**PROMOTE AND IMPLEMENT, AS APPROPRIATE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLICIES, LAWS AND NEEDS OF EACH COUNTRY, COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION, ESPECIALLY TO THOSE AT-RISK POPULATIONS.**

Priority Action 5.1: Design and implement, in accordance with the characteristics, interests, and needs of each country, inter-agency and multisectoral programs that promote the social inclusion of individuals, families, and communities affected by the drug problem, taking into account the specific needs of at-risk populations.

Panama has the following interagency and multisectoral programs that promote the social inclusion of individuals, families, and communities affected by the drug problem, and take into account the specific needs of at-risk populations:

- National Strategic Plan for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Inclusion, and Opportunity. National Disability Advisory Council (CONADIS) and the National Disability Secretariat (SENADIS): This is a technical management instrument designed to steer diverse stakeholders towards coordinating actions that will improve the quality of life of this demographic group, responding to the demands of persons with disabilities and their families, in the personal, family, community, and national spheres. It is aligned with the Government Strategic Plan, the Public Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2020-2030, the Sustainable Development Goals prioritized in the Panama Agenda 2030, and the observations made by international treaty and convention bodies, notably the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and OAS Committee for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, as the principal sources consulted, with further details provided in the bibliography.

This instrument's ultimate goal is to enable persons with disabilities and their families to participate fully, effectively, and on an equal basis in a society based on the exercise of human rights. To that end, it has four strategic pillars, based on which it establishes a conceptual map for coordinating its various components.

- The National Plan for Reducing Poverty by 2030 coordinates and targets the actions of the *Techos De Esperanza* [Rooves of Hope], *100-Cero* [100-Zero], infrastructure plan, universal scholarship, *120 a los 65* [120 at 65], *Ángel Guardián* [Guardian Angel] and *Red de Oportunidades* [Opportunities Network] programs.

Priority Action 5.2: Disseminate best practices and lessons learned to improve institutional responses to the needs of at-risk populations.

Panama disseminates best practices and lessons learned to improve institutional responses to the needs of people in at-risk situations, such as mechanisms, programs, and interventions, through publications, meetings, workshops, seminars, and documents like institutional annual reports and

progress reports, which show the range of project and program execution experiences. This ensures ongoing improvement of the actions with standards that guarantee quality care and execution.

OBJECTIVE

6

PROMOTE PROPORTIONATE SENTENCING FOR DRUG-RELATED CRIMES THAT PROVIDES FOR PENALTIES COMMENSURATE WITH THE RELATIVE SERIOUSNESS OF OFFENSES, IN LINE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONVENTIONS AND RESPECTING THE PRINCIPLES OF DUE PROCESS, WITH GENDER PERSPECTIVE, AGE, COMMUNITY, AND A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH.

Priority Action 6.1: Promote proportional legal sentencing for minor drug-related offenses in accordance with domestic law.

Panama promotes the Criminal Code, passed by Law 14 of May 18, 2007, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, passed by Law 63 of August 28, 2008, the first of which includes proportional legal sentences for minor drug-related offenses, in accordance with the national legislation.

The country does not have special courts or tribunals for minor drug-related crimes.

Priority Action 6.2: Promote legal reforms as needed, to promote proportional sentencing for minor drug-related offenses.

Panama does not promote legal reforms regarding proportional sentencing for minor drug-related offenses.

RESEARCH, INFORMATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION

OBJECTIVE
1

ESTABLISH OR STRENGTHEN NATIONAL OBSERVATORIES ON DRUGS, OR SIMILAR TECHNICAL OFFICES, STRENGTHENING NATIONAL DRUG INFORMATION SYSTEMS, AND FOSTER SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH TO GENERATE, COLLECT, ORGANIZE, ANALYZE, AND DISSEMINATE INFORMATION TO INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED DRUG POLICIES AND STRATEGIES.

Priority Action 1.1: Develop and strengthen national drug observatories (NDOs) or similar technical offices ensuring they have adequate human and financial resources.

Panama has the Panamanian Drug Observatory (OPADRO), which was created through the National Commission for the Study and Prevention of Drug-Related Crime (CONAPRED) Resolution 10-2017 (of October 10, 2017).

OPADRO has not been assigned financial and human resources to carry out its functions. Accordingly, it needs:

- Technology for database management (computer equipment)
- Software for data analysis
- Statistics staff for data management and analysis
- Financing for studies
- Specific support staff

Priority Action 1.2: Strengthen ties to academic and research institutions, as well as specialized non-governmental organizations, to foster scientific research and studies on the various aspects of the drug phenomenon.

Panama has established and maintained working relationships with academic and research institutions through the academic institutions' participation in the National Drug Network, advising the Panamanian Drug Observatory on the research and sharing information.

The country has carried out studies on the drug problem through academic and research institutions.

Priority Action 1.3: Develop and adopt quantitative and qualitative methodologies and information-gathering mechanisms that allow for the comparison of data among countries.

Panama has developed and adopted quantitative and qualitative methodologies and information-gathering mechanisms that allow for the comparison of data among countries through the studies performed with the Inter-American Uniform Drug Use System (SIDUC).

However, during the evaluation period (2019-2023), the country has not conducted drug studies.

On the other hand, Panama has used CICAD’s standardized indicators for drug information networks to gather, analyze, and report national drug-related information.

The country has not carried out studies using methods that are non-representative of the population or qualitative methodologies to obtain information on drugs that can be shared with other countries that have carried out studies with similar methodologies.

Priority Action 1.4: Establish and strengthen national drug information networks (DINs) to carry out long-term monitoring and early warning systems (EWS), including the use of a broad range of research methods and information sources, to develop rapid responses to emerging threats.

Priority Action 1.5: Contribute to the Early Warning System of the Americas (Spanish acronym SATA) to gather the available national alerts and disseminate them to member states, so that member states can respond in the shortest possible time to new threats.

Priority Action 1.6: Publish updates annually, when possible, on drug supply and drug demand utilizing the information provided on the national drug situation by using information from the national DINs.

OPADRO has a national DIN, which interacts through the following means:

Means	Yes	No	Frequency
Meetings	X		Bimonthly
Document exchange	X		Annually

The following stakeholders participate in the DIN:

Stakeholders	Yes	No
Universities/Academia	X	
Health institutions	X	
Drug treatment facilities	X	
Law enforcement	X	
Forensic laboratories	X	
Statistical and census institutions	X	
Private consultants	X	
Civil society and other social stakeholders	X	
International cooperation agencies		X

The DIN publishes a periodic report.

Panama does not have an early warning system (EWS) or other similar mechanism to identify new psychoactive substances (NPS) and other emerging drug-related threats.

Priority Action 1.7: Build capacity among relevant stakeholders to enhance the collection, management, and dissemination of drug related information.

OPADRO holds training sessions with local stakeholders to enhance data collection and management.

OPADRO convenes meetings and other workshops where the results of studies and other information-gathering activities are shared with local stakeholders.

Priority Action 1.8: Establish or strengthen forums at which drug researchers can present their findings to policymakers, and encourage their participation in CICAD experts groups.

Panama has established the following forum where drug researchers can present their findings to policymakers:

Forum title	Frequency	Reports or publications from these forums
Seminar Transdisciplinary approach to the drug problem	Annual	Technical reports for the CONAPRED Executive Secretariat

Priority Action 1.9: Foster and disseminate best practices and the exchange of successful experiences in research among member states.

OPADRO promotes and disseminates best practices and the exchange of successful experiences in research among member states, through participation in the various international fora convened by international and national organizations.

OBJECTIVE
2

EXPAND ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON DRUG USE AND RELATED ISSUES THROUGH THE USE OF SOUND, SYSTEMATIC DATA COLLECTION PRACTICES, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, AND STANDARDIZED METHODOLOGIES, ENSURING THAT COUNTRIES HAVE THE INFORMATION NECESSARY TO DEVELOP SOUND DEMAND REDUCTION PROGRAMS AND POLICIES.

Priority Action 2.1: Generate information on the incidence, prevalence, and modes of drug use and health impacts of drug use (e.g. non-fatal overdose, fatal overdose, infectious disease transmission), as well as drug use and health impact trends over time using sound, systematic data collection practices, scientific research, and standardized methodologies to monitor use across the general public and in key populations, whenever possible utilizing the Inter-American Uniform Drug Use Data System (SIDUC) as the standard methodology for epidemiological surveillance.

Panama has not carried out demand reduction studies during the evaluation period (2019-2023).

Priority Action 2.2: Develop drug treatment information systems that record the number of patients treated, diagnoses, clinical history, and available information on treatment outcomes.

Panama has a national system for the collection of data on the number of patients treated, diagnoses, clinical history, and available information on treatment outcomes.

The national system on treatment data includes the following modalities and interventions:

Modalities and interventions	Yes	No
Community-based service	X	
Screening, Brief Interventions, and Referral to Treatment		X
Medication-Assisted Treatment		X
Short-Term In-Patient or Residential Treatment		X
Outpatient Treatment	X	
Long-term Residential Treatment		X
Recovery Management		X

Data on treated patients is collected from the following institutions:

Institution	Yes	No
Public health system	X	
Private institutions		X
Non-governmental organizations	X	
Religious institutions	X	

Priority Action 2.3: Evaluate and monitor the impact and the results of treatment and prevention programs using scientific methodologies and make recommendations to update programs based on findings.

Panama has not conducted studies to evaluate treatment and prevention programs and interventions.

The country has not carried out process or intermediate outcome evaluations of prevention and treatment programs.

Panama has not carried out impact evaluations of its prevention or treatment programs.

The country does not have mechanisms to continually monitor or evaluate the results of care, treatment, rehabilitation, or recovery and social integration programs and services in the public health and/or social protection network.

OBJECTIVE
3

EXPAND AND ENHANCE THE COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON ILLICIT DRUG PRODUCTION, TRAFFICKING, AND RELATED ISSUES, THROUGH THE USE OF SOUND, SYSTEMATIC DATA COLLECTION PRACTICES, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, AND STANDARDIZED METHODOLOGIES.

Priority Action 3.1: Generate information on illicit drug production, trafficking, drug markets, and related issues, using systematic data collection practices, scientific research, and wherever possible applying comparable methodologies.

Panama has mechanisms to collect and analyze information related to the illicit supply of drugs. The Office of the Special Prosecutor for Drug-related Crimes, the Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences (IMELCF), and the Chemical Control Unit (UCQ) participate in these mechanisms.

The country has the following information related to supply reduction, trafficking, and related crimes:

Supply reduction, trafficking, and related crimes			
Information	Available information		Year of most recent information
	Yes	No	
Quantification of illicit crop cultivation including crops grown indoors		X	
Number of seizures of illicit drugs and raw materials for their production	X		2021
Quantities of illicit drugs and raw materials for their production seized	X		2022
Number of seizures of controlled chemical substances (precursors)		X	
Quantities of seized controlled chemical substances (precursors)	X		2022
Number of seizures of pharmaceutical products		X	
Quantities of seized pharmaceutical products		X	
Number of persons formally charged with drug use, possession, and trafficking	X		2021
Number of persons convicted of drug use, possession, and trafficking	X		2021
Number of laboratories producing illicit plant-based drugs detected and dismantled		X	
Number of laboratories producing illicit plant-based drugs detected and dismantled		X	
Chemical composition of seized drugs	X		2022
Sale price of drugs (for consumers)	X		2021
Number of persons formally charged with money laundering	X		2021
Number of persons convicted of money laundering	X		2021
Number of persons formally charged with trafficking in firearms, explosives, ammunition, and related materials	X		2021

Supply reduction, trafficking, and related crimes			
Information	Available information		Year of most recent information
	Yes	No	
Number of persons convicted of trafficking in firearms, explosives, ammunition, and related materials	X		2021
Number of persons formally charged with diversion of chemical substances	X		2021
Number of persons convicted of diversion of chemical substances	X		2021

Panama does not carry out periodic studies and research on the drug market for illicit drugs.

The country does not conduct studies on medical and scientific uses and other legal use of narcotics or psychotropic substances, subject to the international control system.

Priority Action 3.2: Conduct studies on the price, purity or concentration, and chemical profile of drugs.

Panama collects information on drug prices, purity or concentration, or chemical profile of drugs, through reports such as the following:

Type of Study	Title of report/publication	Year of report/ publication
Statistics report	Annual statistics bulletin	2019
Statistics report	Annual statistics bulletin	2020
Statistics report	Annual statistics bulletin	2021
Statistics report	Annual statistics bulletin	2022

The country conducts chemical characterizations and tests of purity for substances that may or may not be subject to international control. However, the country does not have mechanisms through which substances that have been identified as not being under international control can be placed under control.

Priority Action 3.3: Establish and strengthen the relationship between the NDOs, or similar technical offices, and national, and when applicable, local, or sub-national forensic laboratories to bolster the collection of data on the chemical composition of substances and precursors seized.

In Panama, the Controlled Substances and Forensic Toxicology Laboratory within the Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences (IMELCF) is responsible for analyzing chemical substances, precursors, and pharmaceutical products, including new psychoactive substances. Likewise, the Specialized Analysis Institute of the University of Panama analyzes products for health registration, pharmaceutical errors, and quality control. These institutions are not in the national

drug information network (DIN).

The country participates in the following periodic training programs for personnel involved in the analysis of chemical substances, precursors, and pharmaceutical products, including new psychoactive substances:

Implements or participates in the program	Type of training	Targeted institutions	Year when training was last done
Participates	Meeting of chemical experts	Chemical Control Unit (UCQ) of the Public Ministry	2022
Participates	Control of substances		2022
Participates	Gathering of statistical data on regulated substances		2023
Participates	Safe handling of synthetic opioids		2022
Participates	On-site presumptive tests		2022
Participates	Use of RAMAN manual equipment		2022

Priority Action 3.4: Strengthen drug information networks in member states by improving the mechanisms used to gather and analyze data to inform the development of public policies that control the illicit supply of drugs.

Panama’s national drug information network (DIN) has standardized indicators for the collection of data on drug supply.

The country implements and participates in training activities for DIN stakeholders to improve and strengthen the mechanisms that are needed for the collection and exchange of information on drug supply.

OBJECTIVE

4

PARTICIPATE IN AND STRENGTHEN THE MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM (MEM) PROCESS, CONSIDERING ITS RECOMMENDATIONS.

Priority Action 4.1: Regularly collect information and data to evaluate implementation of the Hemispheric Plan of Action.

For the MEM eighth evaluation round, Panama collected information on the implementation of the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2021-2025 and submitted it in a timely manner for evaluation by the Governmental Expert Group (GEG) in the following thematic areas:

- Measures of Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Support (2021)
- Measures to Control and Counter the Illicit Cultivation, Production, Trafficking, and Distribution of Drugs, and to Address their Causes and Consequences (2022)
- Institutional Strengthening; Research, Information, Monitoring, and Evaluation; and International Cooperation (2023)

Priority Action 4.2: Support and facilitate active and timely participation in each of the MEM activities agreed to by member states.

For the eighth evaluation round of the MEM, Panama appointed delegates for the following MEM groups, actively participating and contributing to the evaluation process:

Thematic evaluation	National Coordinating Entities (NCEs)	Governmental Experts Group (GEG)
Measures of Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Support (2021)	Yes	Yes
Measures to Control and Counter the Illicit Cultivation, Production, Trafficking, and Distribution of Drugs, and to Address their Causes and Consequences (2022)	Yes	Yes
Institutional Strengthening; Research, Information, Monitoring, and Evaluation; and International Cooperation (2023)	Yes	Yes

Priority Action 4.3: Disseminate MEM evaluation reports by member states among national stakeholders, other pertinent organizations, and the general public.

Panama carried out the following periodic activities to promote and raise awareness of the MEM Evaluation Reports on Drug Policies aimed at national institutions:

Name of the activity	Date	Participating institutions
Workshop for disclosure of MEM results	2022	- Health Ministry (MINSAs) - Social Affairs Ministry (MIDES) - Ministry of Public Security (MINSEG)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customs - Drug Prosecutors' Office - Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences (IMELCF) - Chemical Control Unit (UCQ) of the Public Ministry - Ministry of Education (MEDUCA)
Meeting of CONAPRED Commissioners	2019	Ministry of Government (MINGOB) MINSAs MIDES MINSEG Customs Financial Analysis Unit Catholic Church Assembly of Deputies
Review meeting with the Drug Prosecutors' Office	2022	CONAPRED and the Drug Prosecutors' Office

Priority Action 4.4: Promote use of the MEM's findings to identify technical assistance needs.

Panama has promoted the analysis of the findings of MEM Evaluation Reports on Drug Policies for national institutions to identify areas where technical assistance is needed to improve national drug-related policies and programs through work meetings and workshops.

In the aforementioned work meetings, the recommendations made to the country are evaluated and the best strategies to improve the activities in each one are discussed. Activities such as these have served to improve inter-institutional communication, as well as mechanisms for sharing information between institutions. The workshops are specifically aimed at developing the weaknesses identified in the MEM reports.

Priority Action 4.5: Increase hemispheric cooperation and partnerships among member states and sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

Panama has reviewed the MEM Evaluation Reports on Drug Policies and identified opportunities to increase cooperation and partnerships with other member states and sharing of best practices and lessons learned (horizontal cooperation). The country participates in the exchange of experiences in connection with the MEM evaluation, allowing it to capitalize the knowledge generated in other countries to implement programs and strategies in less-developed spheres, as well as to establish communication links that foster cooperation. Likewise, the national review is an opportunity to make strategic adjustments to the institutions' operational programming.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

OBJECTIVE

1

PROMOTE AND STRENGTHEN COOPERATION AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS TO FOSTER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, IMPROVE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCES, AND SHARE BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED ON DRUG POLICIES.

Priority Action 1.1: Develop and implement a plan for promoting and strengthening technical assistance and horizontal cooperation among member states and with states outside of the Western Hemisphere, and with relevant international and regional organizations, and related initiatives and programs.

Panama develops and implements a plan for the promotion and strengthening of technical assistance and horizontal cooperation among member states and with states outside of the Western Hemisphere, and with relevant international and regional organizations, and related initiatives and programs. The Panamanian State adopted the National Cooperation Plan of the Republic of Panama (Panamá Coopera), which has the following main characteristics:

- Proactive alignment with official national and international development priorities, leading to the objective of eliminating extreme poverty, by 2030 at the latest.
- Reduction of inequality, possibly the principal challenge for national development.
- Dual role played by Panama in the supply of and demand for cooperation services, with the establishment of a cooperation hub/bridge for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Cooperation based on knowledge, for a knowledge economy.
- Creation and consolidation of a modern national cooperation system that can adapt to future changes.
- Cooperation based on networks and connections, promoting collaboration among development stakeholders and the participation of multiple actors (thereby preventing isolation and the “island” effect).
- Inclusion of cooperation in foreign policy, as an integral part of State policies.

Out of the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the National Commission against Money Laundering (CNBC), together with international organizations like the European Union Global Facility on Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing and the World Bank, currently provide Panama with technical assistance through training sessions with international experts and manuals for drawing up risk evaluations for authorities, the Financial Analysis Unit, and the Public Ministry, to strengthen capacities for preventing money laundering, given that these actions may help prevent drug-related crimes, as predicate crimes to money laundering, as set forth in Article 254 of Chapter IV Money-laundering Crimes of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Panama.

The following are examples of training sessions organized by the European Union Global Facility and the CNBC:

- Training on the “Investigation and Prosecution of Money Laundering with Predicate Tax Crimes Committed Abroad” held October 11-14, 2022, in Panama City, with experts from

Germany, Andorra, Spain, France, Ireland, and Ukraine, who led sessions for agents of the Public Ministry, Financial Analysis Unit, Ministry of Economy and Finance, judicial branch, and the Department of Legal Investigation on various topics, such as: the final beneficiary, money laundering and tax crimes committed abroad as predicate crimes to laundering, asset seizure and recovery, and the importance of international cooperation in the fight against these crimes.

- Training on the true public and private sector beneficiaries in Panama, held October 10-13, 2022, with various stakeholders in the end beneficiary outreach cycle in Panama, including the competent authorities and supervisors (e.g., Financial Analysis Unit - UAF, General Tax Department, Public Registry, supervisory authorities), Superintendency of Non-financial Entities (SSNF), resident agents, and other designated nonfinancial activities and professions.

The SSNF has received cooperation from the European Union Global Facility, through meetings and trainings for the SSNF staff and liable nonfinancial taxpayers, on final beneficiaries and complex structures.

This training strengthens supervision plans and improves understanding of the risks of money laundering and its predicate offenses, one of which is drug trafficking.

Likewise, the Panama Insurance and Reinsurance Authority organized a forum on preventing money laundering, terrorism financing, and the proliferation financing of weapons of mass destruction, with local and international speakers from Panama's United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), through the United States Embassy.

The country has established the following secure communication channels for the exchange of intelligence information on drug interdiction and control:

- The Latin American Network of Anti-Drug Prosecutors, of which Panama is a member, uses direct communications through WhatsApp or institutional email, among the established points of contact, for secure, real-time communication among counterparts.
- Asset recovery network through secure institutional emails
- Panama has the Panama Joint Maritime Force and the Regional Center for Air-Sea Operations (CROAN), which operate under the command of the Ministry of Public Security. CROAN operates 24/7 and is led by the National Air-Sea Service (SENAN), which holds the legal authority to direct operations in compliance with national and international laws, agreements, and treaties on maritime and air issues; it will have a joint planning section (National Police, National Air-Sea Service, and National Border Service) in charge of receiving intelligence information, evaluating, planning, and committing the resources for fulfilling the assigned tasks.

Panama promotes the exchange, with member states and with states outside the Western Hemisphere, and with relevant international and regional organizations, of best practices on training, specialization, and professional development of the staff responsible for implementing

the national drug policies and strategies. In 2021, Panama signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States of America, according to which the United States would support CROAN in procuring technological equipment to standardize Panama's naval resources, as well as in providing training for the Panamanian staff and exchanging information, which is a key factor for running any center of operations.

Furthermore, every year the Panama Insurance and Reinsurance Authority participates in and provides support for the international exchange of best practices, as a speaker at various international conferences with local and foreign participants, such as the Hemispheric Congress and the Panama Association of Compliance Officers' International Compliance Conference (ASOCUPA). The topics covered are based on the local and international insurance market and include preventing money laundering and terrorism financing, best practices, laws and regulatory actions, new technologies, rating agencies, among other timely topics.

Panama participates in regional coordination activities to prevent crimes related to drug trafficking, such as firearms trafficking, extortion, kidnapping, money laundering, and corruption, among others.

Through the Public Ministry, the country serves as the Vice Chair for Central America of the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors, where it coordinates the Working Group on Money Laundering and Criminal Economy. The country also belongs to the Network of Anti-Drug Prosecutors, the Network of Anti-Corruption Prosecutors, the Network of Central American Drug Prosecutors, and the Forfeiture and Asset Recovery Network.

Through these groups, Panama is able to participate in regional activities to prevent crimes related to drug trafficking, such as firearms trafficking, extortion, kidnapping, money laundering, and corruption, among others.

Furthermore, the Panama Bank Superintendency participates in regional coordination meetings (Money Laundering Prevention Committee), to exchange information on the best practices and regulations implemented in the Committee's member countries. The Money Laundering Prevention Committee of Central American Bank Superintendencies and Other Financial Institutions member countries are: Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic.

At the bilateral level, Panama has signed memorandums of understanding for the exchange of intelligence information to prevent money laundering, terrorism financing, and the proliferation financing crimes (drug-related crimes are considered predicate offenses to money laundering) and established the Binational Border Commission between Panama and Colombia and the Task Force to Combat Money Laundering and Corruption between Panama and the United States.

At the multilateral level, Panama participates in the Egmont Group (exchange of information for the same purposes described in the foregoing section on bilateral agreements), the Group of Experts for the Control of Money Laundering, and the Working Subgroup on Financial Intelligence

Units and Criminal Investigation Agencies.

Panama has bilateral mechanisms for coordination and collaboration with other countries, focused on dismantling criminal groups linked to drug trafficking and related crimes, with Colombia, the United States of America, Costa Rica, Spain, Peru, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. These mechanisms are used weekly and semiannually.

Priority Action 1.2: Promote technology transfers and information sharing among and between member states and international organizations.

Panama has promoted technology transfers among and between OAS member states and international (including regional) organizations through CROAN.

The country has promoted information sharing among and between OAS member states and international (including regional) organizations through:

- CROAN
- Network of contact points for the GAFILAT Asset Recovery Network (RRAG), in which Panama actively participates. This network holds information exchanges to pursue crime revenues, promotes the exchange of information, facilitates mutual legal assistance, and provides feedback for collaborating on investigations. The exchange of information takes place over an electronic platform that ensures the questions and answers are protected and kept secure
- Law 23 of April 27, 2015, which adopts the measures to prevent money laundering, terrorism financing, and financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, establishes the Financial Analysis Unit's power to exchange financial intelligence information that could be associated with money laundering, terrorism financing, and the financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction with jurisdictions with which no agreements have been signed, provided they are part of the Egmont Group (drug-related crimes are predicate offenses to money laundering)

Priority Action 1.3: Promote the dissemination of good practices and exchange of successful research experiences among and between member states and international organizations.

Panama promotes the dissemination of good practices and the exchange of successful research experiences among member states and international organizations on drug policies through diverse initiatives through the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD).

Likewise, in connection with the trainings led by the international organizations, as well as in meetings with counterparts from other countries and international conferences, Panama discusses and shares its best practices and positive experiences with regard to the policies implemented to tackle the drug problem.

Furthermore, best practices and successful investigation experiences are also disseminated through the Egmont Group working groups, which include the member states from the OAS as well as from other continents. These best practices focus on the analysis of intelligence information for money laundering, terrorism financing, and proliferation financing (drug-related crimes are considered predicate crimes to money laundering).

In addition, at the bilateral level, Panama exchanges typologies it has identified and successful cases, especially with Colombia.

**OBJECTIVE
2**
STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AS DEFINED IN THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL INSTRUMENTS RELATED TO THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM, MAINTAINING RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.
Priority Action 2.1: Strengthen regional and international cooperation by competent authorities to investigate and prosecute criminals on drug-related offenses.

The competent authorities in Panama carry out the following cooperation activities at the regional and international levels to investigate and prosecute criminals for drug-related offenses:

- Share information, streamline responses to international aid, organize joint operations among counterparts
- The Public Ministry, together with Panama’s law enforcement forces, has engaged in various cooperative activities regionally and internationally to investigate and prosecute lawbreakers for drug-related crimes with various countries in the region and around the world, like Costa Rica, Spain, Colombia, United States, Italy, Belgium, among others

The country takes human rights into account in these activities. Notably, Panama’s criminal procedure requires strict compliance with human rights standards for the validity of both investigations and the procurement of evidence, as set forth in Article 17 of the Political Constitution of Panama.

The following instruments guarantee the human rights of persons under investigation enshrined in international treaties, the political constitution, and national laws:

- Articles 21 and 22 of the Political Constitution
- Article 10 of the Code of Criminal Procedure
- Article 12 of the Political Constitution of Panama

With regard to international conventions, the following instruments in force address the fundamental guarantees to which all persons have the right:

- American Convention on Human Rights or the Pact of San José, Costa Rica (Article 8, number 2, sections (b), (c), and (d))
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of December 16, 1966, Article 9
- Vienna Convention on Consular Relations

Priority Action 2.2: Strengthen regional and international cooperation to facilitate, where appropriate, mutual legal assistance, extradition, and transfer of proceedings, in accordance with international legal instruments, when investigating and prosecuting criminals on drug-related offenses.

Panama carries out activities to strengthen regional and international cooperation to facilitate, where appropriate, mutual legal assistance, extradition, and transfer of proceedings, in accordance with international legal instruments, when investigating and prosecuting criminals on drug-related offenses. On November 12, 2021, the Committee of Central Authorities and Entities Involved in International Legal Assistance for Criminal Matters was created to foster coordination against crime, through the signing of an agreement by the Attorney General, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Government.

The country's Interagency Technical Committee, bolstered by the European Union Assistance Program against Organized Crime (PACCTO), will make it possible to better coordinate the work of the Panamanian legal institutions that coordinate international cooperation against organized crime and serious offenses like corruption.

This is because the State has appointed the Attorney General's Office and Ministry of Government through the Office for the Performance of Mutual Legal Assistance and International Cooperation Treaties as the central authorities for implementation of the various multilateral and bilateral treaties on legal assistance on criminal matters. Likewise, by stipulation of the Legal Code, the Chamber of General Business, Fourth Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice, continues to have jurisdiction for hearing requests made in accordance with the principle of international reciprocity, and on many occasions the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serves as the communication channel for receiving and sending requests for legal assistance.

The Interagency Technical Committee's functions include:

- Establish protocols for timely, up-to-date exchange of statistics, and the formats and content of interagency information
- Compile and analyze the exchanged data, for monitoring, evaluation of policies, preparation of indicators, and implementation of the activities planned by the Committee
- Create the procedures for settling disagreements among central authorities that could arise in the receipt of requests for international legal assistance on crime matters, with a view to the effective processing thereof
- Participate in drawing up guides, methodology sheets, best practices, and lessons learned, to incentivize improvement and efficiency of the procedures
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will provide advising on interpreting, implementing, and enforcing the multilateral and bilateral treaties

The Committee approved the Guide to Best Practices for Central Authorities and Entities Involved in Handling Requests for International Legal Assistance on Crime Matters of the Republic of

Panama, to facilitate international cooperation, prevent impunity for crimes, and foster law enforcement.

This guide includes a compendium of best practices, meant to serve as a reference for the interagency work done by the Interagency Technical Committee, to facilitate coordination of tasks associated with international legal assistance on criminal matters, which influence the prosecution of crimes, especially ones associated with the fight against transnational organized crime.

In conjunction with this, the Attorney General's Office has established a system for monitoring requests for international legal assistance, both incoming and outgoing, ensuring they are processed in the terms set by the requesting State, or if Panama is the requesting State, setting a deadline for performance by the Prosecutor's Office in charge of serving them when the requested State has not done so.

As a best practice, we must also highlight the ongoing monitoring of the requests for legal assistance by the permanent networks of the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors, the work meetings held among prosecutors or requesting authorities and the competent authorities who handle the requests, as well as the spontaneous transmission of information and the answering of requests for additional information to facilitate timely performance.

Priority Action 2.3: Enact national legislation and/or take administrative actions, as appropriate, to more fully implement the obligations set forth within these legal instruments.

During the evaluation period (2019-2023), Panama has adopted the following legislative and administrative measures and actions to improve implementation of obligations set forth within international legal instruments related to the world drug problem, respecting human rights and gender equality:

	Enacted	Adopted	Name of the legislation/administrative measures or actions
Legislative actions/measures		X	Resolution N.30 of December 13, 2019 - Through which the action protocol of the Superior Prosecutor's Office for Foreign Affairs is adopted against criminal activity preceding money laundering committed abroad
Administrative actions/measures		X	Guide to Best Practices for Central Authorities and Entities Involved in Handling Requests for International Legal Assistance on Crime Matters of the Republic of Panama

Priority Action 2.4: Promote the accession, ratification, and implementation of the international legal instruments related to the world drug problem and related crimes.

Panama has ratified or acceded to the following international legal instruments:

Conventions and Protocols		Yes	No
United Nations Convention	Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children	X	
	Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air	X	
	Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition	X	
	Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961	X	
	Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971	X	
	Convention against Corruption, 2003	X	
	Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA), 1997.	X	
Inter-American Conventions	Convention against Corruption, 1996	X	
	Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, 1992	X	

EVALUATIVE SUMMARY

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

Objective 1

Establish and/or strengthen national drug authorities, placing them at a high political level and providing them with the necessary capabilities, resources, and competencies to coordinate formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of national drug policies.

CICAD notes that Panama has a national drug authority, which has a legal basis. However, CICAD observes that the country does not have an annual budget for the national drug authority. The human and material resources for the implementation of national drug policies are financed through other means. On the other hand, CICAD notes that Panama has an ongoing coordination and collaboration mechanism among agencies and other levels of government (national and subnational), to formulate, implement, monitor, evaluate, and update national drug policies and/or strategies and that the national drug authority coordinates the areas of demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures, drug observatories, program evaluation, and international cooperation.

Objective 2

Formulate, implement, evaluate, and update comprehensive national drug policies and/or strategies that promote balanced, multidisciplinary, and evidence-based approaches, while fully respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, under the principle of common and shared responsibility, consistent with obligations of parties under international law, and take into account gender, age, community, cultural context, and socially inclusive development.

CICAD notes that Panama collects and uses evidence as a basis for formulating and updating national drug policies and/or strategies. In addition, CICAD observes the involvement of relevant actors from priority areas in the development, implementation, evaluation, and updating of national drug policies and/or strategies. CICAD notes that the country has not delegated partial or full responsibility on drug issues to the sub-national/local governments to implement concrete actions related to drug policies and strategies. However, the authority has, in its central structure, an office or operational unit to promote, coordinate, train, and provide technical support to local or sub-national governments or agencies on drug-related issues. On the other hand, the national drug authority does not have coordinators, offices, or representatives within the sub-national/local territories as part of a decentralized operational and coordination structure at the local level, to respond to the drug problem. However, Panama has a specific and ongoing mechanism to transfer funds or finance counterdrug initiatives and projects carried out by sub-national or local governments. CICAD observes that the country does not engage private sector entities to develop innovative approaches in the implementation of drug policies or the exchange of information and best practices. CICAD notes that Panama takes into account the OAS 2020 Hemispheric Drug Strategy and its corresponding Plan of Action to formulate or update national drug policies and strategies. Likewise, these policies and strategies take into account the UN 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development. On the other hand, CICAD observes that the country's national drug policies and strategies do not take into account the human rights approach, the gender perspective, or the social inclusion approach. CICAD notes that Panama has the necessary resources to implement drug policies and programs.

Objective 3

Design and coordinate national drug policies, that can be harmonized across related government policies and/or strategies, that address the fundamental causes and consequences of the drug problem.

CICAD notes that Panama has interagency and multisectoral policy and technical coordination mechanisms to address the drug problem through a comprehensive, balanced, and multidisciplinary approach, including its causes and consequences. However, CICAD observes that the country does not have concrete multisectoral plans or programs to address the socioeconomic causes and consequences of the drug problem. On the other hand, CICAD notes that Panama participates in international cooperation programs at the bilateral and multilateral levels to strengthen policies, programs, institutions, and their internal processes. Likewise, CICAD observes that the country promotes comprehensive and cross-cutting public policies to reduce and prevent crime, violence, social exclusion, and corruption. Additionally, CICAD notes that Panama implements measures that promote equal access to justice and due process, taking into account gender, age, community, and cultural context. Likewise, CICAD observes that the country implements measures that foster citizen participation in crime prevention, build community cohesion, increase public safety, and emphasize social inclusion.

Objective 4

Design, adopt, and implement alternatives to incarceration for minor or non-violent drug or drug-related offenses, while taking into account national, constitutional, legal, and administrative systems, and in accordance with relevant international instruments.

CICAD notes with satisfaction that Panamanian law provides for alternative measures to incarceration for minor non-violent drug related offenses, which respect human rights and take into account the gender perspective in accordance with the relevant international instruments. Furthermore, CICAD observes that the country develops mechanisms to monitor and evaluate these measures, which involve civil society, academic and research institutions, and promotes a common understanding of national legal norms, regulations, and internal procedures for the implementation of said measures.

Objective 5

Promote and implement, as appropriate, in accordance with the policies, laws and needs of each country, comprehensive programs that promote social inclusion, especially to those at-risk populations.

CICAD notes with satisfaction that Panama has interagency and multisectoral programs that promote the social inclusion of individuals, families, and communities affected by the drug problem, and take into account the specific needs of at-risk populations. Furthermore, CICAD observes that the country disseminates best practices and lessons learned to improve institutional responses to the needs of people in at-risk situations.

Objective 6

Promote proportionate sentencing for drug-related crimes that provides for penalties commensurate with the relative seriousness of offenses, in line with the international drug conventions and respecting the principles of due process, with gender perspective, age, community, and a human rights approach.

CICAD observes that Panama promotes legislation that proportional legal sentences for minor drug-related offenses, in accordance with the national legislation. However, it does not have special courts or tribunals for these crimes. Likewise, CICAD notes that the country does not promote legal reforms regarding proportional sentencing for minor drug-related offenses.

RESEARCH, INFORMATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION**Objective 1**

Establish or strengthen national observatories on drugs, or similar technical offices, strengthening national drug information systems, and foster scientific research to generate, collect, organize, analyze, and disseminate information to inform the development and implementation of evidence-based drug policies and strategies.

CICAD observes that Panama has a National Drug Observatory (OND), which has a legal basis, however, it has not been assigned financial and human resources to carry out its functions. Likewise, CICAD notes that the country has established and maintained working relationships with academic and research institutions, and has carried out studies on the drug problem through them. Furthermore, CICAD observes that Panama has developed and adopted quantitative and qualitative methodologies and information-gathering mechanisms that allow for the comparison of data among countries, has carried out studies on drug use applying the SIDUC methodology, and has used CICAD's standardized indicators for drug information networks to gather, analyze, and report national drug-related information. However, it has not carried out studies on drugs in the period 2019-2023. Likewise, the country has not carried out studies that use methods that are not representative of the population to obtain information on drugs that can be shared with other countries that have carried out studies with similar methodologies. CICAD notes that the

Panama observatory has a national drug information network (DIN), which interacts through meetings and exchange of documents, and publishes periodic reports. However, the country does not have an early warning system (EWS) or other similar mechanism to identify NPS and other emerging drug-related threats. Additionally, CICAD observes that the Panamanian observatory holds training sessions with local stakeholders to enhance data collection and management, as well as meetings and other workshops where the results of studies and other information-gathering activities are shared with local stakeholders. Additionally, CICAD notes that the country has established a forum where drug researchers can present their findings to policymakers. Likewise, CICAD observes that the Panama observatory promotes and disseminates best practices and the exchange of successful experiences in research among member states.

Objective 2

Expand access to information on drug use and related issues through the use of sound, systematic data collection practices, scientific research, and standardized methodologies, ensuring that countries have the information necessary to develop sound demand reduction programs and policies.

CICAD notes that Panama has not carried out demand reduction studies during the evaluation period (2019-2023). However, CICAD observes that the country has a national system for the collection of data on the number of patients treated, diagnoses, clinical history, and available information on treatment outcomes. On the other hand, CICAD notes that Panama has not conducted studies to evaluate treatment or prevention programs and interventions, nor has it carried out processes, intermediate outcome, or impact evaluations of these programs. Likewise, the country does not have mechanisms to continually monitor or evaluate the results of care, treatment, rehabilitation, or recovery and social integration programs and services in the public health and/or social protection network.

Objective 3

Expand and enhance the collection and dissemination of information on illicit drug production, trafficking, and related issues, through the use of sound, systematic data collection practices, scientific research, and standardized methodologies.

CICAD notes that Panama has mechanisms to collect and analyze information related to the illicit supply of drugs and has information related to supply reduction, trafficking, and related crimes. However, the country does not carry out periodic studies and research on the drug market for illicit drugs nor does it conduct studies on medical and scientific uses and other legal use of narcotics or psychotropic substances, subject to the international control system. CICAD observes that Panama collects information on drug prices, purity or concentration, or chemical profile of drugs and conducts chemical characterizations and tests of purity for substances that may or may not be subject to international control. However, the country does not have mechanisms through which substances that have been identified as not being under international control can be

placed under control. CICAD notes that Panama has an agency responsible for analyzing chemical substances, precursors, and pharmaceutical products, including new psychoactive substances, however, it is not part of the drug information network (DIN). In addition, the country participates in periodic training programs for personnel involved in the analysis of chemical substances, precursors, and pharmaceutical products, including new psychoactive substances. CICAD observes that Panama's national drug information network (DIN) has standardized indicators for the collection of data on drug supply and that the country implements and participates in training activities for DIN stakeholders to improve and strengthen the mechanisms that are needed for the collection and exchange of information on drug supply.

Objective 4

Participate in and strengthen the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) process, considering its recommendations.

CICAD notes with satisfaction that, for the eighth evaluation round of the MEM, Panama collected information on the implementation of the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2021-2025 and submitted it in a timely manner for evaluation by the Governmental Expert Group (GEG). CICAD observes that, for the eighth round of MEM evaluation, the country appointed delegates for all the MEM groups, actively participating and contributing to the evaluation process. Furthermore, CICAD notes that Panama carried out the following periodic activities to promote and raise awareness of the MEM Evaluation Reports on Drug Policies aimed at national institutions. Likewise, CICAD observes that the country has promoted the analysis of the findings of MEM Evaluation Reports on Drug Policies for national institutions to identify areas where technical assistance is needed to improve national drug-related policies and programs. Additionally, CICAD notes that Panama has reviewed the MEM Evaluation Reports on Drug Policies and identified opportunities to increase cooperation and partnerships with other member states and sharing of best practices and lessons learned (horizontal cooperation).

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Objective 1

Promote and strengthen cooperation and coordination mechanisms to foster technical assistance, improve exchange of information and experiences, and share best practices and lessons learned on drug policies.

CICAD notes with satisfaction that Panama develops and implements a plan for the promotion and strengthening of technical assistance and horizontal cooperation among member states and with states outside of the Western Hemisphere, and with relevant international and regional organizations, and related initiatives and programs. In addition, the country has established the following secure communication channels for the exchange of intelligence information on drug interdiction and control. Additionally, the country promotes the exchange, with member states and with states outside the Western Hemisphere, and with relevant international and regional

organizations, of best practices on training, specialization, and professional development of the staff responsible for implementing the national drug policies and strategies. Likewise, Panama participates in regional coordination activities to prevent crimes related to drug trafficking, such as firearms trafficking, extortion, kidnapping, money laundering, and corruption, among others. Additionally, the country has bilateral mechanisms for coordination and collaboration with other countries, focused on dismantling criminal groups linked to drug trafficking and related crimes. Furthermore, CICAD observes that Panama has promoted technology transfers among and between OAS member states and international (including regional) organizations, and the information sharing among them. Likewise, CICAD notes that the country promotes the dissemination of good practices and the exchange of successful research experiences among member states and international organizations on drug policies.

Objective 2

Strengthen international cooperation as defined in the international legal instruments related to the world drug problem, maintaining respect for human rights.

CICAD notes with satisfaction that the competent authorities in Panama carry out the following cooperation activities at the regional and international levels to investigate and prosecute criminals for drug-related offenses. Likewise, CICAD notes that the country carries out activities to strengthen regional and international cooperation to facilitate, where appropriate, mutual legal assistance, extradition, and transfer of proceedings, in accordance with international legal instruments, when investigating and prosecuting criminals on drug-related offenses. Furthermore, CICAD notes that, during the evaluation period (2019-2023), Panama has adopted the legislative and administrative measures and actions to improve implementation of obligations set forth within international legal instruments related to the world drug problem, respecting human rights and gender equality. Likewise, CICAD observes that the country has ratified or acceded to all the international legal instruments of the United Nations and all the OAS Inter-American legal instruments regarding the world drug problem and related crimes.



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