

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES



INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION

cicad

**THIRTY-FOURTH REGULAR
SESSION
November 17-20, 2003
Montreal, Canada**

**OEA/Ser.L/XIV.2.34
CICAD/doc1275/03
13 November 2003
Original: English**

**REPORT OF TRAINING SESSION FOR NATIONAL COORDINATING
ENTITIES OF THE MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM**

**REPORT OF TRAINING SESSION FOR NATIONAL COORDINATING ENTITIES OF
THE MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM
WASHINGTON, D.C. OCTOBER 2-3, 2003**

DRAFT 5:15PM – 11 NOVEMBER 2003

The MEM process has three central actors: The National Coordinating Entity, appointed by the Government of each member State; the GEG expert; and , the Commission.

The role of the NCE is critical: it coordinates and compiles the answers to the 84 indicators of the MEM questionnaire, together with the responses to the country's implementation of recommendations; it prepares the introductory document which offers a contextual insight into the drug problem and the situation of the country's anti-drug policies for evaluation; it completes and transmits the MEM questionnaire within the established timeframe; and, clarifies any information required by the GEG or the MEM Unit.

A serious evaluation is not possible if the information provided by countries is weak, unclear, contradictory or deficient in some way. Information is key and it is the 34 National Coordinating Entities which are pivotal in providing this crucial material.

Given the importance of the NCE's in their role throughout the process, and the need for the NCE's to be updated regarding modifications made to both the indicators' content and the electronic format of response submission, training was offered in Washington D.C. for all member states, to which representatives from all countries except Guyana participated. After brief introductions by all participants, the two-day session commenced with an overview of the importance of the NCE in the operational process and the established responsibilities which the Commission has entrusted the NCE's with.

Alvaro Ahumada, Coordinator of the Governmental Expert Group (GEG) presented his experience of the first and second evaluation rounds. Among other points, he highlighted the treatment of information and how NCE's usually receive information from different institutions. Consequently, the NCE's need to be in a constant dialogue with these various agencies so as to effectively coordinate the responses in adherence to the set deadlines, and to manage the quality of the information so that the Experts receive high level data and information with which to work.

Clearly, the need for dialogue between the GEG and the NCE is also vital for the process to succeed. The error of interpretation by the Experts was highlighted, which can be resolved by the country comment's to the first drafts of their country's report. Also possible is misinterpretation of an indicator by a country which results in an unclear response. This can also be resolved by means of a note to the country in the draft from the experts asking for clarification. The dialogue

between the Experts and the country through its NCE provides the MEM with its dynamism and results in more accurate information for the GEG to work with. Participants also stressed the usefulness of the MEM report for their programming and activities, and mentioned the utility of having their own country completed questionnaires available for their own use.

Esther Best, the NCE of Trinidad and Tobago, gave a presentation on the successes and difficulties encountered by her office in obtaining and coordinating the responses to the indicators and providing the information required by the MEM. The presentation highlighted the difficulty for NCE's to request information and impose deadlines on the different agencies involved in providing the information, as many of them are unaware of the seriousness and magnitude of the MEM, or the NCE's role in the process.

In light of this problem, which seems akin in many member states, the delegate of Barbados presented a recommendation to CICAD asking for a generic letter to be written to the entities and agencies with whom the NCE's work in all member states, thanking them for their collaboration and assistance, in an effort to develop a positive relationship with these various agencies as well as recognizing their hard work. This proposal was supported by many of the participants.

Julio Balbuena, Chairman of the Inter-Governmental Working Group (IWG) which met in Panama in March 2003 to review and update the MEM process, presented an overview of the modifications introduced to the questionnaire to be utilized in the third evaluation round, after which the indicators and their new format were examined section by section with the participants and members of the MEM Unit. During the review, the US proposed that a new indicator on decriminalization policies be drafted and included in the questionnaire. It was agreed that this draft indicator would be circulated for review at the next CICAD regular session in Montreal, Canada.

Mr. Paul Kennedy, Deputy Assistant Solicitor General of Canada, and Vice-President of CICAD, spoke of the multilateral evaluation, past and present. Reference was made to the characteristics of the drug problem, and how a failure or weakness or actions of one state can have an impact on another. Mr. Kennedy also highlighted the need for promoting the MEM, and the need for good solid data for the evaluations together with the challenge of enhancing the credibility of the process.

On conclusion of the first day, and in an endeavor to show the NCE's how difficult it is for the Experts to carry out their evaluations using poor information, participants were given a practical exercise through which they were asked to evaluate information provided through a mixture of poor, unclear and good responses received from countries.

On the second day of the session, the NCE's received training on the technical aspects of the process. This included an introduction to the new software for the creation of national reports, how to handle files with indicators and national report drafts, and finally how to use the MEM Web-based software to upload and download files with the indicators and comments to the national report.