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REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP (GEG)

**REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP (GEG)
OF THE MULTILATERAL EVALUATION MECHANISM (MEM)
TO THE SIXTY-FOURTH (64TH) REGULAR SESSION OF THE
INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION (CICAD)
November 19 to 21, 2018. Washington, D.C.**

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

Against the backdrop of the Fuego's volcanic eruption, the GEG preparatory meeting for the seventh evaluation round was held at the Spanish Cooperation Training Center in Antigua, Guatemala from June 6 to 7, 2018. Twenty-four (24) out of the 33 designated governmental experts from the OAS member states participated in this meeting. Among the designated experts, 20 are new to the MEM, 13 participated in previous rounds; there is a range of expertise from various professional backgrounds. The GEG met the objectives of the meeting which included: organizing the drafting work of the group, reviewing the experts' role and responsibilities for the round and received virtual platform training. Also, there was an overview of the main characteristics of the MEM process, initial drafting guidelines for the evaluation reports and exchange of experiences and best practices among the experts with previous round experience.

During the meeting Mr. Alvaro Ahumada of Chile and I, Steve Millington of St. Vincent and the Grenadines were elected General Coordinator and Deputy General Coordinator respectively. Due to a change within the National Service for Prevention and Rehabilitation on Drugs and Alcohol Consumption (SENDA), Mr. Ahumada was not able to continue as General Coordinator and I therefore stepped in as General Coordinator. The GEG Group divided itself into the five thematic working sub-groups as in the past rounds, in line with the CICAD Hemispheric Drug Strategy, and elected Coordinators and Deputy Coordinators for each sub-group. An initial GEG work plan (which covered the period up to December 2018), and a methodology was established along with guidelines to

facilitate the work of the GEG. The initial work plan was closely followed as this guided the work of the GEG.

The first week of July, the Coordinators first met through a virtual platform. During the second week of July, the narrative documents prepared by the MEM Unit of the CICAD Executive Secretariat were distributed to the GEG experts, to use as a base for the national evaluation draft reports. During the last week in July and August, a series of virtual meetings were held to review the five thematic chapters of the draft reports. Despite technological difficulties encountered during the meetings, experts completed reviewing drafts and agreed on guidelines to finish pending reports.

The First GEG Plenary Session was held from September 17 to 21, 2018 in Washington, D.C. The excellent work by the five (5) thematic working groups prior to the Washington Plenary, laid the foundation for a successful meeting. During the five days, the Experts from 30 OAS member states met to extensively review the contents of 957 objectives within the draft national evaluation reports of the OAS member states. The experts took into account the diverse country responses to the MEM Questionnaire and the reality of the drug problem in each country. The substantive contents of the five thematic chapters (institutional strengthening, demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures and international cooperation) in the draft reports were discussed among the Experts and ideas were exchanged based on expertise in the area of drug policies.

As a result, key decisions were made among the GEG Experts on the data and information to be included, as well as, inquiries to the contents in the draft reports. Due to the volume of work that was reviewed and extensive discussions undertaken, not all drafts were reviewed. Guidelines, based on the decisions, were given to experts on finishing the review and editing of the pending reports from their respective capitals. Likewise, the GEG work plan was amended to provide the Experts ample time to conclude their work.

Following the Plenary Session, the MEM Unit worked closely with all Experts, particularly the GEG Sub-group Coordinators in an additional review of the texts and in-depth editing of the drafts. This ensured that all first draft national evaluation reports were ready in final form to transmit in their respective original language to member states. These draft reports were sent to CICAD

Commissioners on November 7, 2018 for review and response. The MEM Unit provided vital support to this first drafting phase to all Experts to whom the GEG and I are grateful for their ongoing assistance and guidance during this MEM process.

The way forward, the deadline for countries to send comments and updates on the first drafts is December 5, 2018. During the months of December, 2018 through February 2019, the GEG will evaluate the progress of countries in common topics throughout the past MEM seven rounds via a series of online drafting activities. Then, in March 2019, the GEG Second Drafting Session is expected to take place in Washington, DC. Similarly to the First Drafting Session, the Experts will meet to review in detail the updated contents of the drafts in order to have final draft national reports for the MEM seventh round. The aim is to present 33 national evaluation reports to the Commissioners at the CICAD-65 regular session and a hemispheric evaluation report at CICAD-66, both in 2019.

I would like to take this opportunity to relay my thanks to the GEG Experts for their unwavering commitment to the evaluation process. On behalf of the GEG body, I would like to acknowledge the support the Experts received from the GEG Sub-group Coordinators assigned to each thematic chapter and the invaluable and committed involvement of the MEM Unit staff led by Sofia Kosmas that without their support it would not have been possible to complete this endeavor.

Distinguished Commissioners, I also wish to thank all member states for their continuous support for this OAS Summit-mandated multilateral process.

Thank you.

Steve Millington
General Coordinator
MEM Governmental Expert Group (GEG)