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CONTROL COMMISSION

CICAD

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REMARKS

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Building Blocks for INL A/S Madison

CICAD 68

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

- Good morning everyone, and welcome to CICAD 68. I regret we are not all together in Bogota enjoying Colombia's warm hospitality. However, the show must go on as they say, and I am grateful for the technology that enables us to meet in this hybrid format and continue our important work in countering the world drug problem.
- The United States is thrilled to see the ambitious agenda before us for CICAD 68 this week and we look forward to the many interesting and fruitful exchanges ahead of us. First and foremost, we want to thank our Colombian colleagues and CICAD secretariat for their innovative thinking in developing our program of work this week, as well as all the flexible logistics planning required.
- We are pleased to see continued focus on illicit synthetic drugs on this week's agenda. Illicit synthetic drugs and, more specifically, illicit synthetic opioids, are ravaging my country and so many others. The threats and challenges associated with this issue increasingly permeate our hemisphere.
- We are grateful for this brain trust within CICAD and our shared dedication to identify effective ways to address this threat as one of the most pressing drug challenges of our generation.
- We are familiar with this new paradigm: synthetic drugs are easily produced, even by amateur chemists in a basement; weather and terrain do not restrict their cultivation or production.; these drugs are widely available and prone to simple manipulation through easily adaptable precursor chemical combinations; the myriad chemical combinations allow these illicit drugs to avoid law enforcement detection.
- Importantly, these same technological advances allowing us to communicate remotely today are simultaneously facilitating new trafficking methods via mail, express courier services, and the Internet. Consumption methods for these substances are highly versatile: they can be smoked, inhaled, or ingested, for example.
- Throughout the last year during our presidency of CICAD, the United States endeavored to identify innovative and effective responses to this challenge. Of note, we sought to strengthen public and private sector cooperation and enhanced partnerships with chemical and pharmaceutical industries, who are a key ally in our efforts to combat synthetic drugs.
- Indeed, CICAD programming and the Expert Group on Chemical Substances and Pharmaceutical Products have been instrumental in driving this workstream forward in our region, assembling cooperation measures and best practices for working with private

sector entities, and I'd like to acknowledge CICAD's Supply Reduction Unit in particular in this regard.

- We also strived to incorporate reference to these challenges and ideas in the revised Hemispheric Strategy and accompanying Plan of Action. The United States was pleased to lead CICAD in updating these two foundational documents, which will serve as a guide to our region for the next ten years as we confront evolving drug threats.
- Addressing the synthetic drug challenge is hard, there is no getting around that. Together we've been defying the odds to curb it through innovative approaches and intensified international cooperation. Then, COVID-19 hit us all and offered criminals working in this field new opportunities to flourish given our national resources continue to be taxed in the global fight against the pandemic.
- At the pandemic's outset, COVID caused a shortage of raw materials and chemical precursors in our region, leading to the temporary slowdown of cocaine, methamphetamine, and illicit fentanyl production. The positive disruption was short-lived though, and trafficking flows have now adapted to the current environment, with drugs increasingly being sold on social media and other online marketplaces.
- The number of new psychoactive substances, or NPS, in our Hemisphere are both growing and diversifying. We are seeing greater use of non-medical tranquilizers, ecstasy with higher MDMA purity, and rising methamphetamine seizures as compared to the same period in 2019.
- With criminals producing new synthetic drugs and seemingly working around the clock to find new pathways of drug synthesis using alternative precursors, we must continue working through the UN drug control framework to internationally schedule new illicit synthetic drugs and the precursor chemicals used to produce them.
- Scheduling, while not a silver bullet, is essential in our efforts to keep pace with this intense challenge. It is paramount that international scheduling decisions be complemented by a variety of other tools.
- This includes things like the UN Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs, which offers countries a menu of investigative, legislative, and regulatory solutions to apply within their domestic contexts to address synthetic drug challenges. On this menu is the International Narcotics Control Board's (or INCB's) online information sharing systems, such as the Pre-Export Notification Online System, Precursor Incident Communication System, and IONICS. These platforms help Member States monitor and control the trade in precursor chemicals and share information on incidents involving illicit precursor chemicals and NPS, which can ultimately advance successful transnational counternarcotics investigations.
- As we work now to address COVID-19 in tandem with these illicit drug threats, our earnest resolve and commitment to our work is as vital as ever.

- Our responses to combating illicit synthetic drugs and their precursors, both scheduled and unscheduled, require a multi-pronged and collective approach that includes: enhancing forensic capabilities to identify these substances; working with private industry to address supply chain vulnerabilities; strengthening import and export regulations, sharing information with our partners particularly through global and regional Early Warning Systems; and also expanding access to treatment, especially now when stay-at-home orders or social distancing rules impede our ability to deliver in-person support to people with substance use disorders.
- As we discuss solutions, particularly in the context of COVID-19, I want to take a moment to recognize and applaud CICAD as a leader in guiding a regional approach to countering the world drug problem and supporting countries in their responses to the pandemic. CICAD's work this year has been particularly exemplary. As the pandemic struck, CICAD seamlessly adapted to allow for uninterrupted program delivery, including by pivoting to virtual trainings, webinars, meetings, and conferences to help us continue to advance our drug-control goals in the region. On top of the program delivery, CICAD advanced our important policy work by supporting the finalization of our new Hemispheric Strategy, Plan of Action, and Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism through exclusively virtual engagement.
- None of our efforts are possible without CICAD and we urge you all to continue providing CICAD with the financial resources it needs to continue serving as a regional pioneer in our fight against illicit drugs.
- With that, I will close by saying thank you, and wishing everyone a successful CICAD 68.