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| From: | EU co-Presidency |
| To: | Delegations |
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Delegations will find below the Sofia declaration adopted at the XX High Level Meeting of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs held on 21-22 June 2018 in Sofia.

**XX High Level Meeting of the
EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs,
21-22 June 2018 in Sofia**

1. **Having met** in Sofia on 21 and 22 June 2018, under the co-presidencies of Bulgaria and Suriname, at the XX High Level Meeting of the Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs between the European Union and CELAC.
2. **WE REAFFIRM** the importance of the Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs between CELAC and the European Union, as a bi-regional forum for dialogue and cooperation built on mutual understanding on the basis of the principle of common and shared responsibility, a balanced, comprehensive, integrated and evidence based approach, in full conformity with the three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments that constitute the cornerstone of the international drug control system, and with the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, all human rights, fundamental freedoms, the inherent dignity of all individuals and the principles of equal rights and mutual respect among States.
3. **WE REAFFIRM** that the principle of common and shared responsibility guides all CELAC and EU States' actions to ensure their equal commitment to address the World Drug Problem in all its dimensions.
4. **WE EMPHASIZE** that bi-regional cooperation should complement efforts undertaken at local, national, bilateral, sub-regional, regional and multilateral levels and recognise the importance of ensuring that such cooperation, including through the CND and, as appropriate, its subsidiary bodies, the regular exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned among national practitioners from different fields and at all levels, aligns with agreed priorities and objectives and that it should take place under the principle of common and shared responsibility.

MAKE THE FOLLOWING DECLARATION:

On bi-regional cooperation

5. **WE COMMIT** ourselves to work within this bi-regional framework on identifying and addressing the particular social and economic causes of the world drug problem from its origin, as a means to prevent its negative consequences.

6. **UNDERLINING** the positive cooperation between our regions in the preparations for and during the recently held United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS 2016), and emphasizing in this regard that both regions commit themselves to the UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document. We highlight our joint ambitions and priorities towards a balanced, comprehensive, scientific evidenced based, and integrated approach to address the World Drug Problem in 2019, having in mind that there are important topics that need further discussions. We therefore emphasize that both our regions commit themselves to the broad international implementation and sharing of best practices corresponding to the seven thematic areas of the UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”, as well as the provisions set out in the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on international cooperation towards an integrated and balanced strategy to counter the World Drug Problem.

7. **WE CONSIDER** UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document as a pivotal reference document, representing the latest high level consensus for discussions of relevance to international drug policy in all pertinent fora and **WE WILL SEEK** for broad international implementation of the UNGASS operational recommendations. We look forward to the active participation of the EU and CELAC countries in the discussions in preparation for the ministerial segment at the 62nd CND session in order to foster an in-depth exchange of information and expertise on efforts, achievements, challenges and best practices to address and counter the world drug problem.

8. **WE COMMIT** ourselves to join efforts to review and improve the Annual Report Questionnaire in light of the UNGASS recommendations.

9. **WE WELCOME** the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we note that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the World Drug Problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

10. **WE REAFFIRM** General Assembly Resolution 72\198 on international cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem, which further reiterates that the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the world drug problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing, and recognizes the role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in contributing to the global follow-up and in supporting the thematic review of progress on the Goals related to its mandate, and in this regard encourages the Commission to continue to provide input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, including by providing relevant data, as implementation of the recommendations contained in the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly may contribute to the attainment of the related Goals.

11. **WE WELCOME** the activities conducted by the Cooperation Programme on Drugs Policies between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union (COPOLAD II), that builds upon the positive results achieved during COPOLAD I. We also take note of the efforts made by the EU and participating CELAC countries in the Cocaine Route Programme.

12. **WE ALSO TAKE NOTE** of the positive start of the new cooperation Programme for Assistance against Transnational Organised Crime "EL PAcCTO" between the EU and participating Latin American countries and the activities of the CARIFORUM Crime and Security Programme between the EU and participating Caribbean countries.

13. **WE COMMIT** ourselves to join efforts to further strengthen the cooperation between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as the leading entity in the United Nations system for addressing and countering the World Drug Problem, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme, and other relevant organisations, within their treaty mandated roles, as part of a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach to the challenges posed by the World Drug Problem, while reaffirming the principal role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as the policymaking body of the United Nations with prime responsibility for drug control matters. We also agree to further strengthen our cooperation, as appropriate, in relevant multilateral fora.

14. **WE TAKE NOTE** of the negative impact on cooperation of unilateral lists and certifications on drug trafficking and other related matters that are contrary to international law.

On demand reduction and related measures, including prevention, and treatment as well as other health-related issues

15. **WE REITERATE** our commitment to promote the health, welfare and well-being of all individuals, families, communities and society as a whole, and facilitate healthy lifestyles through effective, comprehensive, best practices and scientific evidence-based demand reduction measures at all levels, covering: prevention, early intervention, treatment, care, recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration activities, as well as initiatives and measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of drug abuse.

16. **WE ENCOURAGE** the development and adoption of policies, that incorporate a holistic, strengthened, balanced, scientific evidence-based and multidisciplinary approach, in accordance with national legislation and the three international drug control conventions, with the objective of reducing the impact of drug abuse on public health, and preventing the stigmatization, marginalization, and discrimination of persons with substance use disorders.

17. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** that prevention is one of the main health responses to the world drug problem, and that policies and effective prevention interventions, should be developed and implemented in an integrated manner, taking account of the specific needs of target groups and centered on and tailored to the needs of individuals, families and communities as part of comprehensive and balanced national drug policies with the full respect of human rights. **WE REAFFIRM** our commitment to investing in and working towards delivering scientific evidence-based prevention programs in a range of settings, including in families, schools, workplaces and communities.

18. **WE COMMIT** ourselves to take effective and practical primary prevention measures that protect people, in particular people in vulnerable situation, from drug use initiation by providing them with accurate information about the risks of drug abuse by promoting skills and opportunities to choose healthy lifestyles and by developing supportive parenting and healthy social environments and by ensuring equal access to education and vocational training.

19. **WE SUPPORT** the principle of equal access to public health services, which should guarantee broad coverage, as well as basic treatment, respecting human rights. We also welcome bi-regional cooperation respecting national legislation and in accordance with the three international drug control conventions, and in the context of comprehensive and balanced drug demand reduction efforts, giving consideration, as appropriate, to effective measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of drug abuse, including but not limited to appropriate medication-assisted therapy programmes, injecting equipment programmes, as well as anti-retroviral therapy and other relevant interventions that prevent the transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use as well as considering access to such interventions including in treatment and outreach services, prisons and other custodial settings, and promoting in that regard the use, as appropriate, of the WHO, UNODC, UNAIDS Technical Guide for Countries to Set Targets for Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment and Care for Injecting Drug Users. We also encourage measures of prevention, vaccination, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis.

We further agree to cooperate on and share and promote best practices, research and scientific evidence-based programmes on prevention, early intervention, treatment, and social reintegration and rehabilitation to better address the World Drug Problem.

On ensuring the availability of and access to controlled substances exclusively for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion

20. **WE CONTINUE** to bi-regionally support all efforts to promote, in line with the UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document, the availability of, affordability of and accessibility to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes exclusively, including for the relief of pain and suffering, in accordance with the three international drug control conventions and defined by national legislation, while preventing their diversion, abuse, misuse and trafficking. We will further focus our efforts by examining, as appropriate, domestic legislation and regulatory and administrative mechanisms, as well as procedures including domestic distribution channels, with the aim of simplifying and streamlining those processes and removing unduly restrictive impediments, when present, without undermining the capacities to ensure traceability

21. **WE ENCOURAGE** the strengthening of systems, scientific evidence-based information and research for assessing legitimate needs for medical use in order to make a correct and adequate provision of all necessary prescriptions, especially those used to relieve pain and to treat critical illnesses and/or terminal ones, and in this way establish a more effective tool to guarantee access and avoid diversion to illicit channels.

On supply reduction and related measures: effective law enforcement, responses to drug related crime, countering money laundering and promoting judicial cooperation

22. **WE STRESS** the need to implement joint preventive and law enforcement measures, where appropriate, to identify, disrupt and dismantle transnational organised crime groups involved in drugs trafficking, as well as all other forms of criminal activity that may be linked to the trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, such as money-laundering, trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, and arms trafficking.

23. **WE WILL CONTINUE** joint actions and cooperation, where appropriate, aimed notably at sharing information and transferring technologies among law enforcement authorities in order to better trace international money laundering and precursors deviation routes, and we are committed to strengthening judicial cooperation and mutual legal assistance to better identify, investigate, prosecute and sanction individuals and organisations, in particular financial entities engaged in money laundering and other drug-related criminal activities in accordance with national and international legal frameworks including, where possible, the seizure and recovery of the assets involved.

24. **WE REITERATE** our commitment to protecting the safety and assuring the security of individuals, societies and communities by cooperating at all levels and focusing our efforts to prevent and counter the illicit cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking of narcotic and synthetic drugs, as well as drug-related crime and violence.

25. **WE RECOGNIZE** that each State faces different challenges that require a customized approach and reaffirm the continuing need for cooperation and support, with a continued commitment to working together to develop comprehensive capacities and strategies to counter the challenges posed by new and existing drug trafficking routes and new technologies and methods used by traffickers, including the provision of technical assistance, to, *inter alia*, enhance their capacities to conduct scientific and strategic research through national observatories on drugs, as well as to effectively address and counter the World Drug Problem.

26. **WE RECOGNIZE** the challenge presented by the use of the Internet, and especially darknet, for drug related criminal activities, driven by the exploitation of the opportunities presented by new technologies. We also recognise that tailored answers are needed to effectively address the situation and in this regard, we encourage countries to coordinate at the political and technical levels, to share information and best practices and to make the best of the technical assistance and capacity-building offered, including training and acquisition of equipment to anticipate the early and effective detection, to prevent, address and counter the use of the Internet, including darknet, by drug trafficking networks and transnational criminal organisations.

27. **WE COMMIT** to strengthen national, regional and international monitoring of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and new psychoactive substances, with a view to more effectively preventing the diversion of and trafficking in those chemicals, while ensuring that the legitimate trade in and use of those chemicals are not adversely affected, including by using national, sub-regional, regional and international reporting systems with the support of the existing and future programmes and International Narcotics Control Board tools such as Projects Prism and Cohesion, the Precursors Incident Communication System and Pre- Export Notification Online (PEN Online) system

28. **WE RECOGNIZE** that the supply of and demand for drugs reinforce each other and that drug trafficking has multiple and severe negative impacts on all countries, including transit countries, and we therefore call upon all participants of this bi-regional mechanism, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility, to continue to develop and implement effective prevention strategies, while simultaneously developing and implementing supply reduction strategies.

On drugs and human rights, youth, women, children, vulnerable members of society and communities

29. **WE REITERATE** our commitment to respecting, protecting and promoting all human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals and the rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies. We also agree to ensure that our national drug policies, as part of an evidence-based, comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach fully respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms and protect the health, safety and well-being of individuals, families, vulnerable groups of society, communities and society as a whole, without discrimination.

30. **WE HIGHLIGHT**, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the UN General Assembly Resolution S-30/1, the need to mainstream a gender perspective and ensure the involvement of women in all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies and programmes, develop and disseminate gender-sensitive and age-appropriate measures. It must not be treated as an isolated issue or a separate track and should take into account the specific needs and circumstances faced by women and girls with regard to the World Drug Problem and, as States parties, implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

31. **WE WILL ENSURE** that measures to prevent the illicit cultivation and eradication of plants containing narcotic and psychotropic substances respect fundamental human rights, take due account of traditional licit uses, where there is historic evidence of such use, and the protection of the environment, in accordance with the three international drug conventions, and also take into account, as appropriate and in accordance with national drug control legislation, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

On proportionate and effective policies and responses, as well as legal guarantees and safeguards pertaining to criminal justice proceedings and the justice sector

32. **WE AGREE** to promote proportionate national sentencing policies, practices and guidelines for drug-related offences, in accordance with the provisions of the drug control conventions and national legislation, whereby the severity of penalties is proportionate to the gravity of offences and whereby both mitigating and aggravating factors, including a gender perspective, are taken into account, while attaching great importance to human dignity and human rights.

33. **WE ENCOURAGE**, in line with national legislations, to consider the development, adoption and implementation of alternative or additional measures to conviction and punishment in the application of justice concerning drug related offences, consistent with the three United Nations drug control conventions, international law and relevant UN standards. We invite the participants of this bi-regional mechanism to consider evidence-based treatment, care, rehabilitation and recovery and social re-integration practices and community-based support services for drug dependent persons in prisons, as appropriate, as well as the transition from penitentiary institutions to the community, securing continuum of care.

34. **WE NOTE** that in our respective regions we have different legal systems with different sanctions for drug-related offences and we do note that we aim for proportionate sanctions within national legislations and with full respect for the international framework.

On cross-cutting issues in addressing and countering the world drug problem: evolving reality, trends and existing circumstances, emerging and persistent challenges and threats, including new psychoactive substances, in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments

35. **WE RECOGNIZE** that there are persistent, new, and evolving challenges that should be addressed in conformity with the three international drug conventions, which allow for sufficient flexibility for State parties to design and implement national drug policies according to their priorities and needs, consistent with the principle of common and shared responsibility and applicable international law.

36. **WE ARE AWARE** that synthetic drugs offer criminal organisations opportunities for illicit production and distribution among different channels, like the Internet. In this regard, we need to design and implement national drug policies, taking into account the priorities of States, as well as the persistent challenges, new and changing, within the framework of the three international drug control conventions, redesign, when appropriate, public policies in the area of drug trafficking and to assume the commitment to share information regarding synthetic drugs production, distribution and routes including developing early warning systems and enhancing capacity of national laboratories and law enforcement agencies for the detection and identification of synthetic drugs.

37. **WE REAFFIRM** our commitment to increase the bi-regional dialogue and cooperation in order to address the main challenges, risks and threats related to the misuse of the Internet and the availability of new psychoactive substances. Sustained information exchange at the regional and bi-regional levels on effective prevention and treatment and related legislative responses to these threats to support the development of effective, evidence-based responses to the emerging challenge of new psychoactive substances with regard to their adverse social and health consequences is also required.

38. **WE PROMOTE** exchange of information to better understand the extent of adverse impacts, including the health, social and economic and safety impacts, of drug trafficking in small quantities in order to develop, where appropriate, effective responses to counter micro trafficking.

On strengthening international cooperation based on the principle of common and shared responsibility

39. **WE TAKE ACCOUNT** of the need to develop, as appropriate, drug policy indicators and tools for the collection and analysis of accurate, evidence-based, reliable and comparable data on all relevant aspects of the World Drug Problem taking into consideration the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

40. **WE HIGHLIGHT** the efforts made by the EU and participating CELAC countries in cooperation programmes and projects at different levels, under which we cooperate on the reinforcement of balanced, integrated and evidence-based approach to the drugs phenomenon and the quality of the EU-CELAC cooperation activities.

41. **WE ENCOURAGE** increased cooperation and coordination between the UNODC and other relevant UN bodies, within their respective mandates, across the UN system, to jointly develop activities promoting comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based and balanced national drug strategies, policies and cooperation programmes, also in view of the UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The efforts to achieve the drug-related Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address and counter the world drug problem should complement and reinforce each other.

On alternative development and cooperation on development-oriented balanced drug control policy, and on addressing socio-economic issues

42. **WE COMMIT** to continue efforts in the context of long-term and sustainable development programmes to address the most pressing drug-related socioeconomic factors, including unemployment and social marginalization as well as environmental aspects, such as conservation, recovery and sustainable use of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

43. **WE ENCOURAGE** the promotion of inclusive economic growth and support initiatives that contribute to poverty eradication and the sustainability of social and economic development, develop measures for rural development, improving infrastructure and social inclusion and protection, addressing the consequences of illicit crop cultivation and the manufacture and production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances on the environment, with the incorporation and participation of local communities, and consider taking voluntary measures to promote goods and services stemming from alternative development, including preventive alternative development, as appropriate, to gain access to markets, consistent with applicable multilateral trade rules and with national and international law, within the framework of comprehensive and balanced drug control strategies.

44. **WE REITERATE** our commitment to strengthen sub-regional, regional and international cooperation to support comprehensive and sustainable alternative development programmes, including, as appropriate, preventive alternative development, as an essential part of successful prevention and crop control strategies to increase the positive outcome of such programmes, especially in the areas affected by and at risk of illicit cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, taking into account the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development and the operational recommendations related to alternative development included in the UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document.

45. **WE ENCOURAGE** the development of sustainable urban development initiatives for those affected by illicit drug-related activities to foster public participation in crime prevention, community cohesion, protection and safety and to stimulate innovation, entrepreneurship and employment.

46. **WE AGREE** to convene the XXI High-Level Meeting of the Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs between CELAC and the European Union in 2019.
