

JOINT MEETING BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS FROM AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES ON DEVELOPMENT OF CO-OPERATION IN FIGHTING DRUGS

4 - 5 December 2014

Almaty, Kazakhstan

Key Findings and Outcomes

This Joint Meeting was organized by the OSCE Transnational Threats Department's Strategic Police Matters Unit, the EU-funded project "Heroin Route II – Information Networks along the Heroin Route" and the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors (CARICC). The two-day event brought together senior and middle management representatives of national law enforcement and drug control agencies from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to discuss the issues of co-operation in fighting drugs and to exchange information on drug traffickers and routes of drug supply. Participants shared their experience and exchanged their views on mechanisms and tools for enhancing cross-border co-operation by strengthening the information exchange mechanisms. Discussions were focused on the practical implications of co-operation between law enforcement, improving ways and means of the information exchange and the planning of further joint activities in a holistic manner.

Based on the principles of the UN Charter on supporting peace and security, International UN Conventions (Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1954, Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988);

acknowledging the role of UNODC in the global efforts on countering illegal drugs and complementing the importance of the Paris Pact Initiative;

in line with the OSCE Concept for Combating the Threat of Illicit Drugs and the Diversion of Chemical Precursors, adopted by the OSCE participating States in 2012 (PC Decision 1048);

in light of the previous meetings on the matter in June 2013 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and in November 2013 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan; and

based on the presentations and discussions at the meeting, the following findings and outcomes were compiled¹:

Current situation on combating the threat of illicit drugs and the diversion of chemical precursors in the region

Participants expressed their concerns that for the third consecutive year Afghanistan, which has the world's largest opium poppy cultivation, saw an increase in the area under cultivation. The total area under opium poppy cultivation is estimated at 224,000 hectares in 2014, a 7% increase from the previous year. The vast majority (89%) of opium cultivation took place in nine provinces in Afghanistan's Southern and Western regions, which include the country's most insecure provinces. In 2014, opium prices decreased in all regions of Afghanistan. One probable reason for the decrease was an increase in supply due to an increase in production.

Active discussions were devoted to trafficking of precursors, in particular, the Acetic Anhydride (AA) to Afghanistan presumably from the United Arab Emirates, China and India.

Discussing new trends and seizures of illicit drugs participants noted the emergence in the region of a so called "5% heroin", the chemical formula of which needed to be clearly determined. In this regard it was proposed to inform all the interested countries and UNODC, through the existing channels.

Participants highlighted the spread of the "Hawala system" to transfer illegal money coming from drug trafficking to different countries of the world and the need to increase the capacities of law enforcement to control illegal money flows.

Law enforcement officers shared the information on the current and planned activities in implementing relevant state programmes and national action plans on fighting illicit drugs.

¹ This is non-exhaustive list which does not imply consensus among the participants or endorsement by relevant participating States, or by the OSCE Executive Structures

A great deal of attention was devoted to information analysis, activities on profiling of transnational Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) involved in drug smuggling along the 'Northern route' and on the methods of concealment of narcotic drugs. Participants identified the need to increase co-operation.

General conclusions on development of co-operation in fighting drugs

There is a need to keep in mind the on-going and post-2014 transition landscape that not only impacts Afghanistan but the greater region as a whole.

It should be stressed that co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms facilitated by regional organizations such as CARICC have proven to be very valuable in facilitating and fostering information exchange as well as for co-ordinating joint regional and international operations. In this regard, Afghanistan was encouraged by the meeting participants to become a member of CARICC.

The importance of the development of regional and international co-operation between law enforcement at strategic, tactical and operational levels needs to be acknowledged. In this regard it is crucial to build the capacities and establish networking at all levels of law enforcement (senior, middle management and expert levels).

It should be noted that some of the countries represented had no existing formal exchange of law enforcement information. As a direct result of this meeting those countries have opened up those lines of communication and agreed to exchange information.

Support is needed for international educational programmes and training initiatives, in particular in the field of e-learning, for drug- and law enforcement, customs and border agencies, which would increase future regional and international co-operation in fighting drug trafficking, and increase the professional level of the personnel of the respective organizations.

Regular meetings should be established between the agencies at border checkpoints with the respective counterparts on the other side of the border at expert level; as well as quarterly meetings at senior management level.

The importance and value of tools for joint efforts to counter illicit drugs such as controlled deliveries, joint operations, information sharing, and assistance in implementing joint investigations of crimes related to illicit trafficking of drugs and precursor chemicals need to be highlighted and promoted.

Participants declared the will to continue the development of co-operation and identified several major topics of the meetings which could be considered to take place in 2015 and further on:

- Use and capacities of liaison officers in bridging law enforcement through information sharing and needs facilitation in prevention, investigation and prosecution of drug-related cases in the region – improved use of the existing forms and channels of co-operation;
- Co-operation between law enforcement and forensic officers on illicit drug investigations in Central Asia and Afghanistan;
- Development of the technical capacities of the law enforcement agencies on detection, investigation and prosecution of the illicit drugs turnover – best practices;
- Early prevention of emerging drug routes by increased information sharing and cross-border co-operation;
- Specific education needs of drug enforcement agencies in the region – priorities and problems.