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1. ALGERIA

Since Report No 1.147/2013 issued by this Office, there have been no new developments as regards arrests of major drugs traffickers or legislative amendments, or changes in the legal regulations or the organisation of the Ministries which are of relevance to drug trafficking.

However, statistics are available for 2013 from the National Anti-Drugs and Drug Addiction Office (ONLDT), showing that:

- In 2013, seizures of cannabis resin amounted to 211 512.73 kg as against 157 382.643 in 2012 - an increase of 34.39%.
- In 2013, 1 175 974 psychotropic pills were seized, as against 937 660 in 2012 - an increase of 25.42%.

2. EGYPT

2.1. Overview

The representative of ANGA gave a presentation on developments in the fight against drug trafficking in 2013, highlighting the Agency's achievements. As in previous presentations to the Local Dublin Group, he described developments in the Agency's work for each type of substance:

a) Cannabis

He reiterated that Egypt cannot be considered a cannabis-producing country, despite the fact that cannabis cultivation has been developing in some mountain areas in Southern Sinai. In this connection, the Brigadier pointed out that over the last year an integrated crop destruction strategy has been implemented (together with the seizure of assets and irrigation infrastructure), with the result that, in their view, 90 % of the crops in Sinai have been destroyed. However, they are confident that the small quantity produced in Sinai is consumed in Egypt (and not exported to other countries). With regard to imports, as on previous occasions, the Brigadier referred to the places of origin of the majority of the hashish consumed in Egypt (Morocco, accounting for 85 %, and Lebanon for the remainder). Nonetheless, there are indications that a new entry route has opened up, through the south of the country and the Red Sea, for hashish from Pakistan. At the beginning of this year, some 100 kg of hashish from Pakistan was seized. Total seizures in 2013 amounted to 84 tonnes. Most of the cannabis seized was being brought on boats across the Mediterranean.

b) Psychotropic substances

These usually originate in India and China and are making considerable inroads in Egypt owing to their low cost. In 2012, 4 million tablets of these substances were seized in various parts of the country. They are brought in both through international airports and through maritime port areas. One noteworthy instance was the smuggling of 1 million Heptagon tablets in the locality of Nuweiba (in Southern Sinai).

c) Heroin

Heroin, also, is not produced in Egypt; it enters through the east of the country, originating mainly in Afghanistan, but also via the Red Sea and the south of Egypt, from Kenya. Last year, 260 kg of heroin was seized.

d) Opium

Crops of opium poppy have been found in Sinai and in Upper Egypt, where there is a certain cultural aspect to its cultivation. However, most of the opium seized in Egypt comes from South-East Asia. In 2013, 800 kg of opium was seized.

e) Cocaine

Cocaine consumption in Egypt continues to be very rare. Only a few kilos were seized in 2013.

2.2. Institutional framework

Given the current situation in Egypt, combating drug trafficking is not one of the Government's political priorities. This is apparent in the absence of any major legislative changes or changes in the strategy for combating drug trafficking.

In this connection, Brigadier Abdel Aziz pointed out that despite the political changes in recent months, there had been no significant changes in the Agency. He emphasised that following the removal from office of ex-President Morsi in July 2013, only the Director and Deputy Director of the Agency had been replaced, and that the persons replacing them had extensive experience in the Agency itself.

As for legislation, one noteworthy development had been Decree 125/2012 of the Ministry of Health, which added Tramadol to the list of psychotropic substances banned in the country, thus facilitating the fight against this drug.

2.3. International cooperation

In this area, the Brigadier highlighted a number of successes achieved through international cooperation in 2013. He mentioned that thanks to cooperation with Italy and the United States, a successful operation had been carried out leading to the seizure of 30 tonnes of hashish on a vessel from Morocco. Thanks to cooperation with France, another seizure of similar magnitude had been made in the Mediterranean.

Lastly, the Brigadier expressed his gratitude to the Home Affairs Attaché at this Embassy for his assistance with another operation to seize hashish from a vessel in the Mediterranean.

In this strategy of cooperation with third countries to prevent drugs reaching the coast of Egypt by boat, the Brigadier mentioned that efforts had been made in 2013 to extend cooperation to Asian countries such as Pakistan.

2.4. Recommendations

The UNODC representative reported that an increase in cocaine trafficking from the Sahel to Libya had been detected. Owing to the current situation in those countries and the very long border with Egypt, Brigadier Abdel Aziz advised that the Agency will pay particular attention to the area, given the possibility that the ease of access could give rise to increased consumption of cocaine.

On the other hand, the representative of one Embassy asked about possible links between the terrorist groups operating in Sinai and the groups growing drugs in the region. The Brigadier replied that he did not believe there was any link, since the cultivation of drug crops had been developing in the area for years, while terrorism was a relatively new phenomenon. He did note that individuals engaged in trafficking and contraband could traffic in all kinds of things, including drugs, weapons and human beings. On the traffickers' side, links could come to be established between terrorist and trafficking networks.

3. LIBYA

3.1. Welcome and introduction

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the participants, referring to the items on the agenda and the expected outcomes. He also noted that the Libyan authorities had been invited to attend the meeting but, although they confirmed their attendance orally, they had not come. The agenda was adopted.

The Chair recalled the role of the Mini Dublin Group, saying that it is a flexible, informal consultation and coordination mechanism for regional and country-specific problems of illicit drug production, trafficking and demand. At local level, the main tasks of the Mini Dublin Group are to compile information on the local situation, to conduct dialogue with the host country on drug control and to draw up recommendations.

The Chair briefed on the outcomes of the last meeting in September 2013, pointing out some major police operations against drugs during 2013: a boat intercepted with five thousand kilos of hashish; an operation carried out in Misrata in which an unknown quantity of cocaine and pills was seized; a coastguard operation resulting in the seizure of thirty thousand kilos of Hashish; in Al Khoms, an operation led to the seizure of eleven thousand LSD pills; and in April 2013 a Libyan boat was intercepted carrying twenty three thousand kilos of cannabis.

3.2. Discussion on the current general situation in Libya

According to the participants, these were the main points:

1. Libya is an established market and transit zone for hashish, heroin and cocaine.
2. There is a correlation between illegal immigration, organised crime and drug trafficking. In this regard, it was pointed out that on 1 March the Italian Guardia di Finanza had seized two fishing boats (Abusharif and Prince Khaled) coming from Libya carrying 18 tons of hashish. The boats were intercepted near Pantelleria Island, in the vicinity of Lampedusa. The crew was, mainly, from Egypt and Syria. Apparently both boats were involved in human trafficking and drugs.

3. Concerning illegal migration, it is believed that some Africans pay for their travel not in cash but with drugs.
4. The absence of political authority has allowed the problem to increase lately. The power vacuum is being filled by some Islamist organisations to tackle the social problems caused by drug addiction. Particularly in the East of the country, Ansar Al Sharia (extremist Islamic Group) has developed a policy to combat drug addiction.
5. The State's control over the illicit drug market has fallen away.
6. There are several institutions that claim to be in charge of combating drug trafficking: among them there could be some revolutionary brigades or militias.
7. The lack of official information concerning drug seizures, of statistics and data, hampers the fight against drugs in Libya.

3.3. Recommendations

In conclusion, the situation has not improved since last year. Although the national anti-drug trafficking institution has been established and, for many, is the authority in this area, it seems to not be fully operational yet. For this reason Libya is not able to carry out an effective fight against drugs. Two outstanding issues remain: firstly, the lack of a clear institution or body with the capacity to combat drugs and, secondly, the Libyan authorities' preference for discussing these matters at bilateral level rather than subjecting themselves to analysis by multinational bodies.

All in all, at this meeting the participants agreed on the following recommendations:

1. Take account of the recommendations adopted at previous meetings, especially in 2012 and 2013.
2. Strengthen the cooperation and collaboration with the Libyan authorities and, particularly, encourage them to participate in the forum of the Mini Dublin Group.
3. Establish information exchange channels between Libya and other counterparts as a cornerstone for international cooperation.

4. Develop awareness-raising programmes related to drug consumption problems, focusing especially on youth, in which other institutions such as the Ministry of Health could take part.
5. Need to develop an antidrug strategy which must include civil society as well.
6. Put in place a single body or institution to combat drug trafficking.

4. MOROCCO

4.1. Overview

There have been no major changes. The most significant event in media terms was the publication, at the beginning of March, of a report in the local press that Morocco remains the world's leading country for the production and export of hashish, according to the INCB (International Narcotics Control Board).

It was also pointed out (FR) that the current crisis in Franco-Moroccan relations is presenting a major obstacle in the cooperation between the two countries in this area. Among other things, there are serious doubts as to whether Morocco will participate in the G-4 meetings planned at various levels, especially in the meetings to be held in France.

It was also noted that the Moroccan authorities responsible for providing data (DGSN) are delaying more than in other years when it comes to supplying data, with no apparent reason; for the moment, it was not possible to give any fuller explanation for this. From the figures available, there appears to have been a reduction in the number of seizures, although there was no agreement on this assessment, given the lack of really reliable data. In any case, difficulties persist when it comes to assessing the real value of the figures supplied by these authorities since there is no body which centralises the data from the security agencies and services.

A new entry route for drugs, mainly cocaine, was observed, following the introduction of a new RAM (Royal Air Maroc) service between Casablanca and São Paulo.

4.2. Legislative amendments

There have been no new developments. It was recalled that, around the time of the Group's previous meeting, there were reports of various initiatives by groups and associations aiming at a partial legalisation of hashish production. Both political parties (PAM and Istiqlal) have taken up the issue, with seminars and public debates at the Parliament, but there has not been any progress on this question. There is some support for this approach, in some sectors of public opinion, since it is a traditional crop in some (especially disadvantaged) areas, but it is far from being widespread.

4.3. International cooperation

Apart from the difficulties which one Member State participating in the Dublin Group is currently encountering vis-à-vis the Moroccan authorities, there is a very high level of cooperation, especially with some countries (ESP, AL, IT). However, it is also apparent that at a more operational level the cooperation mechanisms are far from functioning fluidly. The participants therefore favoured conveying a message to the Moroccan authorities with a view to improving this aspect, especially as regards the functioning of an effective operational contact point.

4.4. Other

In line with the recommendations made at the previous meeting of the Mini Dublin Group, the EU Delegation reported that in its contacts with the Moroccan authorities they expressed a willingness, in principle, to become more closely involved with EUROPOL, with a view to their possibly participating.

5. TUNISIA

5.1. General situation

5.1.1. *Production and trafficking*

The hypothesis put forward in previous reports, that Tunisia is not a drug producing country but rather a transit country for the trafficking of moderate quantities of cannabis to Europe, is maintained. In the absence of reliable statistics to support the facts, drug consumption would not appear to be a major problem. The only official statistics provided by the Tunisian authorities concerning drug trafficking in Tunisia correspond to those for the first half of 2013. During this period, the Tunisian security forces seized 1 015 kg of hashish, 14 379 Parkizol or Temesta tablets, 4 418 ecstasy tablets and 137 ketamine sprays.

In the majority of cases the seizures took place on the street. The drugs were found hidden in transport vehicles or in cars. The most significant seizures took place in the Tunis, Kebili and Tozeur Governorates. The drug products enter Tunisia across the Tunisian-Algerian border and are destined either for local consumption or for onward transit to Europe, Libya and Egypt. Most of the time, the tablets containing the above-mentioned substances are seized at border crossing control points, in seaports, in shipments coming from Europe.

Officials in the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior estimate that there were 1 852 police operations involving drug trafficking in the first six months of 2013, involving a total of 3 441 people, 3 221 of whom have been imprisoned.

The development of new technology is making it ever easier for drug trafficking to spread across the region, and there are now potential new threats arising from the appearance on the scene of hybrid operators (part traffickers, part terrorists), coupled with a greater propensity for direct confrontation with the authorities. Back in December 2012, two men were arrested at the Algerian border, close to Jendouba, for possessing arms, explosives and drugs.

Drug trafficking escalated following the revolution, and this has intensified competition for control of trafficking routes in border areas.

5.1.2. Consumption

As mentioned in previous reports, cannabis is the most widely consumed drug in Tunisia, with the price of other drugs - such as cocaine - being far too high for local consumers.

There is no reliable information available concerning the consumption of other "designer" drugs although, according to the authorities of the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior (MINT), ecstasy and Subutex tablets are imported from Europe and Algeria for local consumption. Similarly, according to the MINT, fraudulent medical prescriptions are increasingly being used to obtain Parkizol and Temesta tablets, which are distributed illegally to consumers of those substances.

According to unofficial statistics from 2012, it is estimated that there are around 350 000 consumers of such products in Tunisia and that the majority of them are under 35 years of age. According to other - as yet unofficial - statistics from 2013, between 5 and 10 % of young people in Tunisia would appear to be cannabis resin users.

5.2. Legal and institutional framework

The country is currently going through a period of considerable regulatory and legislative change. However, up until the end of 2013, there had been no exemptions or amendments to Tunisia's legislation on drugs. Law No 92/52 of 18 May 1992 on drugs continues to apply.

It should be noted that a committee, made up of members of the National Constituent Assembly (ANC), representatives of civil society and lawyers, held a press conference on 22 March 2014 in which it called for the reform of Law No 92/52 of 18 May 1992, which is deemed excessively harsh. The committee aims to reduce penalties for cannabis use by abolishing imprisonment, for example.

In September 2013, according to unofficial sources, 8 000 prisoners out of 25 000 (nearly one-third of the prison population) were in prison for drug offences, mostly just for drug use. Around half of the 1 852 prisoners released during the amnesty of 20 March 2014 were being held for cannabis use.

The Tunisian authorities are considering creating a criminal investigation department within the National Guard, coming under the responsibility of the Directorate General for National Security, which would specialise in such areas as the fight against drugs, organised crime, economic and financial offences and legal proceedings.

5.3. International cooperation

5.3.1. Technical assistance

During 2013, no specific activities were carried out in conjunction with the Tunisian authorities concerning the fight against drugs and drug use.

5.3.2. Statistics

The Tunisian Ministry of the Interior recently changed its communication policy. It now provides information on operations involving the fight against drug trafficking. However, these communiqués are issued infrequently, in a relatively unsophisticated form and often quite late.

5.3.3. INTERPOL and UNODC

As regards international cooperation, it should be pointed out that in September 2013 the United Nations opened a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) field office in Tunis, attached to the regional office in Cairo.

Furthermore, at the 9th African Conference of Directors and Inspectors General of Police held on 10 February 2014 in Algiers, it was decided to create a regional body for the coordination of police activities (AFRIPOL), with the aim of fighting cross-border crime, cybercrime, arms trafficking, international terrorism and drug trafficking.

Through its internal security department, the French Embassy sent two experts in 2013 to give a one-week course for future Tunisian trainers in the fight against drug trafficking.

5.4. Recommendations

Given the lack of information on the internal situation, it is difficult to make recommendations. We do not know if the fight against drugs is being conducted effectively or not. However, one of the first recommendations is to promote transparency of information, so as to allow a full picture to be obtained of consumption, trafficking and production of drugs in Tunisia.

The lack of official information and the very limited nature of the data available would seem to indicate that there is no national strategy for combating the trafficking and consumption of drugs in Tunisia. This lack of strategy also shows that there is no administrative mechanism in place for collecting data and analysing information, both of which are prerequisites for a better understanding of the problem and for preventing and combating it.

With regard to international cooperation, the Tunisian authorities must be more cooperative when it comes to exchanging information, in a transparent fashion, with the security services of other countries so as to allow more effective coordination of the fight against drug trafficking, which - like terrorism - is a transnational phenomenon.

Encourage the participation of members of the Tunisian security forces in international seminars and provide technical assistance in this field.

Reform the legal framework by adopting a coherent, inter-sectoral approach which takes into account human rights and the effectiveness of the fight against drugs.
