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From: General Secretariat of the Council

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Subject: EU-Central Asia Action Plan on Drugs (2014-2020)

Delegations will find in annex the EU-Central Asia Action Plan on Drugs for the period 2014-2020 as endorsed at the EU-Central Asia Senior Officials' Dialogue on Drugs held on 12 November 2013.

I. Introduction

The EU and Central Asian countries give high importance to actions against illicit drugs and the drug-related problems. The EU and Central Asian countries have a shared interest in enhancing their cooperation to address common threats and security risks. Increased drug trafficking and drug abuse as well as not yet fully modernised law enforcement and judiciary mechanisms are identified as key security threats for Central Asian countries. ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan could lead to an increase in the illegal and uncontrolled flow of drugs. Major challenges include effective demand reduction policies and supply reduction and fight against illegal trafficking from Afghanistan in this regard and should be addressed. Modernisation of the judicial systems to deal with drugs issues is also essential for addressing more effectively the whole spectrum of those challenges.

The first Action Plan on drugs between the EU and Central Asian Republics was adopted in 2002 and the second EU-Central Asia Action Plan on Drugs followed for 2009-2013. The third Action Plan will cover the period 2014- 2020 .

This updated Action Plan reflects the priorities for cooperation endorsed in the third Progress Report on the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia Implementation Review and outline for Future Orientations, adopted on 25 June 2012, which calls for strengthening implementation of the EU-Central Asia Action Plan on Drugs.

The EU approach in external action in the field of drugs aims to further strengthen and support efforts of third countries to deal with the challenges to public health, safety and security. According to the EU Drugs Strategy for 2013-2020 adopted by the Council in December 2012, EU external relations in the field of drugs are based on the principles of shared responsibility, multilateralism, an integrated, balanced and evidence-based approach, the mainstreaming of development, respect for human rights and human dignity and respect for international conventions.

The EU proposes to jointly update the Action Plan 2007-2013 with Central Asian Republics for the upcoming period 2014-2020.

The EU-Central Asia Action Plan on Drugs 2014-2020 represents continuity of the EU policy and long term engagement with Central Asian partners to help further strengthen their national policies in drug demand reduction and in combating illegal drugs supply and related organised crime.

II. Overall assessment

The EU and Central Asian partners have a shared interest in enhancing cooperation to address common threats and new risks to security in Central Asia and the wider region, notably as regards developments in Afghanistan. The EU has committed itself to assisting Central Asian partners in facing these challenges in close coordination with international actors and to promote their security and development.

EU-Central Asia cooperation on drug related issues aims to develop a better understanding of the drug situation at national and regional level, to sharing EU experience and expertise and to promote informed evidence-based policy decisions. Further joint efforts should be undertaken for advancing “a balanced approach” to national drug strategies in all Central Asian countries; existing national drugs strategies and their implementing policies and practices could achieve additional results by implementing more goal-oriented measures, which would target specific settings and groups. Further modernisation of the judicial systems to deal with drugs issues is also essential for addressing more effectively the whole spectrum of the problem. In order to meet these challenges, modern approaches towards border management systems and cross border cooperation are required that would also contribute to the stability and economic development in each country and at regional level.

The previous Action Plans facilitated the introduction of:

- a regular monitoring system of drug situation,
- modern drug addiction treatment and rehabilitation methods within the public health system and the penitentiary system, and more generally
- awareness and prevention of drug addiction among the population.

With the support of EU assistance programmes and expertise, Central Asian countries have already started to adapt methodologies of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drugs Addiction (ECMDDA) , such as joint assessment missions, information maps, a National Action Plan for the Drug Information System, country situation summaries, drafting the national reports on a common basis. Joint efforts have been undertaken by Central Asian governments and the EU to promote visibility and use of these national reports.

It is also important to take into account the structure and functioning of each state, its perceptions and attitudes towards drug use and drugs users, and the possible impact on the development of modern treatment responses and harm reduction interventions, social and cultural differences between EU and Central Asian countries and their possible impact on prevention and dissemination policies.

Designing efficient policies and measures to obtain lasting results is a shared concern. The lack of government resources for drug demand reduction policy, notably in the area of treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts, and proper data collection, dissemination of data on the issue and effective supply reduction and fight against illegal trafficking from Afghanistan as well as the modernisation of the judicial systems in dealing with drugs issues are persisting challenges.

Capacity building is important but is frequently not sufficient to ensure institutional support and institution-building, especially where the social and public health dimension of the drugs issue does not receive similar level of attention as drug supply reduction. Access to relevant updated information is key to identify needs, to build better strategies and to develop appropriate responses, which in turn can provide useful information to feed the analysis of the evolution of needs and responses.

The EU is inviting Central Asian partners to pursue regular working contacts with a wide range of stakeholders – including civil society and counterpart institutions at national and regional levels with a view to contribute to a sustained improvement of national drug strategies and their impact.

The regional dimension of the Action Plan is quite important to share experiences and assess progress made in the sector; it gives incentives to all countries involved to proceed according to their identified needs and priorities. While there are some positive examples of bilateral cooperation, there continues to be a lack of sufficient cross-border and regional cooperation and communication. In general terms, regional cooperation remains weak.

There is scope for improving cooperation and coordination between international organisations and donors to combine resources and work together with Central Asian partners to reach common measurable targets .

It should be recognised that international partners and the donor community have not yet fully succeeded in supporting the Central Asian governments in establishing self-sufficient, sustainable, efficient and effective institutions to tackle the drug problem efficiently. The updated EU CA Action Plan 2014-2020 aims at supporting Central Asian partners in responding to the changing political and security context in the fight against drugs and in supporting their reform efforts. The principles for cooperation as adopted in the previous Action Plans on Drugs remain valid:

1. ownership: actions should be integrated into the partner countries' own strategies;
2. coordinated approach: led by Central Asian countries, together with donors and implementing agencies, with a view to ensuring coherence and complementarity;
3. long term perspective: critical for the successful institution-building, it aims at promoting policy and organisational reforms, including sharing of the EU experience and transfer of best practices;
4. balanced approach towards drug policy;
5. coherence with regional approach, harmonisation of procedures and cross-country cooperation;

6. sustainability: increasing the ability of Central Asian countries to bear the maintenance costs of the structures and means established or received within the programmes;
7. regional inclusiveness: regional cooperation will be strengthened by associating Afghanistan, preferably through the use of regional mechanisms.

III. Future orientations

Improving the impact of EU action

The adoption of the EU-Central Asia Action Plan on Drugs (2009-2013) has led to a significant intensification of cooperation with Central Asia partners. The importance of the co-operation between the EU and the Central Asian countries in the areas covered by the Action Plan was underlined in the 3rd progress report of the EU Strategy for an Enhanced Partnership with the countries of Central Asia adopted in June 2012. The implementation of the EU-Central Asian Action Plan on Drugs has been a common endeavour of the EU institutions together with Member States, aiming at enhancing synergies and complementarities while avoiding overlap.

EU cooperation is guided by the EU Strategy on Drugs which was revised in December 2012 for the upcoming period 2013-2020, and is based on international law, the relevant UN Conventions which provide the international legal framework for addressing the illicit drugs phenomena and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see annex).

At a time when the countries of the region are addressing the drug issues with increasing determination, there is scope for adjusting EU actions to achieve greater results, focusing efforts in areas where the EU and EU Member States can provide specific value added in supporting national policies in this domain. With the enhanced engagement of EU Member States with Central Asian partners to implement cooperation measures, the EU aims at improving its contribution to partners' national efforts. Yet more needs to be done in this area to draw directly on EU expertise and the diverse concrete experiences of EU Member States to underpin EU actions in the region.

Objectives

The EU-Central Asia Action Plan on Drugs 2014-2020 provides the overall political framework for EU cooperation with the Central Asian partners in the area of drugs which aims to protect and improve the well-being of society and of the individual, to protect public health, to offer a high level of security for the general public and to take a balanced, integrated and evidence-based approach to the drug phenomena in line with recently adopted EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020.

In this respect it is important to underline the key priorities:

- To achieve a measurable reduction in the demand for drugs and consequent drug abuse-related health and social risks and harms as well as effective countering of the drug trafficking;
- To contribute to a disruption of the illicit drugs market and a measurable reduction of the availability of illicit drugs;
- To contribute to a better dissemination of monitoring, research and evaluation results and a better understanding of all aspects of the drugs phenomenon and of the impact of interventions in order to provide sound and comprehensive evidence-base for policies and actions;
- To encourage coordination through active discourse and analysis of developments and challenges in the field of drugs at EU and international level;
- To further strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the EU and third countries and international organisations on drug issues.

The EU-Central Asian Action Plan sets the inclusive policy cooperation framework between the EU and the Central Asian partners to jointly address the drugs problem through a balanced policy approach in the most efficient way, notably with the development of national drug monitoring systems and efficient drug demand reduction policies and prevention systems. It also aims to facilitate the gradual adoption of EU and international good practices on drug policies in the region/ regional policy and thereby to contribute to the reduction of drug-related problems in Central Asian countries and wider region.

The Action Plan also aims to enhance coordination in the implementation of EU bilateral and regional assistance programmes, as well as regional initiatives and to facilitate regional cooperation between Central Asian countries and neighbouring region as well as with other donors and specialised organisations.

Policy fields and cross-cutting issues: key actions

The updated EU-Central Asia Action Plan 2014-2020 covers two main policy fields and two cross-cutting issues in coherence with the EU Drugs Strategy:

- Drug Demand Reduction;
- Information, Research and Evaluation of drug policies;
- Drug Supply Reduction;
- Wider Regional Cooperation.

The EU-Central Asia Action Plan highlights policy areas where EU cooperation can be envisaged with specific value added and result-oriented, building up on its own experience, and the prospects provided by existing EU and EU Member States cooperation programmes in the area of combating drugs, including CADAP, BOMCA and the Heroine Route programme, financed by the Development Cooperation Instrument and the Instrument for Stability.

IV. Specific Objectives

1. Drug demand reduction

The policy framework for the drug demand reduction objectives draw from lessons learned and a detailed assessment of the implementation of the EU Strategy on Drugs which has led to the definition of priority actions for the period 2013-2020. The experience of the EU candidate countries and the European Neighborhood Eastern countries is also relevant in this context.

The EU-Central Asia Action Plan for 2014-2020 proposes to adopt a similar integrated and plural approach to drug demand reduction. The main focus is to promote the comprehensive balanced national drug strategy concept as developed by the EU and assist Central Asian governments in updating existing policies and draft comprehensive National Drugs Strategies and drug related legislation.

These National Drugs Strategies will aim to incorporate the latest developments and achievements in the field of drug demand reduction in the EU and its Member States and also best international practices into the following specific objectives:

- to contribute to the reduction in the use of illicit drugs through comprehensive approaches: consider drug dependence as a treatable condition, rather than a lifestyle choice; and thereby ensure the interaction of drug policies with related ones (social affairs, education, health, development, justice etc.);
- to strengthen evidence-based policies: prevention and treatment should be based on the latest available information, facts on actual patterns, quality, types of drugs used; consideration should also be paid to new challenges (developing processing data mechanisms to draw timely conclusions of and swiftly address new trends, e.g. emergence of new psychoactive substances and misuse of prescribed controlled medications);
- to provide improved availability, coverage and accessibility of effective drug treatment and its combination with rehabilitation and reintegration. Consider developing a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary based treatment system offering a wide range of integrated pharmacological (such as detoxification and opioid agonist and antagonist maintenance) and psychosocial (such as counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy and social support) interventions, based on scientific evidence focused on the process of rehabilitation, recovery and social reintegration;

- to enhance cooperation internally and externally with various stakeholders to improve the quality of drug demand reduction measures (prevention, harm reduction, treatment, rehabilitation, reintegration), based on scientific evidence and best practices;
- to target in particular vulnerable and marginalized groups (young, detainees, migrants etc.) in drug use-specific settings (prisons, workplace etc.) and avoid experimental and recreational drug use becoming problem use;
- to strengthen efforts aimed at reducing the adverse consequences of drug abuse for individuals and society as a whole, taking into consideration not only the prevention of related infectious diseases, such as HIV, hepatitis B and C and tuberculosis, but also all other health consequences, such as overdose, workplace and traffic accidents, somatic and psychiatric disorders and social consequences, such as family problems, the effects of drug markets in communities and crime.

Key actions include:

- establishing a permanent working group comprising the representatives from Central Asian countries, which will be introduced to models of balanced drug strategies, action plans and legislation in the field of drug demand and harm reduction;
- a stock-taking exercise of the current state of national strategies, action plans and national legislation on drugs;
- providing assistance in drafting and amending National Strategies and related legislation in the field of drugs, notably concerning drug demand reduction;
- providing assistance in drafting and amending National Strategies and related legislation in the field of drugs, including exchange of best practices and quality standards in prevention, detection, risk and harm reduction , social reintegration and recovery;
- Drug Demand Reduction Action Plans and Programmes adopted by governments with appropriate resources based on a comprehensive approach to drug abuse reduction, notably the “Principles of Drug Dependence Treatment” from UNODC and WHO (2009), UNODC/WHO “Joint Programme on Drug Dependence Treatment and Care” from 2009 and the UNODC “Treatment Quality Standards” (2013), applied to Central Asia;

- a scientific basis for Drug Demand Reduction Programmes that should include preconditions of early intervention, treatment of addiction and rehabilitation;
- establishing an official network of Professionals involved in the implementation of Drug Demand Reduction and providing adequate training in line with the EU practices to those officials;
- drug addict treatment programme or comparable treatments such as opiate treatment, with appropriate follow up for social and economic reintegration support to ensure sustainable recovery;
- strengthening programmes for vulnerable groups, including scaling up of Drug Demand Reduction measures in detention settings.

2. Information, research, monitoring and evaluation of drug drug policies

The main objective in the field of information, research, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies is to contribute to a better understanding of all aspects of the drugs phenomenon.

The EU- Central Asia Action Plan 2014-2020 looks for ways to use efficiently the National Reports on Drugs, reviewed on a scientific basis by EU experts and to identify the areas where the assistance of international partners is most needed. The role of the EU, notably CADAP experts in the validation process of the National Reports is seen as key for the assessment of the quality of the reports.

The support of the National Focal Points is a key element for ensuring reliability of data. The support to those institutions is maintained in the current Action Plan.

The new EU-Central Asia Action Plan focuses on following relevant highlights:

- devise accurate pictures of the drugs situation – e.g. number of people using drugs, main drugs used, drug related deaths, number of users contracting drug related diseases, drug seizures, availability of drugs, legislative tools and measures to tackle drugs;

- identify emerging behavioral changes and trends that pose risks at an early stage and enhance capacity to assess and respond;
- share data and best practices for the planning and organisation of interventions;
- provide decision-makers with the evidence based information needed for the design of national and regional drugs strategies and their evaluation;
- facilitate independent evaluation, analysis and research into the main drivers and consequences of drug use and dependence, social costs and the impact of policy responses to them.

Key actions include:

- effective use of information in policy making;
- enhanced knowledge infrastructure for data collection and monitoring of drug situation, and research /evaluation of responses, notably key indicators in drug demand reduction;
- strengthened work quality of national drug information units and establishing the network of National Focal Points in all Central Asian countries;
- setting up and supporting National Focal Points by further institutionalising and capacity building of those mechanisms;
- developing a multi-annual programme on the objectives and tasks of the National Focal Points;
- developing Data Collection Plan based on EMCDDA five key indicators;
- Supporting the creation of stronger linkages between government authorities and alternative data providers at the national level;
- supporting the exchange of information and best practices between National Focal Points or comparable institutions at the regional level; establishing a monitoring network for Central Asia comparable with the REITOX network (European information network on drugs and drug addiction);

- participation on an ad hoc basis of operational National Focal Points that meets minimum scientific and technical requirements, in the EMCDDA's Reitox Week, engaging them in the Extended Reitox Network, which includes EU Member States, Candidate, Potential Candidate and Neighbouring countries.

3. Drug supply reduction

In the field of drug supply reduction, the objective of the Action Plan is to ensure the balanced policy approach to the drugs problem, targeting with equal vigour the demand for and the supply of drugs. Drug supply reduction policies should support efficient law enforcement mechanisms and justice system through better coordination and improved data collection and management of intelligence-driven law enforcement, arrest referral schemes and non-coercive alternatives to imprisonment, such as education and reinsertion measures.

The new EU-Central Asia Action Plan contains the following:

- a measurable reduction in the availability of illicit drugs through the disruption of illicit drug trafficking and related organised crime;
- improving the effectiveness of the legal framework for dealing with drugs, ensuring a consistent approach to offenders;
- strengthening the capacity of and cooperation between relevant law enforcement agencies, including best practices, cross border information exchange and application of effective integrated border management methods;
- the dismantling of organised crime with efficient use of the criminal justice system, effective intelligence-led law enforcement and increased intelligence sharing.

Key actions include:

- reinforcing policy evaluation and analysis for understanding drug markets and related crime, focusing on large scale, organised cross border drug related crime to improve effectiveness of law enforcement responses;

- balance should be kept between actions respectively of the border related agencies and cross border security actions and of the law enforcement mechanisms and justice system, so as to ensure effective sustained results, in particular concerning criminal proceeds, corruption, money laundering;
- ensuring an efficient legal framework and capacity building, with modernisation of criminal justice system , ensuring proportionality while encouraging drug demand reduction policies such as arrest referral and appropriate alternative to coercive sanctions for drug abusing offenders;
- identifying actions for border related agencies and cross border security to implement principles of Integrated Border Management , notably National Integrated Border Management Strategies and Action Plans, notably through BOMCA;
- facilitating cooperation among border related agencies notably for improving functioning of Border control regimes, including as regards the chemical precursors trade;
- improving of capacity for efficient cross border measures at border crossing points (sea, air, land) inter alia joint search for drugs and effective risk analysis methods;
- providing training on border management to relevant personnel via the twinning of relevant Central Asian educational institutions with European Institutions;
- enhancing dialogue between the heads of law enforcement agencies of Central Asian countries, including for operational co-operation against drug trafficking in particular along the Northern Route;
- increasing regional and trans-regional law enforcement cooperation and coordination in the fight against organised crime and trafficking activities in the region, including with destination countries in the EU , and to the extent possible, with relevant EU agencies.

4. Wider regional cooperation

Much closer wider regional cooperation is required to fight all aspect of the drugs phenomena. The objective of the EU Drugs Strategy in the field of international cooperation is to further strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the EU and third countries and international organisations on drug issues in a comprehensive and balanced manner. The EU external relations in the field of drugs are based on the principles of shared responsibility, multilateralism, an integrated, balanced and evidence-based approach, the mainstreaming of development, respect for human rights and human dignity and respect for international conventions.

The EU –Central Asia Action Plan seeks to address the shared challenges related to drugs, such as increased drug use and related harms and drug trafficking. Promoting dialogue and regional cooperation to jointly combat those threats is therefore an important goal for the EU. A dynamic regional policy based on deepening bilateral political dialogue between the five Central Asian capitals, on fighting drug phenomena could contribute substantially to the stabilization in Central Asia and wider region.

In this regard the EU invites Central Asian countries to support the “Heart of Asia” process initiated at the Istanbul conference in November 2011 which aims to promote regional political and economic co-operation between Afghanistan and its neighbours.

Key actions include:

- ensuring sustained policy dialogue and information sharing on policies, aims and initiatives at regional and wider level, including Afghanistan, and sharing of EU best practices on both demand and supply reduction;
- building on the positive steps already taken to increase cross-border training and capacity building activities in areas covered by the Action Plan;
- strengthening regional mechanisms for the effective use of instruments and methods provided in judicial and law enforcement cooperation (e.g. joint investigation, risk profiling, operations of customs services and interior bodies), including through use of regional platforms;

- strengthening regional capacities for the implementation of integrated border management principles and improved cross-border cooperation and law enforcement to counter illicit drugs trade and illegal migration;
- increasing exchange of intelligence information and promoting cooperation, between law enforcement agencies in the EU and Central Asia, including CARICC (Central Asia Regional Information Center) and bilateral cooperation, and also exploring opportunities for organisation of joint operations between the Central Asian drug law enforcement agencies and the relevant agencies of Afghanistan;
- exploring opportunities for joint actions with the international actors, including OSCE, UN and others on the ground in facilitating joint trainings and other activities, involving representatives from Central Asia and Afghanistan.
- developing synergies between assistance programmes for Central Asia with those for Afghanistan and ensuring improved coordination of EU programmes working on both sides of Central Asian and Afghan borders;
- enhancing dialogue and regional coordination in the field of border management among Central Asian states , including law enforcement agencies, in coordination with relevant regional and international stakeholders, including by making use of the regional initiatives, such as Central Asia Border Security Initiative and Heart of Asia Initiative with Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- building on the positive steps already taken in the context of CADAP, the following programme -CADAP 6- should contribute to an enhanced coordination and cooperation in the field of drug demand reduction activities.

5. Conclusions

Central Asian Partners have expressed their commitment to achieve the goals of the Action Plan, to support its implementation and to actively participate in key actions mentioned in the Action Plan, with the necessary human, administrative , financial and other resources so as to forge a closer partnership with the EU.

The monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan will be done through a regular Dialogue on Drugs among the EU and Central Asian countries, supported by an expert level working group on drug demand policies to discuss progress achieved.

The assistance programmes of the European Commission and the EU Member States will contribute to, and be coordinated with the actions under this Action Plan. The coordination of planned activities with other donors in the region is also essential.

The progress on implementation of the Action Plan on drugs 2014-2020 should be reviewed mid-term at an EU-Central Asia High Level Meeting in 2017.

Annex :

Main references guiding EU - Central Asia cooperation to address the drug problem, as applicable and in conformity with commitments of each Central Asian partner:

- the Partnership and Co-operation Agreements between the European Union and States of Central Asia;
- the EU-Central Asia Strategy for a New Partnership, adopted in 2007;
- the Progress Report on the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia Implementation Review and outline for Future Orientations adopted by the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 25 June 2012;
- the principles adopted at the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs of June 1998, including shared responsibility, as well as the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem adopted by the high-level segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on 12 March 2009;
- the Dublin Declaration on Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia of February 2004;
- the Joint Declaration adopted by the participants at EU-Central Asia Ministerial Forum on Security Challenges in Paris on 18 September 2008;
- the Partnership Declaration of the Ministerial Conference on Border management and Drug Control in Dushanbe, 21-22 October 2008;
- European Pact to Combat international drug trafficking – disrupting cocaine and heroin routes adopted the European Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting on 3 June 2010;
- Final declaration of Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan adopted at the Istanbul Conference for Afghanistan on 2 November 2011;
- Vienna Declaration of the Third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact Partners on Combating Illicit Traffic in Opiates Originating in Afghanistan on 16 February 2012;

- Ministerial Declaration of Central Asia Border Security Initiative Conference on 16-17 April 2012 in Vienna;
 - the national anti-drug strategies adopted by the Central Asian Republics;
 - the EU Council Recommendation on the prevention and reduction of health-related harm associated with drug dependence;
 - the European Union Drug Strategy 2013-2020 and the EU Drugs Action Plan for 2013-2016.
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