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SUMMARY

Recent trends have shown that opium production in Afghanistan is moving from northern and central parts to southern areas. The growth of opium production is fueled by the further deterioration of the security situation intensified by clashes between the Taliban and Afghan security forces. Emergence of ISIS in northern regions of the country, and the growing number of attacks in Kabul are also degrading instability.

Central and southern regions contribute for 55% of total Afghanistan's opium output. Such situation favors the growth of precursors trafficking from India and Pakistan logistics-wise as well as creates a precondition for a shift of trafficking towards Caucasus, Balkans, and South Asia. Use of a so-called Caucasian route, which bypasses itinerary of the Balkan route and goes through Caucasian countries and Caspian Sea, is becoming more convenient and cost-effective.

Growth of opium production might stimulate trafficking of precursors from China. China's developed chemical industry and geographical closeness to can potentially supply precursors for production of illegal narcotics in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

UNODC reported that Afghanistan saw 10% growth in opium cultivation with estimated 201,000 ha in 2015-2016. In northern regions of the country, the increase in cultivation is accounted to the growing number of farmers engaged in poppy cultivation. The estimated opium production potential reached 4,800 tons in 2016 which was 43% growth compared to 2015. The rise is also related to receiving of a higher opium yield per hectare.

More than 61.9 tons of illegal narcotics were seized in Central Asian countries in 2017 which is slightly less than in 2016 when the amount was 62 tons. Cannabis group of narcotics occupied a significant portion in the total volume of drugs seized in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In contrast, opiates comprised the major amount from total seizures but their ratio considerably decreased in 2017. As for seizures of heroin in 2017, they decreased in all countries except Tajikistan compared to 2016. Such drop in seizures might indicate that drug traffickers use routes which bypass the region. Criminal groups might be using the Balkan route more often for smuggling heroin to Russia and Europe. This can be evidenced by the growth in seized heroin in Azerbaijan from 80 kg to 1,186 kg in 2015-2016.

One of the pressing issues related to narcotics' smuggling is the corruption of officials. Profiting from drug trafficking becomes attractive as customs and border officials have low wages. This also exposes the problem of ethical and professional conduct which should be properly regulated. The issues require the governments to act on political, economic, administrative, and legal dimensions.

Issues of smuggling and controlling new psychoactive substances require more immediate attention in the form of changes in legislation along with the development of new drug-counteracting approaches by the law enforcement. Difficulty of tracking precursors' trafficking on the map accounted to insufficient transparency and congruity of data remains as one of the most challenging aspects of NPS phenomenon.

The regional counter-narcotics action lacks coordination and informed decisions based on unified and reliable data on drugs. At the current stage, the only platform for sharing data, intelligence, and analysis, which fills an information gap on drug-related issues and shares relatively sufficient information on the region and international donors, is CARICC (Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center for Combating Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Their Precursors). The center appointed a new director from Russia who will hopefully reinvigorate work and activities of the center.

It is crucial to have access to reliable, up-to-date, and complimentary data on consumption, seizures, price, purity, and other aspects of illicit narcotics from various sources which work with supply and demand reduction issues in the region for making a fair assessment of the drug situation and getting better understanding of the problems. Such data can be used for detecting the most vulnerable areas and then efficiently channel funding and resources to tackle existing problems.

Insufficient foresight analysis is considered to be a weakness for the counter-narcotics action as it prevents law enforcement agencies from timely responding to quick changes in illegal trafficking patterns. It is important to practice preventive analysis of future trends to remedy this drawback. Law enforcement officials can become more flexible and efficient in reply to new drug-related challenges by adopting a strategic approach to issues.

As for money-laundering of drug proceeds, Central Asian countries lack capacity in financial intelligence and therefore struggle to implement efficient anti-money laundering activities. The governments mainly rely on foreign assistance which is channeled to militarization of the counter-narcotics field and reinforcement of the political regimes. Financial intelligence capacity remains weak, and more priority is given to operational activities in the expense of demand reduction programs.

Regional economic integration and development of road and railroad infrastructure contribute to the development of trade but at the same time creates opportunities for smuggling. Additional security risks emerge due to easing of border crossing and customs' requirements. Countries struggle to monitor containers on the border due to their large volumes and outdated equipment.

The latest developments in the region was marked by a seizure of 18 kg of liquid heroine in Kyrgyzstan in March 2018. The narcotic was shipped in a cargo coming from Pakistan, and the final destination was Canada¹.

¹ Trafficking 'Tears of Allah' heroin in juice bottles from Afghanistan to Canada through Kyrgyzstan foiled. (2018, March 20). AKIpress. Retrieved April 29, 2018, <https://akipress.com/news:603790/>

1. PROGRESS OF WORK IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN MINI-DUBLIN GROUP

1.1 Mini-Dublin Group Meetings in 2017

The following MDG meetings were organized in 2017:

- *Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.* The first regular MDG meeting on Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was organized in Bishkek (KG) on March 23rd. The second meeting took place on 24th of November in Astana (KZ).
- *Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.* Tashkent (UZ) hosted the first regular MDG meeting on Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on June 7th. The second meeting was on 6th of December in Tashkent (UZ).
- *Turkmenistan.* The first regular MDG Meeting on Turkmenistan was held in Ashgabat (TKM) on June 14th. The second meeting was organized on November 30th.

1.2 Overview of the regional situation regarding illicit narcotics production

Central Asia has long been considered as a transit territory for an increasing amount of Afghan opiates trafficked to the major consumer markets in Russia, Europe, and the USA. UNODC reports that cultivation of the opium and production of the heroin and other drugs in the region is on a small scale, with more than 99% of the opiates originating in Afghanistan². Current data does not suggest evidence of production facilities for processing opium into heroin and other drugs in Central Asia. The security and drug situation in the region is affected by instability in neighboring Afghanistan which is territorially considered as a part of South Asia. According to estimates, there was a capability to produce 4,800 tons of opium in the Islamic republic in 2016, which comprised 43% increase compared to 2015³. Opiates are either processed on Afghanistan's territory or refined elsewhere before being transited via neighboring countries.

² Illicit Drug Trends in Central Asia. (2008, April). *UNODC ROCA. The Paris Pact Initiative*. Retrieved September 14, 2017, https://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Trends_Central%20Asia-final.pdf, p.6.

³ Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016: Cultivation and Production. (2016, December). *UNODC. Ministry of Counter Narcotics of Afghanistan*. Retrieved September 11, 2017, <https://www.unodc.org/documents/press/releases/AfghanistanOpiumSurvey2016.pdf>, p.33.

Although major heroin production centers are believed to be in Afghanistan, the country lacks supplies of precursors which are imported. Weak border control management and insufficient law enforcement capabilities open space for smuggling of precursors⁴. Large volumes of illicit chemicals are smuggled to Afghanistan and neighboring countries where drug laboratories purify opium to obtain heroin and morphine⁵. However, some Afghan sources associated the drop in the volume of the precursors seized in Afghanistan with the relocation of processing laboratories to Pakistan⁶.

It is supposed that illicit narcotics are trafficked from Afghanistan mainly through three transit routes, namely the northern route passing via Central Asia and Russia, the western or Balkan route going through Iran, Turkey, and the EU, and the southern direction which goes via Pakistan to Gulf countries and further⁷. With the decline in the volume of illicit drugs trafficked through Central Asia in recent years, noted in UNODC World Drug Report 2014, the Balkan and Caucasian passages are gaining new significance for smuggling narcotics. As for Caucasian route, it passes through territories of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, and then connects to the Balkan route in Europe. Caucasian region and Iran have seen large seizures of heroin since 2014. For instance, around 4 tons of heroin were seized in the aforementioned countries in 2016⁸.

⁴ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2017, March). United States Department of State. Retrieved September 2, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/268025.pdf> , p.73.

⁵ Ibid, p.92.

⁶ Ibid, p.73.

⁷ Illicit Drug Trends in Afghanistan.(2008, June).UNODC Country Office for Afghanistan. The Paris Pact Initiative. Retrieved September 9, 2017, http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Opium_Surveys/Illicit_Drug_Trends_Report_Afg_13_June_2008.pdf, p.27.

⁸ Information Bulletin on Drug Related Situation in the Central Asian Region. (2016). Fan va Texnologiya, p.10.

It is estimated that the annual amount of Afghan opium drugs transited via Balkan and Caucasian routes reaches about 170 metric tons (MT)⁹. Large volumes of opiates originated in Afghanistan and seized in Azerbaijan in 2016 indicate that Caucasian pass has gained new importance on the map of heroin trafficking¹⁰. For instance, 141 kg of heroin destined to Azerbaijan were seized by border guards on the Azerbaijani-Iranian border¹¹. In contrast to Caucasus, the number of seizures in CARICC member-states except Tajikistan (CA states, Azerbaijan, and Russia) generally decreased by 60.7% in 2017 and constituted 1,067 kg¹².

As for cannabis, it is widely cultivated in the region as its production is easy and it is regarded as a lucrative cash crop¹³. Cannabis is mostly produced for local markets, and a smaller amount is trafficked to Europe and Russia¹⁴. The largest producer of cannabis is Kazakhstan with estimated 138,000 ha of wild cannabis cultivated in Zhambyl region. Such amount can be used for production of 100,000 MT of marijuana or almost 3,500 MT of hashish¹⁵.

Trafficking of synthetic drugs and NPS is an emerging trend in the region. Increase of purchasing power in the countries might stimulate wider use of such drugs. Similar trend was evidenced in Russia, economic growth and emergence of the middle class spiked the demand for illegal synthetic substances. Growth of NPS and synthetic narcotics' consumption might eventually foster their production. The region has a potential to become a major source of illicit substances due to vast availability of ephedra growing in wild across the area.

⁹ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2016, March). United States Department of State. Retrieved September 2, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2016/vol1/index.htm>, p.280.

¹⁰ V Azerbayjane peresekli vvoz 141 kg geroina. (2016, October 14). RIA Novosti. Retrieved September 2, 2017, <https://ria.ru/world/20160815/1474344495.html>.

¹¹ Citizen of Tajikistan, who was detained in Azerbaijan with 141 kg of heroin, is a member of the IRPT. (2016, October 17). Retrieved September 4, 2017, <http://www.news.tj/en/news/citizen-tajikistan-who-was-detained-azerbaijan-141-kg-heroin-member-irpt>.

¹² CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center.No.180, p.3.

¹³ Moradi, S., Moradi, H. (2013).Drug Trafficking from Northern Afghanistan and Effect of States Cooperation. Bull. Env. Pharmacol. Life Sci., 2 (12), 130-137, p.132.

¹⁴ Illicit Drug Trends in Central Asia (2008, April), p.7.

¹⁵ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2017, March). United States Department of State. Retrieved September 14, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/268025.pdf>, p.201.

The plant contains ephedrine which is a precursor of methamphetamine. UNODC estimates that area of the wild ephedra amounts 138,117 ha, with 88,299 ha in Kazakhstan, 46,433 ha in Kyrgyzstan, and 3,484 ha in Tajikistan, respectively¹⁶.

The development of road and railroad infrastructure and liberalization of trade in the region increase the volume of cross-border exchange and trade. China's 'One Belt One Road' initiative focusing on regional connectivity and economic development also contributes to rapprochement and opening up in the region. Expansion of the trade and freedom of movement challenge governments' abilities to detect and intercept smugglers. Intensive flows of cargo and people going in different directions require more capabilities from border and customs officials and use of modern equipment. If such capabilities do not match needs, interception efforts will not be efficient. Countries attracted by potential opportunities and benefits of infrastructural development might face other border security and trafficking risks.

To sum up, the cultivation of opium and production of illegal opioids is confined in the region as the largest amount of the drugs comes from Afghanistan where the lack of institutional control, poverty, and corruption fuel the drug-dependent economy. In contrast, cannabis and ephedra widely grow in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and lesser in Tajikistan. Central Asia's location and exposure to corruption boost the transit of Afghan narcotics.

¹⁶ Illicit Drug Trends in Central Asia (2008, April), p.29.

1.3 National situation regarding illicit drugs, money laundering, and precursor control

1.3.1 Kazakhstan

a. Illicit narcotics production

Kazakhstan's non-cannabis narcotics are mainly imported from neighboring and other countries¹⁷. The republic has large illegal production of marijuana for internal use and CIS market. Its southern regions are known for cultivation of opium poppy in small amounts and growing of ephedra¹⁸. The latest statistics revealed that illegal cultivation of narcotic plants significantly increased from 97,610 bushes in 2016 to 909,128 bushes in 2017¹⁹.

Growing demand has been driving cultivation of cannabis and import of synthetic narcotics. The country is threatened by the spread of synthetic narcotics produced locally and coming from China, Russia, and the EU. Data for 2017 showed that the amount of seized synthetic narcotics increased from 165 kg to 22 tons within seven years²⁰.

Kazakhstan's law enforcement seized about 20-25 tons of drugs in Zhambyl region in 2016²¹. According to estimates, 140,000 ha of wild marijuana is grown in Shu Valley. Such amount can be potentially used for yielding 100,000 MT of marijuana or almost 3,500 MT of hashish²². Another region with favorable climate for growing cannabis is Kyzylorda region. It draws attention of the organized crime for its favorable climate for cultivation of a certain type of marijuana²³.

¹⁷ Assessment Report on the State of Play of Drug Policy Making in Central Asia. CADAP 6 Policy Component (C1). (2017, March). *Trimbos Institute*. Retrieved September 11, 2017, <https://assets.trimbos.nl/docs/438fe9f3-47f5-4b6e-938f-b869a47da0dd.pdf>, p.13

¹⁸ The World Factbook: Illicit Drugs. (n.d.). *Central Intelligence Agency*. Retrieved September 15, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2086.html>.

¹⁹ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

²⁰ Assessment Report on the State of Play of Drug Policy Making in Central Asia. (2017, March), p.13

²¹ Information Bulletin on Drug Related Situation in the Central Asian Region. (2016), p.11.

²² International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (March 2016), p.201.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.12.

The law enforcement discovered plantations with 459 cannabis bushes and more than 172 kg of cannabis in August 2017²⁴.

b. Consumption

The latest statistics on drug consumption recorded 24,870 officially registered abusers in 2017²⁵. The number decreased by 2,399 persons compared to 2016²⁶.

c. Trafficking

A geographical position of Kazakhstan makes it a significant country on the way of the northern route for transit of narcotics coming from Afghanistan. Traffickers use sea and air communication and railroad and road transport. A new railway crossing Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran opens possibilities for drug smuggling. However, recent developments point at the reduction of the trafficking levels. Concentration of opium production in southern Afghanistan led to the change of trafficking directions which resulted in limited availability of heroin and six-fold increase in prices in Kazakhstan, according to UNODC²⁷. The estimated street-price of heroin reached \$18,000-\$20,000 USD per a kilogram in 2016. The law enforcement of Kazakhstan accounted such jump in prices for the use of alternative routes passing through Southern Asia and Balkans²⁸.

In 2017 the Kazakh law enforcement authorities registered 3,340 drug crimes and seized 40,6 tons of narcotics of which 0.6% were opium drugs and 85.9% were cannabis narcotics²⁹. Regarding seizures, the volume of seized heroin dropped, whereas the amount of recovered opium, hashish, and marijuana rose noticeably.

²⁴ VMVDRK Rasskazali o Dostidzheniyah v Borbe s Narkobiznesom.(2017, September 8). *365 INFO.KZ*. Retrieved September 15, 2017, <https://365info.kz/2017/09/v-mvd-rk-rasskazali-o-dostizheniyah-v-borbe-s-narkobiznesom>.

²⁵ Fact Sheet: Kazakhstan (Republic of). (2017, March). *UNODC.Paris Pact Initiative*. Retrieved September 16, 2017, <https://www.paris-pact.net/upload/2d85ee0fd051bd4c9cf01936fb4c1d6e.pdf>, p.9.

²⁶ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*.No.180, p.5.

²⁷ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2017, March). Retrieved September 16, 2017, p.201.

²⁸ Ibid, p.199.

²⁹ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*.No.180, pp.2-3.

The ratio of seized heroin decreased from 196 kg 2016 to 146 kg in 2017³⁰. However, the amount of seized opium considerably rose from 2 kg to 95 kg, the ration of hashish grew from 431 kg to 790 kg, and the volume of marijuana grew from 29,315 kg to 34,107 kg in the same timeframe³¹.

d. Money laundering

Money laundering often occurs in the form of tax evasion, abuses of public office, and fraudulent financial activities with involvement of shell companies and off-shore banking accounts abroad³². The country lacks unified money laundering strategy and coordinated financial investigations that further worsen the situation³³. Smuggling of illegal goods and forged invoicing of exports and imports are widely practiced activities. For example, Kazakh prosecutors worked with 54 money-laundering or related cases in a court in 2016³⁴.

While Kazakhstan has the most sophisticated financial and economic systems in the region, endemic corruption, organized crime, and large shadow economy make them vulnerable to economic crimes and terrorist finance activities. It is challenging to track and investigate cases related to revenue from narcotics as payments are often made by using informal payment systems like hawala, electronic wallets, bitcoin, and other services.

Kazakhstan's institutional capacity to detect, investigate, and prosecute money laundering cases is being limited by separation of the duties between law enforcement agencies. For instance, the Financial Police being the only authority permitted to investigate money laundering cases works just with economic and corruption crimes. As for the Ministry of Interior, it is empowered to interrogate only predicate crimes, but cannot investigate money laundering incidents³⁵.

³⁰ Ibid., p.6.

³¹ Ibid.

³² International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2015, March). Retrieved September 16, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2015/vol2/index.htm>, p.237.

³³ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2017, March). Retrieved September 16, 2017, p.114.

³⁴ Ibid., p.115.

³⁵ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2011, May). *United States Department of State*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/164239.pdf>, p.189.

Fraud and stealing account for roughly 50% of reported and investigated money laundering cases according to the Kazakhstan's Financial Police³⁶. In one of the cases involving laundering of tax fraud proceeds, criminals showed false export amount to receive VAT returns and tried to transfer the fraudulent returns to Hong Kong. The World Bank report says that VAT-related fraud activities are widespread in the country³⁷.

Wide-spread corruption is one of the major obstacles for the development of the open-market economy in Kazakhstan. Recent surveys of the business environment and enterprise performance indicated that 34% out of all companies in Kazakhstan are expected to make unofficial payments to get work done³⁸.

e. Precursor control

Precursors for production of illegal narcotics in Afghanistan and Central Asian republics can potentially be supplied from China as it has developed chemical industry. At the moment, information on trafficking of Chinese precursors to the region is scarce. It is supposed that a large amount of precursors pass through Kazakh-Chinese border, especially via Dostuk, Khorgos, and Kolzhat border outposts³⁹. In addition, UNODC reports that the smuggling of precursors through Dostuk and Khorgos border points is feasible and high-risk⁴⁰.

Law enforcement professionals do not regard precursor control as a priority and doubt any possibility of threat from chemicals smuggled from China⁴¹. Also, officials' level of preparation and knowledge on precursors is not appropriate despite of training support provided by the government and UNODC⁴².

³⁶ Todorokiet, E., Celik, K., & Kholmatov, M. (2011, July). Alternative remittance systems in Kazakhstan. *The World Bank*. Retrieved September 12, 2017, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/FINANCIALSECTOR/Resources/ARS-July2012\(English\).pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/FINANCIALSECTOR/Resources/ARS-July2012(English).pdf), p.36

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Country Partnership Strategy: Kazakhstan 2012–2016. (n.d.). *Asia Development Bank*. Retrieved September 12, 2017, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cps-kaz-2012-2016-psa.pdf>, p.2.

³⁹ Precursor Control on Central Asia's Borders with China. (n.d.). *UNODC ROCA CAU*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Precursor_Control/PrecursorRep.pdf, p.25.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., p.8.

1.3.2 Kyrgyzstan

a. Illicit narcotics production

Kyrgyzstan does not have organized production of drugs. The country did not report any cases of illicit cultivation of opium and production of precursors in 2017. The republic has 10,000 ha of raw-material base for producing marijuana drugs and more than 55,000 ha of areas with ephedra considered as a precursor of ephedrine which is used in methamphetamine⁴³. Wild cannabis and ephedra cover vast areas, particularly in Chui region and around Lake Issyk-Kul⁴⁴. One case of marijuana cultivation was recorded in June 2017, when Kyrgyz law enforcement seized 9.5 tons of cannabis grown on 1.1 ha area in Jalal-Abad region⁴⁵. CARICC reported the cultivation of 10,353,122 bushes of marijuana in 2017⁴⁶.

b. Consumption

The number of drug users decreased from 8,853 people in 2016 to 8,543 abusers in 2017, according to the data provided by CARICC⁴⁷.

c. Trafficking

Kyrgyzstan implemented a law enforcement reform by merging of the State Drug Control Service with the Ministry of Interior in July 2016, which resulted in that experienced anti-drug officers started leaving the new service due to disagreements and rivalry with competing Ministry of Interior. Such trend weakened the counter-narcotics service. A similar negative trend can be observed in Russia.

⁴³ Illegal Drugs in Kyrgyzstan.(n.d.).Facts and Details. Retrieved September 19, 2017, http://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Kyrgyzstan/sub8_5b/entry-4768.html.

⁴⁴ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2009, May). *United States Department of State*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, p.385.

⁴⁵ SBNON MVD KR: zaderzhany podozrevaemye v nezakonnom oborote narkotikov (2017, June 19). Information Portal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kyrgyzstan. Retrieved September 15, 2017, <http://mvd.kg/index.php/rus/mass-media/all-news/item/4904-sbnon-mvd-kr-zaderzhany-podozrevaemye-v-nezakonnom-oborote-narkotikov>.

⁴⁶ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*.No.180, p.6.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Drug trafficking penetrates Kyrgyzstan in the direction of Alai and Cho-Alai of Osh region, and Batken, Leilek, and Kadamjay districts of Batken region. It is worth noting that Osh city, and also Osh, Naryn, Jalal-Abad, and Batken regions have the highest number of drug-related crimes compared to other locations⁴⁸. Osh which is often referred to as a southern capital of Kyrgyzstan serves as a transfer point for illegal narcotics transited to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and further to Russia, Europe, and the US⁴⁹. Country's vulnerability to drug trafficking is due to its closeness to Tajikistan and Afghanistan, activities of organized criminal groups, absence of common approach to regional security, and inefficient border management⁵⁰.

As for trafficking of NPS, several incidents were recorded in 2015 but considering deficiencies in Kyrgyz legislation on substance control the cases were not investigated as crimes.

Seizure ratios of heroin, hashish, and marijuana declined, whereas the amount of recovered opium grew in the reporting period. The amount of heroin decreased from 166.8 kg to 101.3 kg, volume of recovered hashish dropped from 794.8 kg to 256.7, and ratio of cannabis fell from 2,139.3 kg to 1,052.4 kg in 2016-2017⁵¹. However, the amount of opium grew from 24.9 kg to 33.5 kg in the same timeframe⁵².

d. Money laundering

The Kyrgyz government is attempts to control money-laundering. The State Financial Intelligence Service (FIS) signed more than eight international agreements on exchange of data on money laundering and terrorism financing⁵³. However, frail political institutes, corruption, and financial constraints hamper effectiveness of anti-money laundering activities. FIS is not acknowledged as a legitimate agency by government authorities which results in lack of collaboration and data sharing among agencies⁵⁴.

⁴⁸ Information Bulletin on Drug Related Situation in the Central Asian Region. (2016), p.17.

⁴⁹ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2009, May), p.384.

⁵⁰ Anti-Drug Program of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (2014, January 27). Retrieved September 17, 2017, https://www.unodc.org/documents/centralasia/prodocs/Anti-drug_program_ENG.pdf.

⁵¹ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2017, March). Retrieved September 16, 2017, p.120.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.121.

Government and private entities lack qualified staff and law enforcement capacity. Organized crime and corruption in the criminal justice system are constant problems for the government. For instance, high-ranking officials were implicated in corruption in several instances in 2016⁵⁵. The National Service on Drug Control reported 41 cases of drug-related corruption and initiated 41 criminal investigations. As a result of investigations, 56 persons were prosecuted and 49 of them worked in law enforcement, other government entities, and local government authorities⁵⁶. In total, more than 292 kg of drugs, including 70 kg of heroin, were seized from the corrupted officials⁵⁷.

e. Precursor control

A legal right to traffic precursors belongs to 270 entities and individuals of the state registry. Precursors such as sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, acetic acid, and acetone are mainly imported to Kyrgyzstan from Kazakhstan and Russia. Occasional incidents of precursors from countries such as Austria (toluene, acetone), the Netherlands (methyl ethyl ketone, potassium permanganate) can be mentioned⁵⁸.

China is considered as a major source of precursors for Kyrgyzstan as countries share 858-km border. Smuggling mainly occurs on Torugart and Irkeshtan border outposts⁵⁹. According to Kyrgyz DCA and UNODC, it is common when trucks drive across a river and mark an eastern border of Bishkek to avoid paying taxes and tariffs⁶⁰. Use of Chinese import declarations by Kyrgyz Customs in Irkeshtan and Torugart border crossings creates risks for trafficking of precursors as border officers cannot read declarations in Chinese and do not possess clear information about imported goods, especially when a driver declares liquids⁶¹. Also, Kyrgyz law enforcement officials do not have a required level of knowledge of precursors and do not consider their trafficking as an issue.

⁵⁵ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2016, March), p.208.

⁵⁶ Baiburina, Y. (2016, July 6). Statistika: v Kyrgyzstane bolee 8 tys. chelovek narkozavisimi. *KNEWS*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, <http://knews.kg/2016/06/statistika-v-kyrgyzstane-bolee-8-tys-chelovek-narkozavisimy>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Information on Import and Export of Precursors. (2016). State Drug Control Service Under the Government of Kyrgyz Republic.

⁵⁹ Precursor Control on Central Asia's Borders with China.(n.d.). *UNODC ROCA CAU*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, p.16.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.15.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.16.

Precursors are imported to Kyrgyzstan mainly for industrial use. For example, sulfuric and hydrochloric acids are used in production of soap and washing products, leather processing industry, mining industry, conducting laboratory tests; acetic acid is utilized in food industry, leather processing industry; potassium permanganate is used in medical practice, production of carbonated beverages; toluene and acetone are used for conducting chemical analysis, as dissolving agents for paint and varnish products; methyl ethyl ketone is added to paint as a marking material⁶².

Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies seized illegal precursors totaling 2,811.8 kg in 2017 which was 1,168.6 kg more than in 2016⁶³. Tajikistan was a key destination for the export of precursors. During the reported period, no cases of the trade of precursors from Afghanistan were recorded.

1.3.3 Tajikistan

a. Illicit narcotics production

No cases of cultivation of opium and production of NPS were reported in 2017. However, production of marijuana mainly for personal use persists. The country reported 31 ha of wild growth and 1.24 ha of illicit cultivation of cannabis⁶⁴.

b. Consumption

CARICC reported that the number of drug abusers decreased from 7,067 to 6,947 in 2016-2017⁶⁵.

To consolidate its efforts in drug prevention and healthy lifestyle promotion Tajikistan adopted a five-year program in April 2016. The program targets the youth and plans starting educational programs for prevention of drug use and introduction of global standards which help constraining drug abuse⁶⁶.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

⁶⁴ Illicit Drug Trends in Central Asia.(2008, April), p.23.

⁶⁵ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

⁶⁶ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2017, March), p.256.

c. Trafficking

Tajikistan has the longest border with Afghanistan among all Central Asian countries. According to estimates, 75-80 MT of Afghan heroin and 35-40 MT of opium pass through the country, but only a small fraction of those is seized by the authorities⁶⁷. A relatively small amount of the trafficked drugs are seized supposing that the trafficking estimates are accurate⁶⁸. Country's border areas are considered to be ruggedly remote, hard to control, and lacking essential infrastructure⁶⁹. Trafficking mainly occurs at night and involves local people who smuggle narcotics across rivers using small boats and inner tubes⁷⁰.

Infrastructural projects intended to contribute to economic development might create opportunities for trafficking. For example, US-funded Nizhniy Pyanj bridge on the Tajik-Afghan border allow smugglers to move larger quantities of drugs between two countries, in addition to the improvement of the trade between two countries⁷¹. More than half of seizures took place in Khatlon province and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region bordered with Afghanistan⁷².

Seizure ratios of heroin, opium, hashish, and cannabis increased in 2016-2017. The amount of seized heroin rose from 88.8 kg to 110 kg, volume of recovered opium grew from 611.5 kg to 1,211.3 kg, amount of hashish increased from 2,108.7 kg to 2384 kg, and ratio of cannabis rose from 617.3 kg to 742.7 kg in the reported period⁷³.

⁶⁷ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2016, March), p.264.

⁶⁸ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2017, March), p.256.

⁶⁹ Afghan Narcotrafficking: The State of Afghanistan's Borders. (2015, April). *East West Institute*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, <https://www.eastwest.ngo/sites/default/files/ideas-files/Afghanistan-Borders.pdf>, p.21.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.20.

⁷² International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2017, March), p.20.

⁷³ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

d. Money laundering

Tajikistan's banking system is not sophisticated for fraud operations and therefore the issue of money laundering is insignificant in the country. It is assumed that a large amount of narcotics is transited via Tajikistan with involvement of some law enforcement officials as they have extremely low wages making profiting from drug trafficking attractive⁷⁴.

e. Precursor control

Tajik law enforcement officials reportedly do not have good knowledge of precursors. Some officials expressed an opinion that precursors' trafficking is not a pressing issue⁷⁵. Smuggling of precursors from China to Tajikistan is not a feasible option as Kulma border crossing is open only for a few months and has harsh weather conditions⁷⁶.

The largest seizure of precursors was recorded in Sogd region in 2015 and amounted 7,228 kg of sulfuric acid⁷⁷. The total amount of seized precursors dramatically increased from 65.1 kg to 551.7 kg in 2016-2017⁷⁸.

1.3.4 Turkmenistan

a. Illicit narcotics production

No evidence of illicit opium cannabis cultivation and heroin production was recorded in Turkmenistan in 2017. Scarcity of publicly accessible and disclosed information on Turkmenistan does allow making conclusions regarding a situation on illicit drug production and acuteness of drug issues.

⁷⁴ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2016, March). Retrieved September 2, 2017, p.265.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Precursor Control on Central Asia's Borders with China.(n.d.). *UNODC ROCA CAU*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, p.20.

⁷⁷ Krupnaya partiya prekursorov iz'yata v Tadzhiqistane // <http://rus.pressa.tj/news/krupnaya-partiya-prekursorov-izyata-v-tadzhikistane>.

⁷⁸ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

International donors often complain about reluctance of Turkmen authorities to participate in sustained joint training exercises with authorities of Afghanistan. UN officials note that Turkmen authorities continue distancing themselves and cancelling meetings with international border management representatives without a proper reason or warning⁷⁹.

b. Consumption

Turkmenistan has not provided any information on drug abuse since 2006. The latest available data is from 2007, when total number drug users was approximately 32,000 persons, with 26% being IDUs⁸⁰. The total percentage of heroin users was 93%, whereas cannabis users made up only 3%⁸¹.

Local law enforcement has an authority to start drug cases and send people to rehabilitation centers like the one located in Ahal province, which can accommodate around 120 patients⁸².

c. Trafficking

Turkmenistan is the main trafficking corridor going westward from Afghanistan to Iran and onwards to Europe by crossing Balkan and Caucasian routes. In contrast, the country's position is insignificant for the northern route. In most cases trafficking happens along mountainous 800-km border with Afghanistan and 1147-km border line with Iran. Commercial truck flows from Iran to Turkmenistan and boat traffic from Turkmenistan to Caucasus and Russia creates opportunities for trafficking⁸³.

Turkmenistan implements flexible and neutral border security policy towards Afghanistan and in some instances engages with incumbents and insurgents across the border. Such policy might improve border management but can contribute to the growth of trafficking through Balkan and Caucasian routes via territory of Turkmenistan⁸⁴.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.25.

⁸⁰ Fact Sheet on Turkmenistan. UNODC, Paris Pact Initiative. Updated as of February 2015.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2016, March). Retrieved September 10, 2017, p.276.

⁸³ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2017, March). Retrieved September 16, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2015/vol2/index.htm>, p.275.

⁸⁴ Afghan Narcotrafficking: The State of Afghanistan's Borders. (2015, April). *East West Institute*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, p.24.

Turkmenistan does not support or coordinate illegal production or sale of narcotics but low wages and credentials of law enforcement officials stimulate corruption and might undermine counter-narcotics efforts on the border. For instance, junior level officials at border checkpoints are often bribed to allow disrupted passage of contraband goods. It can be expected the use smuggled goods for concealing illicit drugs. However, there were no cases of prosecution of the government officials in relation to corruption linked to drugs⁸⁵.

Seizure ratios of heroin and hashish declined, whereas the amount of recovered opium and marijuana rose in 2017. The total of seized heroin decreased from 0.625 kg to 0.117 kg, the volume of recovered hashish fell from 5.4 kg to 0.032 kg⁸⁶. In contrast, the amount of opium rose from 228.3 kg to 243.7 kg and volume of marijuana grew from 617.3 kg to 742.7 kg in 2016-2017⁸⁷.

Street-level prices of heroin, opium, and cannabis seem to be the highest in the region⁸⁸.

d. Money laundering

Data on cash smuggling or any other type of illegal financial operations is unavailable. Also, there is no information on investigation or prosecution cases involving money laundering.

Turkmenistan' banking and financial capabilities are weak and underdeveloped. It has only five international banks. It is supposed that money laundering can involve revenues from trafficking, sale of illicit narcotics, and related criminal activities⁸⁹.

e. Precursor control

Data on trafficking of precursors in Turkmenistan is unavailable. There was only one case in 2000, when two shipments of acetic anhydride amounting 40.29 tons from Singapore were arrested in Turkmenistan⁹⁰.

⁸⁵ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2017, March). Retrieved September 16, 2017, p.276.

⁸⁶ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2017, March). Retrieved September 16, 2017, p.275.

⁸⁹ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2012, March). *United States Department of State*. Retrieved September 12, 2017, <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2012/database/191294.htm>.

⁹⁰ Precursor Control on Central Asia's Borders with China.(n.d.). *UNODC ROCA CAU*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, p.5.

1.3.5 Uzbekistan

a. Illicit narcotics production

The drug situation in Uzbekistan is mainly influenced by its geographical position as a buffer between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, on the one side, and consumer countries, on the other.

Uzbek law enforcement identified 1,301 cases of illicit cultivation of narcotic plants⁹¹ and burnt 0.47 ha of wild cannabis and 0.67 ha of drug-containing plants in 2015⁹². No opium poppy cultivation and heroin production was reported.

b. Consumption

The number of registered drug users decreased from 10,505 to 8,036 in 2016-2017⁹³.

Information on abusers of synthetic drugs is unavailable despite of seeming significant increase in trafficking of synthetic cannabinoids mainly brought to the country by its migrant workers returning from Russia.

c. Trafficking

Trafficking of opiates mainly happens along Uzbek-Tajik border. For instance, UNODC reports that the volume of seized heroin along the border is higher than on Uzbek-Afghan border due to its highly restrictive regime of the latter, which effectively deters drug traffickers⁹⁴.

Seizure amounts of heroin, opium, and hashish declined, whereas the amount of recovered marijuana rose in 2017. The ratio of seized heroin decreased from 107.8 kg to 12.4 kg, volume of recovered opium fell from 1,446.8 kg to 797.9 kg, and amount of hashish fell from 241.2 kg to 78.5 kg⁹⁵. In contrast, the amount of opium rose from 228.3 kg to 243.7 kg and volume of marijuana grew from 617.3 kg to 742.7 kg in 2016-2017⁹⁶.

⁹¹ Information Bulletin on Drug Related Situation in the Central Asian Region, p.39.

⁹² V Tashkent unichtojili 1.4 tonny narkoticheskikh sredstv // http://news.uzreport.uz/news_3_r_132658.html

⁹³ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

⁹⁴ Afghan Narcotrafficking: The State of Afghanistan's Borders. East West Institute, p.23.

⁹⁵ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Uzbekistan's drug control policy is based on the Program of Complex Measures on Countering Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking for 2016-2020. The program specifies responsibilities of the law enforcement in restricting illegal drug trafficking, reducing demand, preventing abuse, improving law enforcement legislation, and collaborating with international partners⁹⁷.

To tackle new types of psychoactive substances and synthetic drugs, the National Center for Drug Control initiated the establishment of a working group which is composed of representatives of the official authorities of Uzbekistan. The working group proposes relevant amendments to the national drug control legislature, which envisions the restriction of NPS and synthetic drugs⁹⁸.

The country develops its border security policies unilaterally focusing mostly on enforcement and interdiction, while less attention is paid to drug control and demand reduction activities⁹⁹.

d. Money laundering

The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) considers the anti-money laundering systems (AML) of Uzbekistan as vulnerable within international financial system because of weakening jurisdiction on anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism¹⁰⁰.

Illegal money in the country comes from sources such as corruption, drug trafficking, lobbying, and smuggling of goods. Some members of the political elite and businessmen expropriate revenues from state-run companies and invest their money abroad. For instance, an integral part of many Uzbek business deals abroad is the use of off-shores, or companies formed in various tax havens around the world, that allow true owners of a company to remain in the shadows.

⁹⁷ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control. (2017, March). Retrieved September 17, 2017, p.291.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.45.

⁹⁹ Afghan Narcotrafficking: The State of Afghanistan's Borders. (2015, April). *East West Institute*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, p.23.

¹⁰⁰ Advisory. (2008, March 20). Advisory. Department of the Treasury. Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. Retrieved September 16, 2017, <https://www.sec.gov/about/offices/ocie/aml/fin-2008-a004.pdf>

Corruption investigations of mid-level government officials and former high-level politicians were more common in 2017¹⁰¹. Recent and ongoing investigations on economic crimes are connected to former government officials and influential people of Karimov's era. The major investigations were related to the former president's elder daughter, former deputy head of the security service allegedly involved in the transit of Afghan drugs through Uzbekistan to north, and former general prosecutor.

e. Precursor control

Uzbekistan is the only country in the region with capabilities to produce acetic anhydride and sulphuric acid. However, precursors used for drugs' production for in Afghanistan predominantly smuggled from Pakistan owing to its geographic proximity to the main heroin producing provinces, namely Kandagar, Helmand, and Nangarkhar. Uzbekistan seized 3.7 kg of precursors in 2017¹⁰².

1.4 Summary of the Mini-Dublin Group's work

MDG meetings serve as a platform for discussing and exchanging insights on anti-drug issues as well as give a chance to review progress achieved by law enforcement agencies in the region and share feedback to strengthen joint activities. Stakeholders participating in the meetings exchange valuable information and develop solutions for existing problems. One of the main functions of the MDG framework is being an arena for sharing initiatives and opinions, identifying needs of Central Asian countries, and avoiding overlapping in activities. The group does not take operational actions, but only evaluates country-level and regional drug situation and shares information with the EU and other stakeholders. Meetings functions as informal coordination mechanism for country-specific, regional, and global issues of illegal drugs' production, trafficking, and demand reduction.

The main goal for organizing the meetings is identification of the needs of the host countries and direct donor assistance towards satisfaction of these needs. To fulfill its main objective and fully engage host countries into collaboration through dialogue, six MDG meetings were organized in respective venues in 2017. The meeting on Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was held in March in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and then in November in Astana, two gatherings on Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were organized in June and December in Tashkent (Uzbekistan), and other two meetings on Turkmenistan took place in June and November in Ashgabat (Turkmenistan).

¹⁰¹ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes. (2015, March). Retrieved September 16, 2017, p.316.

¹⁰² CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). *Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center*. No.180, p.6.

The meetings gave an opportunity to participants to directly discuss drug issues and look for possible solutions along with representatives of national counter-narcotics agencies. Participating countries paid a special attention to exchanging ideas on the change of drug trafficking routes, a lack of the structured data collection methods and mechanisms for investigations, and need to enhance capacities of key border outposts through appointment of Border Liaison Offices and cooperation on synthetic drugs and NPS.

Meeting participants noted that Central Asia has faced an increase in the trafficking of synthetic drugs and NPS in the last several years. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan already made changes in their national legislations to optimize control over NPS. For example, with support from UNODC K50 Project, Kyrgyzstan added 85 substances to the list of controlled psychotropic substances in 2015¹⁰³.

Parties expressed willingness to continue to participate in meetings of such format, pro-actively engage in discussions, and share information and analysis with all members.

The informal platform has achieved positive results and shown the significance of the impact made by international assistance in improving capacities of the national law enforcement agencies and aiding them to tackle drug-related issues.

Participants of MDG meetings in Central Asia proposed the following recommendations:

- Strengthen collaboration among law enforcement agencies of the Central Asian countries.
- Enhance drug-prevention activities and counter-narcotics campaigns, especially with a focus on synthetic drugs on grassroots level.
- Further improve the scale of the technical support to drug control agencies in the region.
- Develop strategies and concrete techniques to block trafficking channels crossing the countries in the region.

¹⁰³ KGZ K 50 project was started in 2011. Its main goal is strengthening the former State Service on Drug Control which was reestablished in 2011. Two main donors are the US and Russia

- Increase the scope of constructing border outposts and technical facilities.
- Allocate more human and financial resources to professional training of border control experts.
- Invest in the agricultural sector of Afghanistan and develop and support alternative agricultural practices stimulating replacement of poppy by crops.
- Organize visits of the representatives of Afghanistan's Ministry of Internal Affairs to drug control agencies in Central Asia. Foster the development of bilateral cooperation through implementation of joint counter-narcotics activities.

1.5 Essential points to be followed up by the MDGs

The Mini-Dublin Groups are advised to consider the following recommendations:

- MDG chairmanship and UNODC field offices should closely cooperate in implementation of active and planned anti-drug activities. This will strengthen the coordination and improve the quality of reports and donors' response to host countries' needs.
- Each MDG president is advised with consent of other members to invite countries, NGOs, experts, civil society members, and other participants who are capable to contribute to the meetings. Such practice should be used in all Central Asian countries. To facilitate the process, UNODC and MDG chairmanship should join efforts and provide a mutual vision of the MDG action to all member states.
- Greater participation of host parties in contributing to meeting reports should be further encouraged and facilitated.
- MDG platform should be backed by a higher authority with a real power so the group can address issues and rely on the authority. Such status will give more leverage to presidents of the regional groups by making them more capable of implementing changes.

2. REGIONAL OR SUB-REGIONAL NATURE OF PROBLEMS

Origins of drug trafficking in the region can be traced back to the period of state-building in early 1990s. To consolidate power and increase influence over societies, political elites in post-Soviet states needed to establish connections with underground criminal groups which were influential whereas government institutions were weak. Consequently, the corruption became one of the many negative consequences of drug trafficking across Central Asia. The scale of drug profits enticed regional law enforcement, customs officials, and border guards who often closed their eyes to drug trafficking¹⁰⁴.

One of the existing problems is that inaccuracy, inaccessibility, and lack of data on illicit drugs. Furthermore, the countries lack a unified well-functioning information sharing mechanism which is partially explained by that countries regard such information as strategic. CARICC currently occupies a position of a sole, accurate, and valid source of information and analysis on anti-drug issues in Central Asia.

Geopolitical competition, regional power struggle, and unresolved issues can be considered as obstacles for the development of effective communication and collaboration. However, the recent regional rapprochement started by Uzbekistan can promote openness and closer collaboration.

3. MATTERS REQUIRING TREATMENT BY THE DUBLIN GROUP AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

The Dublin Group should allocate more resources to support and promote activities of CARICC which faces funding issues. The center plays an essential role of an information hub for sharing valuable data and coordinating regional counter-narcotics efforts. Information support provided by the center to member states can considerably advance multilateral cooperation and raise effectiveness of joint efforts made by national law enforcement agencies.

A stronger emphasis should be given to strengthening of the collaboration between MDG Chairmanship and UNODC field offices as well as ensuring more active participation of the host parties in discussions and drafting of subsequent reports at meetings.

¹⁰⁴ Afghan Narcotrafficking: The State of Afghanistan's Borders. (2015, April). *East West Institute*. Retrieved September 17, 2017, p.20.

More attention should be paid by donors to the prioritization of host countries' needs during the coordination and planning of anti-narcotics activities. Assessments of needs and closer round-table discussions can help donor countries better identify of host-country priorities, implement more efficient funding campaigns and anti-drug policies. As for host parties, they should continuously communicate donors about their needs and priorities.

Members of the Group should concentrate on providing technical assistance the republics. Such approach envisages paying less attention to political factors and giving more emphasis to collaboration in assistance provision for demand reduction.

A positive impetus for improving coordination and cooperation among EU law enforcement agencies can be the creation of European liaison officers' network consisting of European drug liaison officers who serve in the region. This will allow to better management of joint activities and increased efficiency of MDG in rendering anti-drug assistance.

4. REGIONAL GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Political Initiatives

The following political initiatives in Central Asia should be advised:

- Encourage and support regional cooperation among counter-narcotics' authorities in the region.
- Support the development and harmonization of national drug control legislation.
- Provide for regular and active coordination among international partners in the counter-narcotics field.
- Facilitate the exchange of information among all parties in the region, including CARICC, for creation of the counter-narcotics information platform.

4.2 Donor community priorities

The donor community proposes to focus on the following priorities:

- Improve technical capacity of competent national authorities and further support the enhancement of national capacity for counter-narcotics operations.
- Enhance professional skills of law-enforcement officers in the region by engaging counter-narcotics' institutions from MDG member state and promoting policy of preparing trainers for national partners (training of trainers).

5. PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS MADE IN 2016

Countries in the region concentrate more in capacity and institutional building instead of investing in governance and cooperation. Such policy does not help reduce the volume of illicit drugs. Moreover, each Central Asian country prioritizes the achievement of the highest seizures on its own territory over multilateral action. Also, each country focuses on bilateral cooperation targeting provision of specialized trainings and procurement of equipment instead of active multilateral engagement. As a result, host parties lack effective collaboration on multilateral level. Shortcomings are clearly evident when it comes to exchanges of operational information among the competent agencies of the region. Improvements in information exchange and organization of joint operations are urgently needed to have a concerted and more effective response.

Sale of illegal drugs via the Internet has become a new trend since 2016. DCSA is working on related issues and coordinating work in this direction with OSCE, UNODC, CADAP, competitive agencies, and other involved countries to identify sources of such micro-businesses.

Host countries have not updated lists of priorities included in MDG country reports for over seven years making the group's recommendations outdated. Only Tajikistan and Uzbekistan updated their lists of prioritized needs in these years. Other countries are also expected to renew their priority lists. In its turn, such feedback from regional authorities might be able to facilitate submission of more suitable recommendations and actions by the Dublin Group members.

Major donors such as the US, Japan, Germany, Italy, UNODC, and OSCE have been implementing various counter-narcotics programs in the region, but the nature of the foreign assistance remains limited and insignificant in scale. A special importance is given to contribution to implementation of the EU Act. During the MDG Meeting in Bishkek in March 2016, the Italian Embassy proposed initiatives to organize several meetings on these issues and then organized them with UNODC in 2017.

Attachment 1. Drug-related statistics in Central Asia

Table 1. Split ratio of seized opium and cannabis groups of drugs in 2016-2017¹⁰⁵

	Kazakhstan		Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Turkmenistan		Uzbekistan	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Heroin	196	146	166.8	101.3	88.8	110	0.625	0.117	107.8	12.4
Opium	2	95	24.9	33.5	611.5	1,211.3	228.3	243.7	1,446.8	797.9
Hashish	431	790	794.8	256.7	2,108.7	2,384	5.4	0.032	241.2	78.5
Marijuana	29,315	34,107	2,139.3	1,052.4	617.3	724.7	2.1	5.5	883.2	916.6

Table 2. Number of registered drug-related crimes in 2016-2017

Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Turkmenistan		Uzbekistan		
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	
3,657	3,340	1,738	1,571	856	820	478	419	6,646	5,429
-8.7%		-9.6%		-4.2%		-12.3%		-18.3%	

Table 3. Number of arrested individuals in 2016-2017

Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Turkmenistan		Uzbekistan		
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	
1,815	2,075	1,421	1,190	1,119	892	504	397	5,431	4,650
14.3%		-16.3%		-20.3%		-21.2%		-14.4%	

Table 4. Number of officially registered drug abusers in 2016-2017

Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Uzbekistan		
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	
27,269	24,870	8,853	8,543	7,067	6,947	10,505	8,036
-8.8%		-3.5%		-1.7%		-23.5%	

¹⁰⁵ CARICC Information Bulletin (2018, March). Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center.No.180.