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Policy directives to the drug programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and strengthening the drug programme and the role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as its governing body, including administrative, budgetary and strategic management questions

Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

Reconvened twenty-fourth session

Vienna, 10-11 December 2015

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda**

Strategic management, budgetary and administrative questions: work of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Work of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note has been prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council decision 2015/234, in which the Council decided to renew the mandate of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime until the first half of 2017, as well as Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 52/13, 54/10, 54/17, 56/11 and 58/1 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolutions 18/3, 20/1, 20/9, 22/2 and 24/1. The present note covers the work of the working group between 8 June and 5 October 2015. Information on the work of the working group during the preceding period can be found in document E/CN.7/2015/6-E/CN.15/2015/6.

* E/CN.7/2015/1/Add.1.

** E/CN.15/2015/1/Add.1.



I. Deliberations

1. Between 8 June and 5 October 2015, the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime held three informal meetings. It continued to consider issues under the items of the agenda approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2015/234 and by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in its resolution 52/13 and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in its resolution 18/3, as well as in accordance with the terms of reference contained in the annex to those resolutions and with provisions contained in Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 54/10, 54/17, 56/11 and 58/1 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolutions 20/1, 20/9, 22/2 and 24/1.

2. At its meeting held on 8 June, the working group approved its calendar of meetings and provisional programme of work for the remainder of 2015. It received updates on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) annual report and annual appeal for funds. An update was also provided on the UNODC regional programme for Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, including its focus, achievements and the status of available funds. A representative of UNODC recalled the challenges faced by the region, which included transnational organized crime and drug trafficking, and their connection to violent extremism and terrorism. Regarding the governance and financial situation of UNODC, the working group was briefed on 2014 expenditure, in comparison with the budget and implementation rate, by region and by subprogramme. The working group was also informed about the implementation of full cost recovery and about cost reductions being implemented at UNODC headquarters and field offices. The need to increase general-purpose funding was reiterated. The working group was briefed on the status of implementation of Umoja,¹ which was to be launched in November 2015. Some speakers expressed appreciation for the efforts made by UNODC and referred to the need to continue assessing the situation of general-purpose funding and its decline. They also advocated the flexible use of programme support costs. A representative of UNODC presented the Office's research thematic programme, including the thematic areas covered, the publications produced and the methodologies used to collect and publish data. An update was given on the work of the Independent Evaluation Unit, including an overview of the evaluation of projects and programmes during 2014 and 2015.

3. At the meeting of the working group held on 7 September, a representative of UNODC provided an update on the work of the Terrorism Prevention Branch in delivering legal and capacity-building assistance to Member States to prevent and counter the fast-evolving challenge of terrorism. Technical assistance programmes were being delivered in the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia, Africa and Latin America to develop and strengthen Member States' investigative and prosecutorial capacities and to strengthen their legislation and their operational ability to address terrorism and to counter the financing of terrorism. Reference was made to new challenges, such as foreign terrorist fighters,

¹ Umoja is an enterprise resource planning software for the management of finances, resources and assets. Umoja will be the central administrative tool of the United Nations.

the links between terrorism and organized crime, radicalization, and destruction and looting of cultural property. A representative of UNODC also provided an overview of the preparations for the regular budget for the biennium 2016-2017. Senior management representatives informed the meeting that the situation of general-purpose funds continued to deteriorate, mainly owing to the diversion of contributions to special-purpose funds. Efforts to mobilize general-purpose resources and to absorb expenditure in special-purpose funds as part of the full cost recovery transition would continue. Full cost recovery implementation remained essential for the cost-efficiency and financial sustainability of the Office, and would continue during the biennium 2016-2017. A representative of UNODC also gave a presentation on the financial statements of the Office for 2014, and on the related report by the Board of Auditors. Delegations expressed concern about the envisaged decrease in regular budget resources and the decrease in general-purpose resources, which risked affecting the functioning of the Office. One delegation expressed support for the implementation of full cost recovery, as that model was essential for fiscal stability. Some delegations expressed support for the extension to the time allotted in the current biennium for the transition to full cost recovery; however, concern was expressed by other delegations about that extension. An update was provided on the status of Umoja, a Secretariat-wide initiative which would bring long-term benefits to programme implementation and administrative processes. Some delegations expressed concern about the cash management impact of Umoja on Member States, particularly as regards the ability of the Secretariat to effect cash disbursements. Some concern was also expressed about the “blackout” period that would be implemented immediately prior to the Umoja launch date of 1 November 2015. During the meeting, a representative of UNODC provided an update about its regional programme for South-Eastern Europe, stressing that the Office was working in the region in a manner that complemented the European Union accession processes. The working group was informed about the status of the revised evaluation policy, under which all projects and programmes had to be independently evaluated every four years. An independent evaluator presented the results of the evaluation of the UNODC Global eLearning Programme.

4. At the meeting of the working group held on 5 October 2015, a representative of UNODC provided an update on the status of the implementation of Umoja. It was recalled that Umoja was designed to provide transparent financial information on different aspects of programme delivery, including financial accounting and donor, budget and project reporting. In response to queries and comments, a representative of UNODC informed delegations that the historical information contained in ProFi would remain online and accessible for Member States after 1 November 2015. With regard to the obligation to pay cash up front for all budgeted activities and contractual obligations, reference was made to the efforts of the Secretariat to find ways to ensure the effective and timely implementation of projects. The importance of unearmarked funding in that regard was stressed. Delegations were also informed that in, 2016, all projects would be created as compatible with the results-based management framework, which would result in a standardized process and standardized reporting. In response to concerns raised by the working group, information was provided about the reasons for additional regular and extrabudgetary projections and requirements related to the second cycle of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. A representative of UNODC provided updated information on

the draft strategic framework for UNODC for the biennium 2018-2019, which reflected the new development agenda adopted by the General Assembly, specifically Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 16, and which would be considered further by the working group at its meeting to be held in November. A representative of UNODC also provided information on the annual appeal for funds, which would most likely take place during the third week of January 2016. The appeal would consist of a brochure outlining the key results, outcomes and outputs for each of the programmes reported on in the annual report, their overall budgets and durations, and the planned delivery and funding requirements for the biennium 2016-2017. In addition, a representative of UNODC presented the thematic programme of the Public Affairs and Policy Support Branch and provided an overview of the achievements and challenges encountered with regard to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. With regard to the work of the Independent Evaluation Unit, the working group was informed about evaluation and accountability, which had been mainstreamed into the Sustainable Development Goals. An update was also provided with regard to the United Nations Evaluation Group peer review and the biennial workplan of the Independent Evaluation Unit for the biennium 2016-2017.

II. Organizational and administrative matters

5. The working group held three informal meetings during the reporting period, on 8 June, 7 September and 5 October 2015. Further meetings were scheduled for 9 November and 7 December 2015.

6. At a joint meeting held on 3 June 2015, the extended bureaux of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice agreed to recommend the nomination of Hernan Estrada Román (Nicaragua) and Ignacio Baylina Ruiz (Spain) as co-chairs of the working group under its renewed mandate. At the joint meeting, the extended bureaux also agreed to empower the nominated co-chairs to commence organizing the work of the working group, including the holding of meetings, prior to the formal endorsement by the Commissions of the nominations for co-chairs and prior to the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of the decision on the extension of the mandate of the working group.

7. The Secretariat continued to provide documents and information to the working group by electronic means and in hard copy, including through a public web page on the UNODC website and through a secure web page for Member States only.