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**Report of the Nineteenth Meeting of Heads of National  
Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the  
Caribbean, held at Isla Margarita, Bolivarian Republic of  
Venezuela, from 28 September to 2 October 2009**

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\* The present report is issued in English, French and Spanish, the working languages of the subsidiary body.

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## **I. Matters calling for action by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs or brought to its attention**

### **Recommendations adopted by the Nineteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean**

#### **Round-table discussion on strengthening cooperation among the bodies involved in tackling drug trafficking between the States of Latin America and the Caribbean and the States of Africa, in particular West Africa**

1. Pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/10, entitled “Strengthening interregional cooperation among the States of Latin America and the Caribbean and the States of West Africa in combating drug trafficking”, the Nineteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA), Latin America and the Caribbean, held a round-table discussion on strengthening cooperation among the bodies involved in tackling drug trafficking between the States of Latin America and the Caribbean and the States of Africa, in particular West Africa. The Meeting benefited from the participation of representatives of 10 West African States.

2. In its resolution 52/10, the Commission requested the Secretariat to include in its report to the Commission at its fifty-third session on action taken by the subsidiary bodies of the Commission the recommendations adopted by the Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, on how to improve cooperation between the States of Latin America and the Caribbean and the States of West Africa in combating drug trafficking, for its consideration and action. The deliberations of the round table are summarized in section IV below. In accordance with resolution 52/10, the recommendations of the Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, are reflected below.

#### **Recommendations**

3. It was noted that it was necessary to map out cooperation at all levels, including source, transit and destination countries. Information-gathering, analysis and exchange of intelligence, training, joint operations, the placement of liaison officers, capacity-building, provision of equipment, and technical and mutual support were all areas requiring attention. Among the areas that were singled out for special attention as means of promoting better cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean, West Africa and Europe were:

- (a) The establishment of bilateral cooperation agreements;
- (b) The pursuit of tripartite or multipartite cooperation arrangements;
- (c) Where bilateral agreements were not in place, full use by countries of the instrumentalities provided in the United Nations drug control conventions, particularly the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988,<sup>1</sup> as well as the United Nations Convention

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1582, No. 27627.

against Transnational Organized Crime<sup>2</sup> and the United Nations Convention against Corruption,<sup>3</sup> to facilitate international cooperation, mutual legal assistance and information exchange and to counteract illicit traffic by sea;

- (d) The provision of specialized training;
- (e) The development of confidence-building measures;
- (f) Commitment to establishing a direct line for trustworthy communication with counterpart law enforcement agencies for information exchange;
- (g) Commitment to enabling and facilitating the regular exchange of information on the movement of persons, vessels or aircraft of interest;
- (h) Commitment to the exchange of information on passengers travelling from West Africa to Latin America or vice versa;
- (i) Pursuit of the exchange of senior operations officers on temporary secondment to build closer and more direct communication ties and gain better understanding of operational needs, procedures, practices and capacities;
- (j) Commitment to exploring future bilateral cooperation in the joint training of operational staff to build confidence, trust and complementarity in procedures.

4. It was recommended that a single focal point for the Latin American and Caribbean countries should be established for communications from West African law enforcement authorities. That focal point would then channel information and communications to the pertinent authority of the country concerned in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

5. It was also recommended that Governments should be encouraged to use existing coordination and information exchange mechanisms such as those provided by the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre — Narcotics (MAOC-N), the secure system for the exchange of information established under the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) project on law enforcement and intelligence cooperation against cocaine trafficking from Latin America to West Africa, which could be further developed and expanded, the Colombian Maritime Coordination Centre, and the module within the Venezuelan National Information System on Drugs for the exchange of information with the competent authorities of other countries, presented at the meeting, or other appropriate, existing, real-time information exchange systems. In addition, consideration could be given to integrating existing systems into a single platform, while ensuring the required levels of robustness and security, to forestall the proliferation of multiple systems and platforms, which could generate incompatibilities and duplication.

6. It was also recommended that UNODC, the Economic Community of West African States and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) should work in partnership to implement the above recommendations.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. 2225, No. 39574.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. 2349, No. 42146.

**Recommendations by working groups**

7. The Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, also set up working groups to consider three main issues and to draw up recommendations on those issues. The observations and conclusions that led to the recommendations are presented in section V below. The meeting adopted the recommendations below, which had been drawn up by its working groups.

**Issue 1. Improving the effectiveness of controlled deliveries among States**

8. With regard to issue 1, “Improving the effectiveness of controlled deliveries among States”, the following recommendations were made:

(a) Governments should take immediate steps to streamline the procedures and time taken to process official requests for legal assistance in gathering evidence, filing criminal charges and obtaining the extradition of offenders;

(b) To facilitate the clearance procedure for undertaking controlled deliveries, Governments should be encouraged to include controlled delivery procedures within bilateral agreements concluded with neighbouring States and trade partners;

(c) In agreeing to undertake a controlled delivery operation, Governments must agree that there will be an expeditious sharing of information between the cooperating authorities at the conclusion of the operation with regard to all persons associated with the offence, so as to ensure that all trafficking-group members in other jurisdictions may be investigated and prosecuted, as appropriate.

**Issue 2. Effective border management at sea container terminals**

9. With regard to issue 2, “Effective border management at sea container terminals”, the following recommendations were made:

(a) Governments should be encouraged to establish an inter-agency response for container control at national ports and container terminals through the establishment of specialist units dedicated to the review, selection and search of identified containers of interest;

(b) In order to better identify containers used for the carriage of illicit drugs, Governments of the region should take steps to ensure the exchange of information between authorities on risk indicators, smuggling *modi operandi* and emerging trends;

(c) Law enforcement authorities of countries in the region should be supported by their Governments in developing close cooperation with private sector port operators, shipping companies and trade associations such as the Business Alliance for Secure Commerce to engage their support in counter-narcotics initiatives and facilitate access to pre-arrival cargo information necessary for profiling and targeting of containers.

**Other recommendations**

10. (a) Governments of the region that had not already done so were urged to register with and use the International Narcotics Control Board Pre-Export

Notification Online (PEN Online) system for precursor chemicals without further delay;

(b) Competent national authorities of countries in the region were urged to provide pre-export notifications to the International Narcotics Control Board for shipments of pharmaceutical preparations containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine using the PEN Online system.

## **II. Major regional drug trafficking trends and countermeasures**

11. At its 2nd, 3rd and 4th meetings, on 28 and 29 September 2009, the Meeting considered item 3 of its agenda, entitled “Major regional drug trafficking trends and countermeasures”. For the consideration of the item, the Meeting had before it two papers prepared by the Secretariat, entitled “Statistics on drug trafficking trends in the Americas and worldwide” (UNODC/HONLAC/19/2) and “Current situation with respect to regional and subregional cooperation” (UNODC/HONLAC/19/CRP.1). In addition, country reports on drug trafficking were submitted by Argentina, the Bahamas, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Ghana, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, Sierra Leone and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (UNODC/HONLAC/19/CRP.2-16). Colombia had also submitted a country report.

12. A representative of UNODC introduced the item and made an audio-visual presentation on reported drug trafficking trends in the region in the context of global drug trafficking. The presentation was based on information provided by Governments to UNODC. The representatives of the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Panama, the United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Cuba, Costa Rica, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Haiti, Guyana, Chile and France made statements. The observers for the International Narcotics Control Board, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States and INTERPOL made statements. A statement was also made by the observer for DrugScope, a non-governmental organization (NGO) accredited with the Economic and Social Council.

13. Several representatives referred to the high quality of the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Meeting and the important role played over the years by the Meetings of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean. They noted that the Meetings had been instrumental in promoting law enforcement cooperation and provided a valuable forum for the exchange of information and know-how, the identification of new trends and the development and formulation of operational responses, as well as the promotion of formal and informal cooperation among countries of the region and beyond. The Meetings of HONLEA had also, over the years, made important recommendations to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs that had resulted, inter alia, in timely follow-up and drug law enforcement cooperation.

14. Several representatives reported on the development of maritime trafficking routes and on the significance that those routes played in trafficking in illicit drugs, particularly cocaine. New trends were described, including those relating to specific routes. One representative made reference to draft legislation in his country to

control the transportation of fuel at sea with a view to limiting opportunities for the refuelling at sea of vessels engaged in drug trafficking.

15. Representatives presented information on the current drug control situation in their countries, describing, inter alia, new developments in trafficking trends, routes and concealment methods, as well as seizures of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals, eradication of illicit crops, destruction of illicit drug-processing laboratories, arrests, prosecutions, money-laundering investigations and operations conducted over the previous two years.

16. Representatives also provided information on the status and outcome of significant arrests, investigations, prosecutions and judicial cases. Information was also provided on mutual legal assistance cases. Reference was also made to the valuable tools provided to drug law enforcement agencies in the three United Nations international drug control conventions and the more recent United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and United Nations Convention against Corruption. It was noted that these additional tools enabled international law enforcement cooperation and mutual legal assistance and that they could be used by countries in cases where bilateral cooperation agreements were not available.

17. Several representatives made reference to maritime drug trafficking and the emergence and development of trafficking routes from the Americas through West Africa to Europe. In this regard, the initiative at the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, through the adoption of its resolution 52/10, to devote a special part of the Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, to tackling the matter of cooperation between the Latin America and the Caribbean and West Africa regions was regarded as highly opportune. Thus, representatives of countries of the region welcomed the presence of representatives of West African countries at the Meeting and looked forward to developing and reinforcing mechanisms for interregional cooperation.

18. Several representatives reported on their countries' national drug control strategies and plans and their development and implementation. In this connection, reference was made to the integration of efforts to combat money-laundering in one jurisdiction through the establishment of specialized investigation, prosecution and judicial instances, which had resulted in the more expedient and efficient processing of anti-money-laundering cases. This experience was highlighted as a good practice worthy of further examination.

19. A number of representatives emphasized the important role played by sustainable alternative development in combating illicit drug production. In this context, the representative of Peru referred to the successful experience of his country in establishing alternative livelihoods for former illicit crop growers, whose producers' associations were now generating significant export earnings and contributing to the licit economy.

20. Representatives made reference to the valuable technical assistance and training provided to countries of the region through the UNODC project on prevention of the diversion of drug precursors in Latin America and the Caribbean, implemented with the support of the European Union.

21. Referring to the significant efforts that countries of the region had made to introduce effective controls on air and sea cargo and on passengers departing by air

from the region, an appeal was issued to developed countries, in particular European countries, to introduce effective controls on passengers departing from their territories towards the Americas, in view of recent seizures of synthetic drugs at airports in some countries of the region on passengers arriving from that region.

22. Several representatives made reference to intelligence, operational and training centres that had been established in their countries, offers of assistance and training, and mechanisms for the exchange of information that were being implemented to promote cooperation within the region.

23. The representative of Brazil reported on a project in his country to permit the monitoring of remote and extensive border regions through the use of pilotless aircraft (drones), indicating that this new approach could improve the surveillance of extended border and remote areas in countries of the region.

24. Several representatives referred to increases in cannabis seizures in their countries in the recent past. In this regard, countries of the region were urged to be vigilant and to exchange information in relation to a new strain known as “super cannabis”. Laboratory analyses by one country of the region had shown the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content of this type of cannabis to be more than twice as high as that found in earlier seizures. It was also reported that abuse of the higher-potency cannabis had had serious health effects.

25. Reference was made to new methods of concealment of drugs in commercial trade. It was also noted that in some cases the drugs were intended to be extracted while shipments were in transit through European countries. Several representatives referred to the use of shipping containers for drug trafficking and the countermeasures taken by their authorities to detect substances concealed within licit merchandise, including through the application of new technologies and intelligence.

26. A number of representatives also provided information on the revision or development of new multi-year national drug control plans and their constituent elements, and on the emphasis, focus and resources that they were being given. These included the setting up of structures to promote their implementation and to ensure inter-institutional coordination at the national level.

27. A number of representatives highlighted the re-emergence and increase in the use of human beings as “mules”, particularly through ingestion of illicit drugs in capsules, for the illicit trafficking of drugs by air, and called other countries of the region to increase their vigilance. One representative also made reference to the use of light aircraft for the trafficking of illicit drugs to the United States and Europe.

### **III. Implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean**

28. At its 4th meeting, on 29 September 2009, the Meeting considered item 4 of its agenda, entitled “Implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean”. The Meeting had before it a document prepared by the

Secretariat (UNODC/HONLAC/19/3) on the basis of information provided by Governments in response to a questionnaire sent to all States members of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean. The document reflected the answers received by the Secretariat from the Bahamas, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) by 7 September 2009. After that date, responses were submitted by Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Guyana, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay.

29. A representative of UNODC made an introductory statement. The representatives of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Colombia also made statements.

30. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela informed the Meeting that his country's actions in the implementation of the recommendations took place within the broader understanding of the concept of shared responsibility. He reported on the establishment of a system for the analysis of air traffic information that enhanced the exchange of information with countries of Central America and the Caribbean. Information was provided on the installation of radar coverage over the national airspace, which had led to successes in the detection of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking, including the destruction of a significant number of clandestine airstrips near the border with Colombia and the establishment of a digitalized control centre that enabled the detection of aircraft whose registrations had been changed. Reference was also made to draft legislation under review that would enable the downing of aircraft engaged in drug trafficking flights. Information was provided on the effectiveness of the recent installation of body scanners at airports, which had resulted in the detection of persons carrying illicit drugs. Enhanced analysis of documentation relating to air and maritime cargo had resulted in major seizures of illicit drugs. Further improvements were made with regard to the chain of custody over seized substances, with the installation of incinerators to enable the destruction of such substances. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had developed an integrated drug abuse prevention plan and introduced mobile drug abuse prevention units that would deliver services and information at the community level. A national anti-drug fund had been established that would, with its own resources, train drug abuse prevention agents and promote drug abuse prevention activities and community participation.

31. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela also provided information on the signing of over 50 cooperation instruments with 37 countries. The instruments addressed, inter alia, the establishment of joint cooperation committees to facilitate exchanges of intelligence. Increased effectiveness had been achieved in prosecuting drug-related cases, with successful prosecution rates reaching 95 per cent over the first half of 2009. This was reported to be due to the provision of specialized training for investigators and judges, among others. Changes in the anti-money-laundering regime had led to a major increase in the number of assets seized from illicit drug trafficking that were being administered under the supervision of the relevant drug control authorities. These assets included businesses and companies that were now generating resources for drug control activities.

32. The representative of Colombia highlighted elements of the action taken by his Government to implement the recommendations adopted at the Eighteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean. He noted the adoption of Law 1311

in 2009, which made the construction, trade, possession and transportation of semisubmersible and submersible vessels a penal offence because such vessels were a means used by drug trafficking organizations. It was noted that some of those vessels were capable of reaching the United States and possibly the Canadian coasts from Colombia. Information was also provided in relation to cooperation agreements made with a number of countries over the past year to enable the exchange of information. The Meeting was also informed about an international maritime interdiction training course, which the Colombian navy had developed to share its experience and expertise in this field with other countries, as well as the support the Government of Colombia was ready to provide to enable participation in the course by partner nations.

33. The representative of Argentina made reference to the establishment of a centre for the assessment of drug trafficking, designed to collect, collate and systematize all information on seizures and confiscations of drugs and controlled substances in the country.

#### **IV. Round-table discussion on strengthening cooperation among the bodies involved in tackling drug trafficking between the States of Latin America and the Caribbean and the States of Africa, in particular West Africa**

34. At its 5th, 6th and 7th meetings, on 30 September and 1 October 2009, the Meeting considered item 5 of its agenda, entitled “Round-table discussion on strengthening cooperation among the bodies involved in tackling drug trafficking between the States of Latin America and the Caribbean and the States of Africa, in particular West Africa”.

35. The Chairman of the Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, made an introductory statement. Statements were made by the observers of Nigeria, the Niger, Togo, the Gambia, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. The representatives of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Colombia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Peru, Spain, Ecuador, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Panama, Argentina, Brazil and France also made statements. The representative of the United Kingdom made an audio-visual presentation on MAOC-N, based in Lisbon. Representatives of UNODC made a joint audio-visual presentation with the representative of Spain on the UNODC project on law enforcement and intelligence cooperation against cocaine trafficking from Latin America to West Africa. The observer for DrugScope, an NGO accredited with the Economic and Social Council, made a statement. A representative of the Secretariat also made a statement.

36. In his introductory statement, the Chairman outlined the special significance of the round table, which was being held pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/10. In that resolution, the Commission had called for the agenda of the Nineteenth Meeting to be revised in order to ensure that particular focus was placed on cooperation among the bodies involved in tackling drug trafficking between the States of Latin America and the Caribbean and the States of Africa, in particular West Africa; it also invited Member States concerned to participate in the Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, and to ensure

the participation of senior officials of drug law enforcement agencies from States in West Africa, particularly from those States affected by drug trafficking. The Chairman gave a special welcome to the representatives of the West African States and looked forward to the discussion to formulate proposals and recommendations on this item for consideration and action by the Commission at its fifty-third session.

37. The representative of the United Kingdom provided a description of the three operational phases of the MAOC-N, its modus operandi and its cooperation links with countries of West Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, and an overview of the successful operations coordinated through the Centre since its inception in 2006. He explained that the legal basis for cooperation under the auspices of the Centre was provided by article 17 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. He also provided an overview of some of the obstacles to successful international cooperation that needed to be attended to, such as unwillingness of institutions to adapt to the changing modus operandi of traffickers; national operations procedures that could make cooperation difficult; national inter-agency rivalries; difficulties in ensuring effective cooperation between law enforcement and military agencies; and distrust relating to classification of information, legislative aspects and resources.

38. The representatives of UNODC and Spain presented the UNODC project on law enforcement and intelligence cooperation against cocaine trafficking from Latin America to West Africa and its secure system for the exchange of information. That system provided a secure Internet-based platform through which drug law enforcement agencies of 14 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and West Africa, as well as drug liaison officers from European countries, could exchange information to support drug law enforcement investigations in real time. The system enabled the automatic cross-checking of information online and provided a powerful tool to support drug law enforcement investigations, including joint investigations.

39. The representatives of the West African States provided information on the current drug control situation in their countries and the efforts of their Governments to counteract drug trafficking through their territories, as well as illicit drug production and drug abuse within their countries. They also provided information on national drug control plans, institutional arrangements for tackling the drug problem and their national drug control legal frameworks. Statistics on seizures of illicit drugs were also presented, with an emphasis on cocaine trafficking in West Africa, particularly since 2003, when significant cocaine seizures began to be made in a number of countries in that region.

40. A number of representatives of the West African States drew attention to the vulnerability of their territories to drug trafficking organizations owing to the porousness of their borders, Governments' lack of access to parts of their territories and the fact that uninhabited islands off their coasts were easy prey for drug traffickers, where they could land their illicit cargoes moved across the Atlantic by air and sea without being detected. Some representatives noted that some West African States had recently emerged from periods of instability and had very limited resources at their disposal. The current underinvestment in public offices also left them particularly vulnerable to the influence of corruption. Nevertheless, all West African representatives emphasized the political determination of their authorities to

confront the drug trafficking menace and the urgency of consolidating cooperation between the Americas and Africa.

41. A number of representatives provided information on the cocaine trafficking routes from Latin America and the Caribbean to West Africa and to Europe, as well as on concealment methods and use of human couriers by traffickers. Illustrations of recent successful interdictions were also presented. It was noted that cocaine was moved across the Atlantic by a variety of means, including the transferral of illicit shipments from smaller vessels off the coast of the Americas or of West Africa to larger vessels for the transatlantic crossing and the use of light aircraft that had been specially adapted to increase their range. Such aircraft then landed on islands off the coast of West Africa, in coastal areas or further inland. It was noted that once in West Africa, cocaine was trafficked to Europe by air, sea and land, and also to the United States and Asia. A number of West African representatives noted that the trafficking of cocaine through their territories had resulted in the emergence of cocaine abuse in their countries and that they were ill-equipped in terms of know-how to provide treatment and rehabilitation services for cocaine addicts. A number of representatives from the HONLAC region expressed their readiness to provide assistance in this regard.

42. Speakers identified some of the challenges they faced in seeking closer cooperation to combat illicit drug trafficking. Differences in and limited knowledge of their respective legal systems, differences in standards of evidence-gathering, insufficient human and technical resources and language barriers were cited. At the same time, they identified opportunities for enhanced cooperation, and for the instrumentation of confidence-building measures among responsible authorities and officers from countries of the West African region, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe. In this regard, joint training, exchange of operational staff and the role of drug liaison officers stationed in West Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean played a special role.

43. Several representatives emphasized that it was necessary not only to conduct successful investigations, but also to conduct successful prosecutions, which required robust judicial systems able to respond quickly to requests for mutual legal assistance.

## **V. Consideration of topics by working groups**

44. At its 4th and 8th meetings, on 29 September and 1 October 2009, the Meeting considered item 6 of its agenda, entitled “Consideration of topics by working groups”. The observations and conclusions of the working groups are presented below. For the recommendations of the working groups approved by the plenary, see section I above.

## Observations and conclusions of the working groups

### Issue 1. Improving the effectiveness of controlled deliveries among States

45. The working group on issue 1, “Improving the effectiveness of controlled deliveries among States”, held a meeting on 1 October 2009. In its consideration of the topic, the working group made the following observations:

(a) Criminal groups do not respect the sovereignty of States or the demarcation of national borders;

(b) Controlled deliveries have proved very successful in dismantling criminal organizations engaged in illicit drug trafficking. Such special investigation techniques attacked trafficking organizations at their roots, rather than dealing only with the minor players initially caught in possession of illicit drug consignments;

(c) The use of the international mail system and courier company networks to traffic illicit drugs poses a challenge for authorities considering undertaking a controlled delivery to identify the organization and individuals behind the consignment;

(d) Obstacles encountered in undertaking successful controlled deliveries include an absence of legislation, lack of familiarity with procedures for receiving and processing such requests, delays caused by official procedures and red tape associated with obtaining the proper legal clearances;

(e) It is incumbent upon the authorities at the destination of a controlled delivery to expeditiously inform counterpart agencies in the country of export of the outcome of the operation, together with details relating to the persons arrested, particularly any information, names, telephone numbers or companies linked to the country of export;

(f) A number of States have concluded, in bilateral agreements with likely destination or transit countries, an outline of minimum information requirements necessary to initiate a controlled delivery.

46. The working group drew the following conclusions:

(a) Despite the anonymity and speed of delivery of the international mail system and the services of courier companies, effective controlled delivery operations can still be undertaken;

(b) Controlled deliveries are fast-moving operations that required those involved in the process of obtaining the necessary clearances to be familiar with their roles and responsibilities so as to streamline the clearance process;

(c) A successful controlled delivery is successful only if all persons associated with the trafficking group, in both the country of destination and the country of export, are investigated for their involvement and prosecuted and convicted for their role in the offence;

(d) Getting successful controlled deliveries started is always difficult, but if the process is supported by an existing bilateral agreement, then obtaining the necessary clearances is much easier.

**Issue 2. Effective border management at sea container terminals**

47. The working group on issue 2, “Effective border management at sea container terminals”, held a meeting on 29 September 2009. In its consideration of the topic, the working group made the following observations:

(a) The volume of international trade in sea containers continues to grow, challenging the ability of individual law enforcement authorities to effectively manage the flow of goods through these key border entry and exit points;

(b) Crime groups and trafficking networks are becoming more sophisticated, more cross-border connected and more oriented towards operating at the international level. Authorities are encountering new fraud techniques and increasing sophistication on the part of smugglers;

(c) Trafficking groups are manufacturing their own duplicate container seal numbers, a growing trend that contaminates legitimate cargoes with smaller quantities of illicit drugs that, if undetected, over time amount to substantial quantities and net considerable profits;

(d) Multi-agency law enforcement units operating at container ports and terminals are an effective use of Government resources;

(e) The UNODC Container Control programme offers participating ports (i) access to training and software to support modern techniques of risk assessment, targeting and profiling; (ii) training in search techniques and equipment to support searches; (iii) assistance in establishing partnerships with commercial operators; and (iv) access to secure communications enabling participating authorities to exchange information about containers, companies and vessels of interest.

48. The working group drew the following conclusions:

(a) Without effective controls at ports and container terminals, economies in the region are put at risk, ports lose foreign investment and national exporters may be unfairly penalized by the criminal actions of a few;

(b) While customs services have traditionally taken the leading role at ports, collecting Government revenues, enforcing the regulations of other agencies and managing the inbound and outbound flow of trade, changing world trade patterns, increasing freight volumes and the growing sophistication of transnational crime groups now call for a collective agency response to border control;

(c) Establishing an inter-agency approach to managing the import, export and trans-shipment of containers encourages closer cooperation between authorities at these important border points, focuses more professional resources on border management and enhances the reach and effectiveness of national legislation to combat illicit drug trafficking and transnational crime;

(d) There is a need for law enforcement authorities managing container traffic to build up their information resources through the establishment of databases on illicit trafficking trends, seizure reports, import and export companies, individuals of interest, high-risk trade routes and *modi operandi* so as to be better placed to quantify risk and better select containers to search;

(e) A close and supportive engagement with private sector port operators, shipping companies and trade associations, such as the Business Alliance for Secure

Commerce, should be encouraged as a priority for authorities wishing to gain ready access to essential shipping and trade information.

## **VI. Follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly and the outcome of the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

49. At its 9th meeting, on 2 October 2009, the Meeting considered item 7 of its agenda, entitled “Follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly and the outcome of the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs”. For its consideration of the item, the Meeting had before it the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly and the outcome of the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.<sup>4</sup>

50. The Chairman of the Meeting made a statement. The Secretary also made a statement.

51. The Chairman drew the attention of the Meeting to the outcome of the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, held in Vienna on 11 and 12 March 2009, which provided follow-up to the commitments made by Member States at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, held in June 1998. The Chairman noted that the high-level segment of the Commission resulted in the adoption by Member States of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem,<sup>5</sup> which reflected a holistic and balanced approach to counteract the world drug problem, and that these embodied a commitment by Member States that needed to be reflected in measures at the national, regional and international levels. The Chairman emphasized that the Political Declaration and part II of the Plan of Action, on supply reduction and related measures, were particularly relevant to the work of the meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission and that the meetings of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, should consider how they would provide follow-up and contribute to the work of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in this regard.

52. The Secretary of the Meeting provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Commission, from 1998 to 2009, through the review, inter alia, of biennial reports to monitor the implementation by Member States of the goals and targets they set in the Political Declaration<sup>6</sup> and the measures to enhance international cooperation to counter the world drug problem<sup>7</sup> adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly.

53. Participants were provided with an overview of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action and the new commitments made by Member States therein. Attention was drawn in particular to those paragraphs of the Political Declaration and sections

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<sup>4</sup> A/64/92-E/2009/98.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., sect. II.A.

<sup>6</sup> General Assembly resolution S/20-2.

<sup>7</sup> General Assembly resolution S/20-4.

of the Plan of Action relating to supply reduction and related measures, including those on combating money-laundering and promoting judicial cooperation. It was noted that the provisional agendas of previous meetings of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, had included an item on the follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly and that the draft provisional agenda for the twentieth meeting contained an agenda item on the follow-up to the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

## **VII. Organization of the Twentieth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean**

54. At its 9th meeting, on 2 October 2009, the Meeting considered item 8 of its agenda, entitled “Organization of the Twentieth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean”. For its consideration of the item, the Meeting had before it a note by the Secretariat (UNODC/HONLAC/19/4) drawing attention to certain issues that needed to be addressed during the Twentieth Meeting and containing a draft provisional agenda for that Meeting.

55. The Chairman of the Meeting made a statement. Statements were also made by the representatives of Peru, Colombia, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Chile, Panama, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, the Bahamas, the United States, Argentina, Germany, Spain and Costa Rica. The Secretary of the Meeting also made a statement.

56. The representative of Peru informed the Meeting of the intention of the Government of Peru to host the Twentieth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, in 2010. The participants welcomed that offer. The representative of the Dominican Republic informed the Meeting of her Government’s support for the offer of Peru and noted that her Government had also been ready to host the Meeting. The Secretariat informed the participants that 4 to 8 October 2010 had been tentatively reserved for the Twentieth Meeting, and that it would communicate with the Government of Peru to make the necessary arrangements.

57. A number of topics were proposed for discussion by the working groups at the Twentieth Meeting, under item 5 of its draft provisional agenda, as follows: (a) sale and promotion of illicit drugs over the Internet, as well as the use of the Internet for the recruitment of persons into drug trafficking; (b) synthetic drugs and related trafficking; (c) drug trafficking and corruption; (d) judicial and police cooperation; (e) measures against the use of containers for illicit drug trafficking — new technologies for the control of containers, vehicular traffic and persons; (f) “super cannabis” and evaluation of cannabis trends across the region; and (g) the use of commercial flights, transport routes and smuggling modalities to evade controls in the trafficking of illicit drugs.

58. The Meeting took note of the proposals and requested the Secretariat to formulate the issues to be discussed by working groups prior to the Twentieth Meeting. On that basis, the following draft provisional agenda for the Twentieth Meeting was approved:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Major regional drug trafficking trends and countermeasures.
4. Implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Nineteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.
5. Consideration of issues by working groups [to be determined].
6. Follow-up to the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.
7. Organization of the Twenty-first Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.
8. Other business.
9. Adoption of the report of the Twentieth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.

59. In addition, one delegation proposed that the Twentieth Meeting should be informed about the current situation with regard to demand reduction in order to place the supply reduction situation in context. Another delegation recommended that at the Twentieth Meeting there should be an opportunity to report on progress made in implementing cooperation initiatives with the partner States in the West African region, to review related technical and legal issues and to discuss developing cooperation mechanisms. The Secretariat noted that these proposals could be considered under item 3 of the provisional agenda, where delegations could bring to the attention of the Meeting new and emerging trends and exchange views, knowledge and experience, while reserving the presentation of statistical information on seizures, arrests, mutual legal assistance and other matters for tabular presentations to be included in the country reports submitted to the Secretariat in advance of the Meeting. It was also noted that the issue of interregional law enforcement cooperation could be the subject of discussion under the appropriate agenda item at the sessions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs or of working-level, informal special meetings at the margins of the sessions of the Commission.

## **VIII. Other business**

60. At its 7th and 8th meetings, on 1 October 2009, the Meeting considered item 9 of its agenda, entitled "Other business".

61. The representative of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) made an audio-visual presentation. Statements were made by the representatives of the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Colombia, France, Panama and Spain. The observers of Togo,

the Gambia, the Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone also made statements. The representative of the International Narcotics Control Board made a statement. The Secretary of the Meeting also made a statement.

62. The representative of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) drew attention to recent seizures of cannabis that laboratory analyses showed to have a THC content of 8 per cent, twice that of the reference control sample. This high-THC cannabis was referred to as “super cannabis” or “transgenic cannabis”. He reported that its toxic effects lasted twice as long and that it had severe harmful consequences for the health of users.

63. The representative of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) drew attention to the existence of Internet sites promoting the illicit sale of such varieties of cannabis and providing advice on how to grow it, as well as recipes for the preparation of various edible products using cannabis. The representative asked other countries to be vigilant about the emergence of this variety of cannabis.

64. The representatives of West African States said that cannabis was a serious concern in their countries and thanked the representative of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) for the information provided. They would report to their authorities upon their return, and the information would enable them to exercise greater vigilance. They invited Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and other countries with knowledge and expertise in this regard to share it with them.

65. The Secretariat drew attention to resolution 52/5 of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, entitled “Exploration of all aspects related to the use of cannabis seeds for illicit purposes”. The Meeting was informed that in that resolution the Commission had noted that a number of Member States had reported an increase in the availability of cannabis plant, notably of cannabis plant cultivated indoors, and an average overall increase in the THC content of some varieties of cannabis plant. The Commission also urged all Member States to take strong measures against the illicit cultivation of cannabis plant, in compliance with the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961.<sup>8</sup>

66. Several delegations expressed concern about recent developments in some countries in the region to decriminalize the possession of illicit drugs. Attention was drawn to the provisions of the 1961 Single Convention that called on parties to adopt penal measures for possession of those drugs and provided only for their use for scientific and medical purposes. It was emphasized that these drugs were illicit and under international control because they were dangerous to health.

67. A number of speakers noted that the Meetings of HONLEA should also deal with matters related to demand reduction. In this regard, several speakers informed the Meeting about the balanced multidisciplinary approach adopted by their Governments, including in their national drug control plans, strategies and interventions, which covered all aspects of the drug problem. All participants recognized the importance of demand reduction programmes, strategies and interventions as part of a holistic approach. It was noted that the majority of Member States had reported to UNODC that they had developed balanced and multidisciplinary strategies covering all aspects of the world drug problem.

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 520, No. 7515.

68. A number of speakers drew the attention of the Meeting to the fact that demand reduction was not within the scope and mandate of the Meetings of HONLEA. It was noted that the mandate of the Meetings of HONLEA was to promote and facilitate international cooperation on drug law enforcement and related matters. Thus, the Meetings of HONLEA were not the appropriate forum to deal with demand reduction. Consequently, most delegations did not include national experts on tackling demand reduction issues and were thus unprepared to discuss such issues.

69. One speaker drew attention to the need to establish mechanisms to enable the real-time exchange of information on the licit trade in controlled substances and precursor chemicals, as well as pharmaceutical preparations containing controlled substances, in order to prevent diversion to illicit trade. The representative of the International Narcotics Control Board drew attention to the fact that such a system, the PEN Online system for precursor chemicals, was already in existence and was being used by a large number of Member States worldwide, including many of those present at the Meeting. The Meeting considered and endorsed related recommendations to be brought to the attention of Member States through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (see sect. I, “Other recommendations”).

## **IX. Adoption of the report of the Nineteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean**

70. At its 9th meeting, on 2 October 2009, the Nineteenth Meeting adopted its report (UNODC/HONLAC/19/L.1 and Add.1-6), including the reports of the working groups and the recommendations contained therein, as well as the recommendations of the round-table discussion on strengthening cooperation among the bodies involved in tackling drug trafficking between the States of Latin America and the Caribbean and the States of Africa, in particular West Africa, as orally revised.

## **X. Organization of the Meeting**

### **A. Opening and duration of the Meeting**

71. The Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, was held on Isla Margarita, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, from 28 September to 2 October 2009. The inaugural ceremony was held on 28 September 2009 and was addressed by Francisco Arias Cárdenas, the host country’s Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs for Latin America and the Caribbean, Tareck el Aissami, the host country’s Minister of the Interior and Justice, and José Manuel Martínez Morales, representative of the Executive Director and Chief of the UNODC Regional Programme Office for Central America.

## **B. Attendance**

72. The following States members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean were represented: Argentina, Bahamas, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Guyana, Haiti, Italy, Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

73. The following States were represented by observers: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

74. CICAD, the European Commission, the European Police Office, the International Criminal Police Organization and the International Narcotics Control Board were represented by observers.

75. DrugScope was represented as a non-governmental organization.

76. UNODC served as the secretariat of the Meeting.

## **C. Election of officers**

77. At its 1st meeting, on 28 September 2009, the Meeting elected the following officers by acclamation:

*Chairperson:* Néstor Luis Reverol (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

*First Vice-Chairperson:* Miguel Ángel Pérez Martín (Cuba)

*Second Vice-Chairperson:* Mabel I. Feliz Báez (Dominican Republic)

*Rapporteur:* Andrés Pérez López (Spain)

## **D. Adoption of the agenda**

78. Also at the 1st meeting, the Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted the following agenda:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Major regional drug-trafficking trends and countermeasures.
4. Implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.
5. Round-table discussion on strengthening cooperation among the bodies involved in tackling drug trafficking between the States of Latin America and the Caribbean and the States of Africa, in particular West Africa.
6. Consideration of topics by working groups:
  - (a) Improving the effectiveness of controlled deliveries among States;

- (b) Effective border management at sea container terminals.
- 7. Follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly and the outcome of the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.
- 8. Organization of the Twentieth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 9. Other business.
- 10. Adoption of the report of the Nineteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.

#### **E. Documentation**

- 79. The documents before the Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, are listed in the annex.

#### **XI. Closure of the Meeting**

- 80. Closing statements were made by a representative of the Secretariat, by the Chairman of the Nineteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, and by Tareck el Aissami, Minister of the Interior and Justice of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

## Annex

### List of documents before the Nineteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean

| <i>Document symbol</i>          | <i>Agenda item</i> | <i>Title or description</i>  |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| UNODC/HONLAC/19/1               | 2                  | Provisional agenda, including annotations and provisional timetable  |
| UNODC/HONLAC/19/2               | 3                  | Statistics on drug trafficking trends in the Americas and worldwide  |
| UNODC/HONLAC/19/3               | 4                  | Implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean                  |
| UNODC/HONLAC/19/4               | 6                  | Organization of the Twentieth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean  |
| UNODC/HONLAC/19/L.1 and Add.1-6 | 8                  | Draft report   |
| UNODC/HONLAC/19/CRP.1           | 3                  | Current situation with respect to regional and subregional cooperation   |
| UNODC/HONLAC/19/CRP.2-16        | 3                  | Country reports  |
| A/64/92-E/2009/98               | 7                  | Follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly and the outcome of the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs |