

2 November 2007

Original: English*

Seventeenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean

Quito, 15-19 October 2007

Report of the Seventeenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito from 15 to 19 October 2007

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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 Seventeenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean

1. The Seventeenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA), Latin America and the Caribbean, set up working groups to consider three main issues and to draw up recommendations on those issues. A fourth working group was established as a training workshop to examine aspects related to the detection and dismantling of clandestine laboratories used to manufacture amphetamine-type stimulants. The observations and conclusions that led to the recommendations are presented in chapter IV below. The Meeting adopted the recommendations below, which had been drawn up by its working groups on the issues considered.

Issue 1. Cannabis plant cultivation and trafficking in cannabis in Latin America and the Caribbean

2. With regard to issue 1, “Cannabis plant cultivation and trafficking in cannabis in Latin America and the Caribbean”, the following recommendations were made:

(a) Governments should be encouraged to assess the threat posed by cannabis in order to support the development of effective national strategies to counter the abuse of and trafficking in cannabis and the illicit cultivation of cannabis plants;

(b) Governments should be encouraged to develop national strategies to counter the illicit cultivation of cannabis plants, including eradication programmes that effectively discourage the illicit cultivation of such plants and offer viable alternatives, where appropriate, to rural communities that are dependent on income obtained from such cultivation;

(c) Governments should remain determined and proactive in the development and promotion of drug abuse prevention and awareness-raising campaigns that inform the public about the true dangers to public health and security associated with the cultivation of cannabis plants and with cannabis abuse and trafficking.

Issue 2. Money-laundering and related criminal activities in Latin America and the Caribbean

3. With regard to issue 2, “Money-laundering and related criminal activities in Latin America and the Caribbean”, the following recommendations were made:

(a) Governments that have not already done so should fully implement their national legislation against money-laundering and take steps to ensure that their laws cover all serious forms of crime;

(b) Governments should be encouraged to set up financial intelligence units and other types of intelligence units, taking the necessary steps to ensure that those units are properly resourced and equipped to carry out their functions;

(c) Governments should be encouraged to introduce strong and robust laws to regulate the matter of termination of ownership, where appropriate and in accordance with their national constitutional principles, and to regulate the administration of seized assets and funds derived from drug trafficking and other serious forms of crime.

Issue 3. Trafficking in and commercialization of amphetamine-type stimulants

4. With regard to issue 3, “Trafficking in and commercialization of amphetamine-type stimulants”, the following recommendations were made:

(a) Governments that have not already done so should ensure that their law enforcement officers receive adequate training in raising public awareness about the illicit manufacture of, trafficking in and abuse of synthetic drugs and the diversion of precursor chemicals used to manufacture synthetic drugs and in identifying such drugs and their precursors;

(b) Governments and regional and international organizations with experience in countering the illicit manufacture of, trafficking in and abuse of synthetic drugs and the diversion of the precursor chemicals used to manufacture those drugs should be encouraged to share their expertise with countries in the region that are beginning to be affected by the trafficking in those substances;

(c) Governments should encourage their law enforcement agencies to develop close working relationships with the chemical industries operating within their jurisdiction and, by so doing, to exchange information on legitimate commercial needs for precursor chemicals, unusual trends and suspicious transactions;

(d) Governments should take steps to ensure that law enforcement authorities investigating illicit drug offences are aware of the rapidly developing technologies available to trafficking syndicates for communication and data exchange; that the authorities are familiar with the means for obtaining intelligence and evidence and that they have the necessary resources and legislative support to carry out those tasks;

(e) Governments should endeavour to implement Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 49/3, entitled “Strengthening systems for the control of precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of synthetic drugs”, by cooperating with the International Narcotics Control Board and sharing information on the movement, transit and sale of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants.

II. Major regional drug trafficking trends and countermeasures

5. At its 1st to 4th meetings, held on 15 and 16 October 2007, the Meeting considered item 3 of its agenda, entitled “Major regional drug trafficking trends and

countermeasures". In considering the item, the Meeting had before it a document prepared by the Secretariat on the current situation with respect to regional and subregional cooperation (UNODC/HONLAC/2007/2). The Meeting also had before it a conference room paper on statistics and drug trafficking trends in the Americas and worldwide (UNODC/HONLAC/2007/CRP.1). In addition, the Meeting considered country reports on the drug trafficking situation, which had been submitted by Argentina, Barbados, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Honduras, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (UNODC/HONLAC/2007/CRP.2-18).

6. A representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) introduced the item and made an audio-visual presentation on drug trafficking trends in the region, placing them in the global context. The presentation was based on information provided by Governments to UNODC. The representatives of Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Panama, Argentina, Mexico and Brazil, and the observer for the Russian Federation also made audio-visual presentations. Statements were made by the representatives of Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, Haiti, the United States of America, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic.

7. In their interventions, all representatives presented information on the drug trafficking situation in their countries. They highlighted the success achieved by their competent authorities in recent years in their efforts to intercept illicit drug consignments sent by sea, land and air, to seize illicit drugs and precursor chemicals, to carry out operations to counter money-laundering and to prevent maritime drug trafficking. They also provided information on arrests for drug trafficking offences, as well as on changes in trafficking patterns and routes within and outside the region, modes of transportation, new and innovative methods of concealment, and the seizure and destruction of illicit drug manufacturing laboratories.

8. Several representatives noted that increasing use was being made of postal and courier services for smuggling illicit drugs. They mentioned measures that had been introduced to deal with that development.

9. Many representatives informed the Meeting of the additional arrangements that had been made to promote inter-institutional cooperation among law enforcement and judicial authorities at the national level. They also drew attention to the importance of collecting and producing intelligence and to the need to promote effective mechanisms for the exchange of that intelligence in real time. Participants referred to the fact that countries in the region were already collaborating, not only with each other, but also with countries outside the region. In fact, specific communication channels had been established to facilitate the secure exchange of information in real time. It was recognized that there was always room for improving the mechanisms for sharing information and that countries not already involved in those exchanges should consider joining them. A number of representatives specifically mentioned bilateral initiatives that had been taken to enhance information-sharing at border crossings and to establish joint intelligence centres in border areas.

10. Several representatives drew the participants' attention to the existence of new or revised national drug control plans and of changes in legislation that had either

recently come into force or had been presented for adoption, the aim of which was to enhance drug control measures and promote cooperation. Among the changes were the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (General Assembly resolution 58/4, annex) and of regional agreements and the adoption of new or revised laws to combat money-laundering, to lift bank secrecy regulations, to permit the interception of flights suspected of being involved in drug trafficking, to increase sanctions for drug trafficking offences, to enhance control and prevent the diversion of precursors, to enable the termination of ownership, to facilitate the use of seized assets in drug control and prevention initiatives and to sanction persons obstructing efforts to eradicate illicit crops, to mention just a few.

11. A number of speakers highlighted their countries' ongoing efforts to improve port security and to enhance the important role of customs services in contributing to drug control, interdiction efforts and international cooperation. Attention was also drawn to the UNODC project for enhancing controls of ports and containers, which was acknowledged to have contributed significantly to the increased seizures at the two main ports in Ecuador. Several representatives informed the Meeting that the capacity to conduct searches at border crossings, ports and airports by introducing non-intrusive search methods and using other technological means had recently been (or would soon be) enhanced. In this context, the representatives noted the paramount importance of working on the basis of accurate intelligence and of profiling containers, companies and individuals, given that the large volume of international commerce and travel made it impossible to achieve total coverage.

12. A number of representatives reported on the arrest of major drug traffickers and the dismantling of organized criminal groups, and provided information on a case study on the dismantling of a major network engaged in the smuggling of precursors, the manufacturing of amphetamine-type stimulants and the laundering of money. Reference was made to the increasing trafficking in precursors originating outside the region and their diversion from licit to illicit channels. The importance of cooperating with the International Narcotics Control Board was highlighted.

13. Attention was drawn to a decline in the number of clandestine laboratories used to manufacture amphetamine-type stimulants in the United States, which had been attributed to the application of tighter controls on precursors in that country. The tighter controls had led to those laboratories being relocated to other countries, particularly Mexico. A number of representatives noted that the level of abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants was growing and that that constituted an incipient threat to their countries, which were seizing, particularly at their international airports, increasing amounts of illicit synthetic drugs originating in Europe.

14. Several representatives noted the important role of the bilateral and multilateral cooperation and assistance they had received, including that provided by UNODC and regional intergovernmental organizations such as the European Union and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organization of American States. However, they also noted that the international assistance extended may have been insufficient to deal with the enormity of the problem; for example, the efforts made to facilitate market access for alternative development products were not sufficient and did not always reach the most needed areas.

15. A number of representatives informed the Meeting of efforts and programmes that their Governments had introduced to improve the skills of their law enforcement officials through specialized training.
16. Reference was made to the link between trafficking in drugs and the funding of terrorism, including through the bartering of drugs for weapons. Several representatives mentioned the existence of a new development that further demonstrated the link between terrorism and drug trafficking: the placing of landmines in fields where illicit crops were cultivated, in order to prevent the eradication of the crops by maiming and killing peasants and law enforcement officers engaged in manual eradication efforts.
17. Noting that interdiction efforts alone did not suffice, representatives emphasized the importance of tackling demand for illicit drugs through appropriate drug abuse prevention and reduction programmes, both within and outside the region, for which it was necessary to mobilize the whole community. Several representatives mentioned their Governments' efforts to mobilize the general public, provincial and local authorities, civil society and the private sector in tackling the drug problem. They also noted that, although their countries did not produce illicit drugs, they were being used as transit areas, which had led to increased levels of drug abuse and drug-related crime.
18. One representative referred to a system being introduced in his country that rewarded actions showing commitment to tackling the drug problem and penalized those that did not, for example by withholding subsidies or other forms of support.
19. Several representatives emphasized that the best ways to intercept drug consignments included sharing information, seizing the assets of major traffickers and preventing the diversion of precursor chemicals. It was noted that if precursors were not diverted, it would not be possible to manufacture illicit drugs.
20. The important role of judicial cooperation was also mentioned, particularly with regard to the management of requests for mutual legal assistance in combating drug trafficking organizations. Several representatives provided information on the matter.
21. One representative, referring to the difficult drug trafficking situation faced in Haiti, suggested that the mandate and capacity of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti should be expanded to enable it to assist in carrying out drug control efforts on the ground.
22. All speakers emphasized the readiness of their Governments to continue to participate in and increase bilateral, regional and international drug control cooperation.

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

23. At its 3rd and 4th meetings, on 16 October 2007, the Meeting considered item 4 of its agenda, entitled "Implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Sixteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin

America and the Caribbean, by States of the region". The Meeting had before it a document prepared by the Secretariat (UNODC/HONLAC/2007/3) on the basis of information provided by Governments in response to a questionnaire. The document reflected the replies received by the Secretariat from Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) by 18 September 2007. After that date or in the course of the Meeting, replies to the questionnaire were also received from Argentina, Barbados, Chile, Cuba, Germany, Panama and Trinidad and Tobago.

24. A representative of UNODC made an introductory statement. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela made an audio-visual presentation.

25. During the discussion of the item, statements were made by the representatives of Argentina, Panama, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, the United States, Cuba, Honduras, Colombia, Mexico, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago and Ecuador. The Meeting was informed of action taken to implement the recommendations adopted at the Sixteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Buenos Aires, from 23 to 27 October 2006.

26. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela informed the Meeting about a series of measures that his Government had taken to implement the recommendations of the Sixteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean. Those measures were included in a revised national drug control plan and aimed at enhancing border controls (including through the installation of non-intrusive equipment for conducting searches), controlling the trade in precursors and preventing their diversion, improving the distribution and compilation of data on drug control and drug abuse (including on the abuse of synthetic drugs) and securing information on the purchase of real estate in the border areas. The representative also provided information on measures taken to control the purchase and diversion of fuel, to promote the sharing of intelligence with other countries and to engage in joint operations. He also mentioned a number of legislative initiatives taken to monitor the use of aircraft and postal services, and to establish a national fund for handling seized assets. Mention was also made of a law on the termination of ownership.

27. A number of representatives provided information on the actions taken by their Governments to implement the recommendations that resulted from the discussion of the three issues considered by the working groups at the Sixteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean. The issues were: (a) the response of the region to cocaine manufacture and trafficking; (b) the rising threat of the abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants; and (c) maritime trafficking in illicit drugs.

28. With regard to the three recommendations under issue 1 on the response of the region to cocaine manufacture and trafficking, representatives highlighted measures introduced to enhance the control of precursor chemicals. They referred to bilateral agreements that had been made to facilitate cooperation on the control of precursors, specific cases of cooperation with countries in and outside the region and participation in specific operations or projects, such as the operation *Seis Fronteras* and the regional project for the control of chemical precursor products in Andean countries (PRECAN). In referring to PRECAN, one representative suggested that UNODC should manage the implementation of a future phase of the

project and that thought should be given to how PRECAN and the National Drug Control System developed by UNODC could be integrated.

29. One representative, noting the importance of promoting horizontal cooperation, mentioned that his Government was assisting the Governments of other countries in the region in developing their own systems. A number of representatives indicated measures to improve border control and inspection capacity, particularly through the introduction of non-intrusive search methods and the use of intelligence and profiling techniques. They also expressed their readiness to engage in transborder cooperation efforts and to respond promptly to requests for cooperation, including in terms of providing mutual legal assistance. Several representatives reported on measures to enhance inter-institutional coordination and cooperation at the national level in the eradication of illicit crops and related initiatives.

30. With regard to the promotion of regional and international cooperation, one representative noted that sometimes cooperation might be impeded by a national legal framework regulating when and under what circumstances information could be shared with other States. It was noted that States should have information about the normative framework of the countries with which they cooperated.

31. Referring to the three recommendations adopted at the Sixteenth Meeting on the rising threat of abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants, several representatives mentioned the measures their Governments had introduced to ensure the effective control of precursors used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants, and the specialized training that had been given to law enforcement agency personnel. Such training aimed, for example, at enhancing control at border points and at making available only a limited number of customs control points through which imports of precursor chemicals could pass. Representatives also mentioned measures introduced or being considered by their Governments to prevent the Internet from being used to promote and commercialize illicit and controlled substances. Others pointed out that their Governments lacked the resources, expertise and appropriate normative framework to do more and indicated that they would welcome international assistance from those Governments that had greater capacity in that area.

32. One representative said that it was important to cooperate fully with the International Narcotics Control Board in monitoring and controlling the legal trade in precursors. The representative also mentioned a time-bound operation conducted as part of Project Prism, an international cooperation initiative coordinated by the Board, in which many countries participated and that resulted in the successful prevention of the diversion of a large number of shipments of precursors used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants. Participation in such initiatives was regarded as an effective way of tightening controls and promoting effective cooperation.

33. With regard to the recommendations made on maritime trafficking in illicit drugs, several representatives spoke of the efforts that had been made by the law enforcement authorities in their countries responsible for maritime areas and inland waterways to enhance cooperation, including through the exchange of information. They also spoke of establishing centralized registers of vessels. One representative referred to a Caribbean clearance system operating under the auspices of the

Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council to facilitate the registration and monitoring of movements of pleasure boats within the subregion. However, the representative also noted that the vessels stopped being monitored once they had moved outside the subregion. Mention was also made of measures introduced to enhance port security by adhering to the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code.

IV. Consideration of topics by working groups

34. At its 5th to 8th meetings, on 17 and 18 October, the Meeting considered item 5 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 chapter I above.

Observations and conclusions of the working groups

Issue 1. Illicit cultivation of cannabis plant and trafficking in cannabis in Latin America and the Caribbean

35. The working group on issue 1, “Illicit cultivation of cannabis plant and trafficking in cannabis in Latin America and the Caribbean”, held a meeting on 17 October. In its consideration of the topic, the working group made the following observations:

(a) Cannabis continued to be the most widely produced, trafficked and abused illicit drug worldwide. All representatives reported on the situation in their countries with regard to drug seizures and drug use;

(b) Most of the illicit cannabis plant cultivation in the region took place in remote areas that were difficult to access, for example in valleys, forests and mountains. The income generated from such cultivation represented a solid income to many persons living in rural communities;

(c) In some countries, the public perceived cannabis to be a “soft drug” whose use caused minimal harm and even offered medicinal benefits, although that view was not supported by evidence. Many sectors of society were not fully aware of the threat that cannabis posed to health, the maintenance of law and order in the community and economic development;

(d) Established, sophisticated and well-organized criminal groups in the region were making considerable profits from trafficking in cannabis.

36. The working group drew the following conclusions:

(a) Data obtained from surveys on the extent of cannabis plant cultivation and the prevalence of cannabis abuse were essential to policymakers developing national strategies to combat trafficking in and abuse of cannabis;

(b) The remoteness of the illicit cannabis plant cultivation sites, the fact that such cultivation was a clandestine activity and the aggressive measures used by

traffickers to protect their illicit crops made it difficult and often dangerous to implement illicit crop eradication programmes;

(c) The perception that cannabis was relatively harmless needed to be corrected. The rising prevalence of cannabis with higher potency was clear evidence of the seriousness of the threat;

(d) There was a need for ongoing, proactive programmes for raising awareness about the risk of cannabis abuse among those persons most vulnerable to such abuse. The courts also needed to be made aware of the seriousness of the consequences of cannabis trafficking and abuse and that decriminalizing cannabis use put communities in danger;

(e) Cannabis was being used for barter trade by criminal organizations involved in various types of crime, as evidenced by the fact that cannabis trafficking was associated with the smuggling of weapons, bank robberies and the funding of other illegal activities.

Issue 2. Money-laundering and related criminal activities in Latin America and the Caribbean

37. The working group on issue 2, “Money-laundering and related criminal activities in Latin America and the Caribbean”, held a meeting on 17 October. In its consideration of the topic, the working group made the following observations:

(a) Money-laundering offences in the region were largely related to the investigation of drug trafficking cases;

(b) Money-laundering should be established as an autonomous offence, with all serious crimes considered as predicate offences to money-laundering;

(c) The establishment of financial intelligence units had proved to be an effective way of identifying attempts to launder the proceeds of crime;

(d) Termination of ownership procedures had proved their value, in some jurisdictions, as an important tool for helping authorities to deprive organized criminal groups of the proceeds of crime;

(e) Participation in regional organizations for countering money-laundering, such as the Financial Action Task Force of South America against Money Laundering (GAFISUD), the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force and the working group of experts on money-laundering of the Organization of American States, helped in the implementation of international standards to combat money-laundering.

38. The working group drew the following conclusions:

(a) It was essential that all countries in the region had equally strong and effective legislation against money-laundering and procedures to prevent criminals from exploiting weaknesses or anomalies in the legislative and regulatory frameworks that might exist in certain jurisdictions;

(b) The effectiveness of financial intelligence units was greatly enhanced when their work was integrated with that of other law enforcement authorities dedicated to the investigation of financial crime (such as police, customs and border

control authorities), prosecutors and regulatory and supervisory entities (such as the central banks);

(c) Consideration should be given to the establishment of intelligence units covering the non-financial sector to investigate the laundering of assets such as investments, construction projects, property and livestock (including assets obtained through the involvement of persons in the liberal professions) and other areas of professional and economic activity;

(d) Governments needed to develop strict laws to regulate the termination of ownership and the administration of funds in cases of seized assets, as such laws provided authorities with powerful tools to act against traffickers.

Issue 3. Trafficking in and commercialization of amphetamine-type stimulants

39. The working group on issue 3, “Trafficking in and commercialization of amphetamine-type stimulants”, held a meeting on 18 October. In its consideration of the topic, the working group made the following observations:

(a) There could be no synthetic drugs without precursor chemicals;

(b) Throughout the world, laboratories for manufacturing “ecstasy” were expanding. Identifying them and dismantling the organized criminal groups operating them required a multi-agency approach and cooperation among authorities in various countries;

(c) Monitoring the sale and movement of machinery and parts used in the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs, together with the associated financial transactions, could lead authorities to the main persons behind the operations and to the location of clandestine laboratories;

(d) The Internet was increasingly being used to sell synthetic drugs and controlled pharmaceutical products. The use of voice over the Internet protocols by those trading in such substances to communicate with each other was a challenge for law enforcement authorities.

40. The working group drew the following conclusions:

(a) It was essential to establish bilateral and multilateral agreements between States to facilitate fast and effective cooperation in the investigation of offences involving the illicit manufacture of and trade in synthetic drugs;

(b) Law enforcement authorities of countries in the region were still unfamiliar with the synthetic drug phenomenon. Therefore, many authorities in the front line needed training in how to raise public awareness and how to identify synthetic drugs and the precursor chemicals used in their manufacture;

(c) Establishing specialized investigation response teams composed of representatives of various kinds of agencies (for example, police, customs and border control officers, forensic staff and public prosecutors) was an effective way to counter the operations of synthetic drug manufacturers;

(d) Traffickers’ attempts to substitute chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs could be linked directly to the effectiveness of the controls implemented by authorities. One example was the purchase of cold and flu remedies from which pseudoephedrine could be extracted. National chemical

control legislation needed to be sufficiently flexible to enable authorities to move fast to counter attempts by drug traffickers to use substitute chemicals not under international control in the manufacture of synthetic drugs;

(e) Law enforcement authorities investigating drug trafficking offences needed to be aware of new developments in technologies for communicating and exchanging data, and of how to use them to effectively gather intelligence and evidence. Drug trafficking offences involving cybercrime were increasing, as was the incidence of Internet pharmacies.

Issue 4. Examination of aspects related to the detection and dismantling of clandestine laboratories used to manufacture amphetamine-type stimulants (training workshop)

41. At its 8th meeting, on 18 October 2007, the Meeting held a training workshop on the examination of aspects related to the detection and dismantling of clandestine laboratories used to manufacture amphetamine-type stimulants.

42. Experts of the national police force of the Netherlands conducted a training session that included a presentation in which they explained, through a hands-on laboratory demonstration, the chemical processes and principles involved in the synthesis and manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants and of amphetamine and “ecstasy” in particular. They also gave information on the equipment and precursor chemicals required for the manufacture of amphetamine and “ecstasy”, on the waste products that are produced and how they are recycled and on the methods used to smuggle and conceal precursor chemicals and amphetamine-type stimulants.

43. After the laboratory demonstration, a question and answer session was held.

V. Organization of the Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean

44. At its 9th meeting, on 19 October, the Seventeenth Meeting considered item 6 of its agenda, entitled “Organization of the Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean”. The Meeting had before it a note by the Secretariat (UNODC/HONLAC/2007/4) drawing attention to certain issues that needed to be addressed during the Eighteenth Meeting and containing a draft provisional agenda for that Meeting.

45. The representative of Honduras informed the participants of the offer by her Government to host the Eighteenth Meeting in 2008. The participants welcomed that offer. The Secretariat informed the participants that it would communicate with the Government of Honduras to make the necessary arrangements for hosting the Eighteenth Meeting.

46. A number of issues for discussion were put forward by the working groups at the Eighteenth Meeting, under item 5 of its draft provisional agenda, as follows: (a) it was suggested that the cannabis problem continue to be an issue for discussion as it required greater analysis; (b) trafficking in amphetamine-type stimulants and their precursors in the region and the enforcement of controls to counter illicit drug

trafficking by air, as well as controls over precursor chemicals, through the establishment of regulatory frameworks and the implementation of action based on best practices; (c) trafficking in cocaine; (d) the use of the Internet and other advanced communication technologies by drug trafficking organizations and the need for authorities to strengthen their capacity to counter that development; (e) international cooperation and the exchange of information; (f) Internet pharmacies; (g) promoting and enhancing cooperation among States in the region by applying multilateral and regional cooperation arrangements; and (h) drug demand reduction: policies and mass media campaigns. It was agreed that the Secretariat would finalize, in consultation with States in the region, as appropriate, the wording of the issues to be considered by the working groups at the Eighteenth Meeting.

47. The Meeting took note of the proposals and requested the Secretariat to formulate the issues to be discussed by the working groups prior to the Eighteenth Meeting. On that basis, the following draft provisional agenda for the Eighteenth 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 Seventeenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.
5. Consideration of issues by working groups.
6. Follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly.
7. Organization of the Nineteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.
8. Other business.
9. Adoption of the report of the Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.

VI. Other business

48. The representative of Ecuador suggested that the Eighteenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, should consider ways and means of enhancing cooperation, coordination and the exchange of information in real time, and of promoting mutual legal assistance among the national drug law enforcement authorities of countries in the region. The representative recommended that HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean should consider the establishment of a joint regional information and coordination centre, which could be established in a country in the region and benefit from the participation of other countries in the region. She also indicated that the Government of Ecuador would be willing to host such a centre and that it had drafted a proposal for discussion. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expressed support for the proposal.

VII. Adoption of the report of the Seventeenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean

49. At its 9th meeting, on 19 October 2007, the Seventeenth Meeting adopted its report (UNODC/HONLAC/2007/L.1 and Add.1-5), including the reports of the working groups and the recommendations contained therein, as orally amended. Prior to the adoption of the report, the representative of the Netherlands said that his Government could not agree with the observation contained in paragraph 36 (d) above, which was agreed to following the discussion of issue 1, entitled “Illicit cultivation of cannabis plant and trafficking in cannabis in Latin America and the Caribbean”, as the use of the substance had not been criminalized in his country.

VIII. Organization of the Meeting

A. Opening and duration of the Meeting

50. The Seventeenth Meeting of HONLEA, Latin America and the Caribbean, was held in Quito from 15 to 19 October 2007. At the opening meeting, held on 15 October 2007, statements were made by the Undersecretary of Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Integration of Ecuador, by the Representative of the Executive Director of UNODC and Representative of the UNODC Country Office in Peru and by the Minister of the Interior and the Police (on behalf of the President of Ecuador).

B. Attendance

51. The following States members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean were represented: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

52. Australia, the Russian Federation and Switzerland were represented by observers.

53. The European Commission, Interpol, CICAD and the United Nations Development Programme were represented by observers.

54. UNODC served as the secretariat of the Meeting.

C. Election of officers

55. At its 1st meeting, on 15 October 2007, the Meeting elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairperson: Domingo Paredes Castillo (Ecuador)

<i>First Vice-Chairperson:</i>	Ofelia Gutiérrez (Honduras)
<i>Second Vice-Chairperson:</i>	Edylberto José Molina Molina (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)
<i>Rapporteur:</i>	Gustavo Enrique Bonelli Vásquez (Peru)

D. Adoption of the agenda

56. At its 1st meeting, on 15 October 2007, the Meeting adopted the following agenda:

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 Sixteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.
5. Consideration of topics by working groups:
 - (a) Illicit cultivation of cannabis plant and trafficking in cannabis in Latin America and the Caribbean;
 - (b) Money-laundering and related criminal activities in Latin America and the Caribbean;
 - (c) Trafficking in and commercialization of amphetamine-type stimulants.
6. Organization of the Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.
7. Other business.
8. Adoption of the report of the Seventeenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean.

E. Documentation

57. The documents before the Seventeenth Meeting are listed in the annex to the present report.

IX. Closure of the Meeting

58. Closing statements were made by the Chairperson of the Seventeenth Meeting and by a representative of the Secretariat.

Annex

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

<i>Document number</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Title or description</i>
UNODC/HONLAC/2007/1	2	Provisional agenda, including annotations and provisional timetable
UNODC/HONLAC/2007/2	3	Current situation with respect to regional and subregional cooperation
UNODC/HONLAC/2007/3	4	Implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Sixteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean
UNODC/HONLAC/2007/4	6	Organization of the Eighteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean
UNODC/HONLAC/2007/L.1 and Add.1-5	8	Draft report
UNODC/HONLAC/2007/CRP.1	3	Statistics on drug trafficking trends in the Americas and worldwide
UNODC/HONLAC/2007/CRP.2-18	3	Country reports