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Report on the meeting of the expert group on data collection held in Vienna from 12 to 15 January 2010

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/12, the expert group on data collection held a meeting in Vienna from 12 to 15 January 2010.

II. Recommendations adopted by the expert group on data collection

2. The expert group on data collection adopted the recommendations set forth in the paragraphs below.

3. The expert group on data collection recommended that a revised draft annual report questionnaire, to be made up of four parts but to be considered a single, comprehensive data collection tool, as amended at the meeting, be submitted to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its fifty-third session for its consideration (see E/CN.7/2010/15/Add.1-4). The expert group also recommended that, pursuant to Commission resolution 52/12, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) carry out a consultative process with Member States. The expert group further recommended that the revised draft annual report questionnaire be made available to Member States in the six official languages of the United Nations, asking for supplementary comments to be compiled in a document for submission to the Commission at its fifty-third session.

4. In addition to adopting the above-mentioned recommendations, the expert group on data collection adopted the recommendations set forth below, which were considered by the participants in the meeting under agenda items 4 and 5.

Revision of the mechanism to collect and report information

5. The following recommendations were made with regard to the revision of the mechanism to collect and report information:



(a) Each Member State should nominate one focal point for collecting data and information on illicit drugs. The transmission of such data and information to UNODC should be made in accordance with domestic laws and regulations. A list of focal points could be updated by the Secretariat;

(b) Collaboration among regional and international organizations should be encouraged in order to achieve greater coherence and compatibility of methods and approaches in data collection on the world drug situation;

(c) In recognition of the substantial resource implications involved, a costed proposal should be submitted to the Commission for consideration at its fifty-third session, outlining a strategy for the development of a Web-based reporting mechanism and the provision of technical support to those reporting within this system;

(d) All documentation related to the collection of data should be translated into the six official languages of the United Nations; in particular, those translations should retain the precise meaning of all technical terms.

Measures to build the capacity of Member States to collect and report information

6. Capacity-building, including in relation to the provision of training in completing the revised draft annual report questionnaire, should be made a priority with a view to improving the quantity and quality of data.

III. Organization of the meeting

A. Opening and duration of the meeting

7. The expert working group on data collection met from 12 to 15 January 2010, pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/12. The Chair of the fifty-third session of the Commission made an opening statement. The elected Chair of the expert working group also addressed the meeting. The Secretary introduced the provisional agenda and the proposed organization of work (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/1).

B. Attendance

8. The meeting was attended by representatives of 51 States Members of the United Nations and eight observers for intergovernmental organizations. A list of participants is contained in UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/INF.1.

C. Election of officers

9. At its 1st meeting, on 12 January 2010, the expert group on data collection elected the following officers by acclamation:

<i>Office</i>	<i>Regional group</i>	<i>Elected officer</i>
<i>Chair</i>	Group of Latin American and Caribbean States	Ulises Canchola Gutiérrez (Mexico)
<i>First Vice-Chair</i>	Group of Western European and Other States	Louisa Degenhardt (Australia)
<i>Rapporteur</i>	Group of African States	Kenjika Linus Ekedede (Nigeria)

D. Adoption of the agenda

10. At its 1st meeting, the expert group adopted by consensus its provisional agenda (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/1). The agenda was as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Content and structure of a revised, simple and efficient reporting system.
4. Revision of the mechanism for collecting and reporting information.
5. Measures to build the capacity of Member States to collect and report information.
6. Conclusions and recommendations.
7. Adoption of the report.

E. Documentation

11. The documents before the expert group on data collection are listed in the annex to the present report.

F. Closure of the meeting

12. A closing statement was made by the Chair, who expressed his thanks and appreciation to the participants for their excellent cooperation and the constructive spirit in which the deliberations had been conducted and, on behalf of all participants, to the Secretariat for the substantive preparations and contributions, as well as the smooth running of the meeting.

IV. Deliberations

A. Content and structure of the revised draft annual report questionnaire

13. At its first five meetings, held from 12 to 14 January 2010, the expert group on data collection considered agenda item 3, "Content and structure of a revised, simple and efficient reporting system".

14. For its consideration, the expert group had before it the following:

- (a) Draft annual report questionnaire: part I (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/2);
- (b) Draft annual report questionnaire: part II.A (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/3);
- (c) Draft annual report questionnaire: part II.B (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/4);
- (d) Draft annual report questionnaire: part III (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/5);
- (e) Draft annual report questionnaire: part IV (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/6).

1. Part I. Legislative framework

15. At its 1st meeting, on 12 January 2010, the expert group on data collection considered agenda item 3, "Content and structure of a revised, simple and efficient reporting system". The expert group had before it the "Draft annual report questionnaire: part I" (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/2).

16. Some Member States expressed disappointment that the process of consultation leading up to the expert group meeting on data collection had not been more extensive and inclusive, and that the documents to be considered at the meeting had not been provided earlier. In that connection, several delegates stressed that their comments were preliminary and that Member States would need more time to analyse the draft questionnaire, including the definitions and the classes of drugs. The Secretariat noted that the preparatory work for the meeting had been completed without any extrabudgetary resources, and within a relatively short time frame. Some delegates noted that the report summarizing the recommendations arising from the informal expert group meeting in July 2009 that had been made available as a conference room paper and was to be placed on the UNODC website, should have been made available immediately after that meeting. Member States could have submitted comments and questions by e-mail without any need for extra resources.

17. Experts made a range of comments regarding the structure, layout and wording of the questions as well as the response options. Where possible and appropriate, those comments were incorporated into a new version of the draft revised questionnaire.

2. Part II. Programmes

18. At its 4th meeting, on 13 January 2010, the expert group on data collection considered agenda item 3, "Content and structure of a revised, simple and efficient reporting system". The expert group had before it the following:

- (a) Draft annual report questionnaire: part II.A (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/3);

(b) Draft annual report questionnaire: part II.B (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/4).

19. The Secretariat indicated that the text contained in the documents was a first draft and that comments were very welcome. Given the technical nature of the discussion, the Chair requested that proposed revisions be provided to the Secretariat in writing wherever possible.

20. Some experts indicated that although they were willing to give preliminary consideration to the proposed drafts, they would like to give the documents further consideration after the meeting. Delegates identified a number of typographical errors and noted some instances where the response options appeared to be out of sequence. In line with the recommendation regarding parts I, III and IV of the questionnaire, it was suggested that part II.A and part II.B also include a list of agreed definitions.

21. A number of experts expressed a desire to have a better understanding of the links between the proposed questions and the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem. It was noted that although the proposed questions were based on the principles in the Declaration, it was not always possible to identify which particular paragraphs in the Declaration had been used as the basis for specific questions. Some of the principles underpinning the proposed questions were outlined by the Secretariat, and a number of delegates emphasized the importance of harmonization with regional and international agencies. A few experts identified questions that would be more appropriate in other parts of the revised draft questionnaire, and those suggestions were duly noted.

22. Experts made a range of other recommendations regarding changes to the structure and layout of questions, to the options included within questions, and to the wording of questions and response options. In particular, several experts considered it unnecessary to retain part II.B and suggested its content be moved to other parts of the questionnaire. All those recommendations were duly noted and incorporated into a second draft of the questionnaire where possible and appropriate.

3. Part III. Extent, patterns and trends in drug use

23. At its 2nd meeting, on 12 January 2010, the expert group on data collection considered agenda item 3, "Content and structure of a revised, simple and efficient reporting system". The expert group had before it the "Draft annual report questionnaire: part III" (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/5).

24. The Secretariat provided an overview of the preparatory work for the meeting of the expert group and highlighted some of the key proposed changes to part III of the annual report questionnaire, including the move to an electronic format using an Excel spreadsheet enhanced collection of metadata and proposed changes to drug categories.

25. Experts made a number of specific suggestions regarding changes to the wording, format or response options for questions. All comments were duly noted and, where possible and appropriate, suggestions were implemented in a revised version of the draft questionnaire, which was presented to the expert group for comments.

4. Part IV. Extent, patterns and trends in drug cultivation, manufacture and trafficking

26. At its 3rd meeting, on 13 January 2010, the expert group on data collection considered agenda item 3, “Content and structure of a revised, simple and efficient reporting system”. The expert group had before it the “Draft annual report questionnaire: part IV” (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/6).

27. It was noted that some of the issues regarding part III of the revised questionnaire were also relevant to part IV, particularly the introduction, definitions, drug categories and the identification of focal points.

28. Several delegates questioned whether that part of the annual report questionnaire unnecessarily duplicated data already collected by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) relating to illicit manufacture and precursor chemicals and information provided pursuant to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Additionally, there was confusion regarding terms used in the section on illicit manufacture. It was agreed that the Secretariat would coordinate with the INCB to minimize duplication and clarify terms.

29. In the interest of harmonization, it was suggested that the relevant proposed definitions relating to crime prevention in the questionnaire be submitted to the expert group on improving the collection, reporting and analysis of crime data, which was scheduled to hold a meeting in Buenos Aires from 8 to 10 February 2010.

30. Experts made a number of specific suggestions regarding changes to the wording, format or response options for questions. All comments were duly noted and, where possible and appropriate, suggestions were incorporated into a revised version of the questionnaire, which was presented to the expert group for comments.

B. Revision of the mechanism to collect and report information

31. At its 6th meeting, on 14 January 2010, the expert group on data collection considered agenda item 4, “Revision of the mechanism for collecting and reporting information”. The expert group had before it a “Review of the data collection process and preparatory activities for the development of a new annual report questionnaire” (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/7).

32. In line with UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/7, experts acknowledged some of the challenges associated with collecting data on illicit drugs at the global level, including in particular some of the significant data gaps and some key technical issues. Experts also acknowledged some of the technical challenges associated with the transmission and processing of data on illicit drugs.

33. There was widespread support among experts for the proposal, unless Member States opted otherwise, to identify focal points for Member States. The advantages of those focal points having relevant technical expertise was noted, as well as the importance of communication being transparent in all cases, using diplomatic channels.

34. The expert group stressed the importance of avoiding duplication and ensuring consistency among international organizations and invited UNODC to coordinate the finalization of the data collection tool with relevant organizations, including INCB, the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

35. Experts considered the advantages of adopting an electronic interface for data collection, suggesting that that should ideally be Web-based. They noted that in developing such an interface, it would be important to fully consider the range of technologies available, and suggested considering the benefits of utilizing the experience available within UNODC and other regional and international organizations in implementing similar tools. It was further noted that although such a system would be advantageous, it should not be implemented at the expense of capacity-building efforts at the regional and global levels.

36. Experts emphasized the necessity of ensuring that the questionnaire and related documents be translated into the six official languages of the United Nations and, in particular, that those translations retain the precise meaning of all technical terms.

37. Some experts noted the importance of maintaining data transparency, using official data and statistics provided or authorized by Government authorities where available. Other experts stated that that was not always possible and that, therefore, the use of alternative sources of data should be considered. Experts also stressed the importance of transparency in the reporting of data on illicit drugs, particularly with regard to the nature of the data sources used to generate information on the global situation with respect to illicit drugs.

38. One delegation stated that an editorial board should be established to help the UNODC to process the recommendations from the expert meeting in preparation for the fifty-third session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Experts noted that the establishment of such a board would be consistent with the mandate granted to UNODC and that one of the key functions of the board would be to ensure consistency in the terminology used in the annual report questionnaire. It was also noted that it would be crucial for that board to coordinate with INCB and other regional and international entities to ensure the harmonization of terminology and indicators.

C. Measures to build the capacity of Member States to collect and report information

39. At its 6th meeting, on 14 January 2010, the expert group on data collection considered agenda item 5, "Measures to build the capacity of Member States to collect and report information". The expert group had before it a conference room paper entitled "Capacity-building in the field of illicit drug data collection" (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/CRP.1).

40. The expert group discussed the importance of capacity-building and acknowledged that support activities should meet the specific needs of each country. It also emphasized that a recipient country should always provide its consent before capacity-building activities could be implemented.

41. Several experts highlighted that in order to target the assistance better, there should be an assessment of specific needs and an evaluation of countries and regions to be prioritized.

42. Several experts also commented on the benefits of building on existing activities. They stressed that there were areas where a common methodology had been developed, which should be supported.

43. Several experts stressed that it could be useful for technical contact points to remain in touch through networks, visits or meetings in order to share experience and contribute to capacity-building efforts.

44. Some delegates suggested exploring, in the context of the Commission, the establishment of a steering group with appropriate regional representation to advise UNODC on capacity-building in the area of illicit drug data collection, analysis and reporting. Experts noted that such a steering group would initially require an assessment of the current capacity of countries and the problems they faced. The members of the steering group should be selected on the basis of objective criteria. Member States would consider the merits of that proposal during the fifty-third session of the Commission.

D. Conclusions and recommendations

45. At its 7th and 8th meetings, on 15 January 2010, the working group considered agenda item 6, "Conclusions and recommendations", in conjunction with the adoption of the report. Under that item, the Chair noted that the expert group on data collection had reviewed the four parts of the draft annual report questionnaire. The experts had undertaken the revision with the aim of improving and simplifying the questionnaire in order to obtain accurate, reliable and internationally comparable data on all relevant aspects of the world drug situation and in conformity with the provisions of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem and other relevant international instruments. The group of experts had however stressed the preliminary nature of the comments and amendments provided during the meeting. The Chair therefore recommended that, pursuant to Commission resolution 52/12, the Secretariat continue consultations with Member States. In order to do so, the Secretariat would make the revised draft annual report questionnaire available to Member States in the six official languages of the United Nations, asking for supplementary comments. The latter would be compiled in a document that would be submitted to the Commission at its fifty-third session, in addition to the present report on the meeting of the expert group. The expert group endorsed those recommendations.

46. The recommendations made by the expert group and adopted at the meeting with regard to the mechanism to collect and report information are contained in paragraphs 1-5 above.

E. Adoption of the report on the meeting of the expert group

47. At its 7th and 8th meetings, the expert group on data collection adopted its report, including its conclusions and recommendations, as well as the revised draft questionnaire (UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/8/Add.1-4), to be submitted to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its fifty-third session.

Annex

Documents before the expert group on data collection

<i>Document</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Title or description</i>
UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/1	2	Provisional agenda and annotations
UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/2	3	Draft annual report questionnaire: part I
UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/3	3	Draft annual report questionnaire: part II.A
UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/4	3	Draft annual report questionnaire: part II.B
UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/5	3	Draft annual report questionnaire: part III
UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/6	3	Draft annual report questionnaire: part IV
UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/7	4	Review of the data collection process and preparatory activities for the development of a new annual report questionnaire
UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/L.1 and Add.1-3	7	Draft report
UNODC/CND/EG.1/2010/CRP.1	5	Capacity-building in the field of illicit drug data collection