



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 24 July 2009

**12000/1/09
REV 1**

**CORDROGUE 49
COAFR 238
JAI 477**

NOTE

from : Czech delegation
to : Horizontal Working Party on Drugs

Subject : Progress report on the implementation of the Council conclusions designed to reinforce the law enforcement action of EU Member States in the fight against drug trafficking in West Africa

1. The JHA Council of 18 November 2008 in its conclusions¹ addressed EU actions in combating illicit drug trafficking in West Africa. Various steps in several directions have been foreseen, namely increasing the consistency of actions by EU MS law enforcement agencies and involving the bodies of the EU, preparing an inventory of current EU actions in the region, identifying new operational actions, making proposals to reinforce the fight against drug trafficking in West Africa and enhancing the dialogue with the countries of the region. The Council asked the successive Presidencies to provide progress reports of this work to the relevant preparatory bodies of the Council and, as soon as particular progress has been made, to the Council.
2. The Czech Presidency put the West Africa dossier high on its agenda in order to ensure continuity and progress of the work on the JHA Council conclusions in several directions.

¹ Document 15812/1/08 REV 1 JAI 645 CORDROGUE 82 COAFR 368

a. Open-ended Informal Group on West Africa/Drugs

An informal group of interested Members States, the European Commission and the Secretariat General of the Council (“Friends of West Africa”¹) has been established and worked to facilitate the pursuance of the Council conclusions; it convened three times during the Czech term of office (3 February, 16 March, 23 June 2009). Its work along the broad lines of the Council conclusions focused on the following areas/issues:

- In the initial debates, a need was identified to have a better knowledge of the threat; it was partly met by the respective regional chapter of the 2008 OCTA and in response to the HDG request Europol has produced a specific assessment of the drug threat in the region which was orally presented at the HDG meeting. of 24 June 2009 (and was going to be distributed shortly thereafter). Thanks to contributions by Europol, the EU’s collective understanding of the threat has improved.
- An inventory (matrix) of current actions by the Member States and EU institutions contributing to the fight against drug trafficking in West Africa has been compiled by the Council Secretariat assisted by the Commission with inputs received from Member States and the Commission. It shows a large set of activities, often of multi-year nature, led and funded by both the Member States and the Community. The inventory should be used both by Member States and the Commission for further planning of their assistance activities in the region and for co-ordinating it with other international partners. Thus it can contribute to increasing the consistency of the EU action in the region. The inventory kept up by the Council Secretariat will have to be updated continuously (and at least once in a semester); the responsibility for updating lies with those who undertake the activities reported.

¹ With the participation of AT, BE, DE, DK, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, PT, SE, SI, UK as well as the Commission, Europol and Council Secretariat.

- The ongoing EU work on new operational actions in the region was kept under review. The Member States (FR, IT, ES and the UK) involved in the project titled “Shared parameters for Intelligence Sharing and Capacity Building on Drug Trafficking – West Africa”, co-funded by the European Commission under DG JLS ISEC Programme, informed of the progress of work on the feasibility study on an EU platform of cooperation for exchanging criminal intelligence, however the final report was not available by the end of June 2009 (July was the new deadline). It may have to be considered in-depth when the HDG and/or other Council bodies start preparing any new action in that regard as well as the final report to the Council. Conclusions regarding ways of operating such platforms with third country partners will hopefully emerge from the study; until then the study could in any event be useful in the co-operation between individual Member States within the West African region (with some Member States having already established national platforms).

- Participants in the informal group were also invited, along the lines of the Council conclusions, to make proposals to reinforce the fight against drug trafficking in West Africa, in particular in connection with a transfer of skills and experience, to give an advantage to the law enforcement agencies of West African states. Given the lack of specific proposals from MS, the sense of the Presidency is that such ideas can be meaningfully considered only at a later stage in consultation with the Commission.

b. Co-operation with West African states

Pursuing the enhancement of the drug dialogue with the West African states, the Czech Presidency included a meeting of the HDG Troika with the ECOWAS Commission and its member states into its calendar. The meeting took place on 25 June 2009 with the situation in the region and the state of the PRAIA action plan of ECOWAS laid out and the work and the contribution of the EU to the regional anti-drug efforts presented. The meeting did not bring about any new or more precise information on the drug situation in the region. The discussion focussed on the support of the EU for the ECOWAS “Regional Action Plan to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organised crime and drug abuse in West Africa” of Praia 2008, and for the more specific “Operational Plan by the ECOWAS Commission” which was presented in detail; the activities foreseen in the latter are costed at nearly 13 million Euro.

The planned activities are limited to the level of the ECOWAS Commission and remain to be matched by a corresponding national action by ECOWAS members. The European Commission presented the available financial instruments and the respective envelopes for drug projects (up to 20M Euro from EDF, 6.5M Euro from the Instrument for Stability). A few EU Member States referred to their bilateral assistance to the region in general terms. ECOWAS members appealed to the EU to make the funding available earlier than the in 2010. However, ECOWAS was not able to tell what part of the funding for the “Operational Plan” was already ensured and whether other international partners had already pledged any support. Overall, the meeting noted the impressive progress made by ECOWAS, supported by the EU, in developing the Operational Plan. The EU involvement in the Operational Plan, including in the funding of the activities, is likely to be the centrepiece of the EU support for the regional anti-drug efforts. The EU is also committed to further enhancing the dialogue with the ECOWAS as the Joint Statement of the Ministerial meeting of the EU Troika and ECOWAS of 16 June 2009 foresees the drug dialogue not only at the expert but also on the political level.

c. Contacts/co-ordination with other international partners

The HDG and its informal group on West Africa also considered co-operation with international partners with the Interpol, UNODC and the United States being the most relevant actors. The situation and the EU action in West Africa was discussed with the Interpol at the meeting with the CATS Troika of 18 May 2009. Interpol offered a closer partnership with the EU in the region, including on combating drugs and to co-ordinate a regional platform of police co-operation which should be pursued in the follow-on contacts with them as well as exchanging a detailed information on the activities of both organisations (the EU matrix).

The United States met with the HDG Troika on 25 June 2009 and the West Africa dossier was high on the agenda. The US is also concerned by the drug situation in the region and makes efforts to increase its assistance which is to address the drug situation in a comprehensive manner; they noted the risk of building up law enforcement efforts without wider capacity building support in the countries concerned. The involvement of the US AFRICOM in anti-narcotic efforts in West Africa was still being developed and entails e.g. provision of equipment. To increase the efficiency of EU – US co-operation, the Presidency proposed to the US an exchange of information on the assistance to the WA region, either simply by an exchange of written documents (the readiness to share the EU matrix on a reciprocal basis was signalled) or in a specific expert meeting which would have to be convened. The US showed preference for the latter.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations:

- The formula of the informal group as a vehicle for further work was welcomed;
- Initial groundwork on the Council conclusions has been done or set in motion: the threat assessment has been made available; a provisional matrix of activities has been compiled and should be completed and regularly updated; the ongoing work on co-operation platforms was kept under review and its results should be made known soon; the dialogue with ECOWAS has been maintained and further enhanced; both the ECOWAS Operational Plan and the preparation of the EU support for it have progressed;
- Further steps should include in particular:
 - finalising the EU planning (both by the Commission and Member States) for the support of the ECOWAS Operational Plan (funding and other types of support) which is likely to form the bulk of the EU engagement in the region in the short term;
 - considering how actions to combat illicit drug trafficking in West Africa can be accompanied by appropriate measures to address the domestic consequences of illicit drug trafficking and use and how full participation (“buy-in”) of West African governments in efforts against illicit drug trafficking can be ensured within a broader context of social and economic development;

- considering possible EU follow-up steps on the security co-operation platforms in West Africa;
 - generating and considering new proposals for EU co-operation with the West African states – these would have to be matched with adequate resources;
 - pursuing the drug dialogue with the West African states both on expert and political level bearing in mind the need for a higher-profile EU-ECOWAS event where the EU assistance support would be presented;
 - maintaining the dialogue with key international partners (in particular Interpol, UNODC, US) focussing on co-ordination of activities in support of the ECOWAS Operational Plan and of the national efforts of WA states;
 - preparing a report to the Council on all the work done.
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