

29 June 2012

Arabic, English and French only*

Twenty-second Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Africa

Accra, 25-29 June 2012

Agenda item 9

Adoption of the report

Draft report

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Addendum

Consideration of topics by working groups

Issue (a): Effective responses to meeting the challenges of illicit cultivation of, and trafficking in, cannabis

1. The working group held two meetings on 26 June 2012. In its consideration of the topic under review, the working group made the following observations:

(a) Cannabis was the most widely produced, trafficked and consumed drug in Africa. The ease and diversity of its cultivation supported its production in steep mountainous areas, forests and highly productive arable land, all factors contributing to its ready availability to African consumers;

(b) The extent of illicit cannabis production in individual states in Africa had not been accurately assessed;

(c) The financial importance of cannabis to both the rural communities who grow it and the trafficking networks who distributed it, underscored the danger authorities faced when acting to eradicate illicit crops and dismantle trafficking networks;

(d) Crime groups engaged in the cross-border trafficking of cannabis are well equipped with modern vehicles, fast vessels and sophisticated communications and are at times, better prepared than the national law enforcement authorities tasked with their arrest;

* Arabic, English and French are the working languages of the subsidiary body.



(e) Well funded alternative development programmes targeting cannabis cultivation in rural communities encourage conservation, good land management and sustainable future development;

(f) In some rural areas the choice to cultivate illicit cannabis was replacing staple crops such as rice, cassava and yams, thus creating a threat to food security and conflict between tribes and families over land use.

2. The working group drew up the following conclusions:

(a) Cannabis abuse adversely affected productivity and achievement of African communities and posed a direct and serious threat to the health of its citizens;

(b) The Governments of Africa need accurate information on the size of domestic cannabis cultivation and its trafficking so as to be able to best respond to the threat it poses to health, security and future community development;

(c) For alternative development programmes targeting illicit cannabis cultivation by rural communities to succeed, there must be the involvement of stakeholders such as civil society, elected officials, community and religious leaders;

(d) Successful cannabis eradication policies require an accurate diagnosis of the situation through surveys and in-depth studies, the investment in human and material resources to execute control plans and the implementation of the identified accompanying measures and development programme;

(e) Law enforcement authorities tackling cannabis trafficking and those persons engaged in it need to be well trained and suitably equipped if they are to match the growing sophistication of the crime groups operating through the region.

3. The following recommendations were made with regard to effective responses to meeting the challenges of illicit cultivation of and trafficking in cannabis:

(a) Governments should be encouraged to undertake surveys and in-depth studies of the threat cannabis cultivation, trafficking and abuse poses in order to support the development of national strategies that act effectively to combat its damaging impact;

(b) Governments must consider alternative development strategies that invest in the infrastructure and equipment needed to support the social and human development of rural populations whose livelihoods are dependent upon the illicit cultivation of cannabis;

(c) Governments should ensure that their law enforcement authorities are well trained, equipped and coordinated with their national counterparts, in their response to combat regional trafficking in cannabis.