



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 January 2012

Original: English

Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Fifty-fifth session

Vienna, 12-16 March 2012

Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

Implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem

Improving quality and building monitoring capacity for the collection, reporting and analysis of data on the world drug problem and policy responses to it

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report describes the limited activities that were undertaken by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in response to Commission on Narcotics Drugs resolution 54/9, in which the Commission recognized the need for building capacity in collecting, analysing and reporting, and improving the extent and quality of data available on the world drug situation. In that context, UNODC organized a regional workshop in South-East Asia and consultations with national experts from China on data collection and reporting mechanisms. In addition, UNODC is finalizing a comprehensive training package to be used for “cascade training” (in which trainees later become trainers) in the areas of data collection, reporting and analysis in different regions. UNODC has continued to provide technical support to build the capacity of experts in a number of countries to monitor illicit drug cultivation and production. Further, UNODC hosted a meeting of representatives from different national, regional, international organizations, including other entities of the United Nations system, to deliberate on experiences, identify practices and develop a structure for a UNODC framework for data quality assurance. The extent of extrabudgetary resources made available to implement the measures set out in the resolution did not enable UNODC to address them in a more

* E/CN.7/2012/1.



comprehensive manner. Many Member States have an express need for support in implementing drug monitoring systems and in collecting data through surveys. There is also a need to strengthen the institutional contacts and align data collection processes at national, regional and international levels.

I. Background

1. In its resolution 54/9, entitled “Improving quality and building monitoring capacity for the collection, reporting and analysis of data on the world drug problem and policy responses to it”, the Commission on Narcotics Drugs noted with concern the 2011 report of the Secretariat on the world situation with regard to drug abuse (E/CN.7/2011/2), which raised concern about the lack of current information on most of the epidemiological indicators on drug use, caused by a lack of sustainable drug information and monitoring systems in some parts of the world, thus hindering the monitoring of changing and emerging trends, the implementation of evidence-based responses and the ability to assess the effectiveness of those responses. In its resolution, the Commission also recognized that continuing efforts were needed to improve the accuracy, reliability, validity and comparability of data and reporting on all relevant aspects of the world drug situation. The Commission also invited relevant international and regional organizations, as well as Member States, to share experiences and expertise in collecting, analysing and reporting drug-related information and data, in order to contribute to the gradual standardization of high-quality data collection methods. In that resolution, the Commission also requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to examine ways and means of utilizing expertise and know-how on drug-related data collection at different levels, in order to inform quality assurance standards and capacity-building activities, and report thereon to the Commission at its fifty-fifth session.

2. The present report describes the activities undertaken by UNODC pursuant to Commission resolution 54/9, in the context of the limited extrabudgetary resources made available by Member States to implement the measures outlined in that resolution.

II. Activities undertaken to build capacity to monitor the drug use and supply situation

3. UNODC, upon the request of the Government of China, held four days of consultations on drug-related statistics with representatives of the National Narcotics Control Commission of China. That was the first comprehensive exchange of information on the mechanism for data collection and reporting on statistics on drug use and supply in China. The consultations have enabled UNODC to have a better understanding of the data collection mechanism for generating drug statistics in China, and provided an opportunity to promote an understanding among Chinese counterparts of the need for internationally comparable data on drug use and supply in order to monitor and report drug trends, in particular through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the *World Drug Report*.

4. Under the umbrella of the regional project entitled “Support for memorandum of understanding partners in East Asia”, UNODC organized a four-day regional workshop on data collection, analysis and reporting for policy and action for experts from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. Workshop participants included representatives from government departments responsible for

national-level collection and reporting of drug use and supply statistics. The four-day workshop therefore covered the monitoring of the drug situation for formulating policy and taking action; the description and discussion of current sources of information and data on drug use, illicit manufacturing, production and trafficking in each country; and a detailed overview of the different parts and sections of the annual report questionnaire. Many workshop participants requested that such regional workshops be held annually, and requested UNODC to organize national-level training for a broader group of national experts. Some participants requested UNODC to provide support for the design and implementation of national surveys on drug use in their countries.

5. Another activity of significance that UNODC has undertaken, through a subcontract, is the development of an interactive training package to develop capacity to collect, analyse and report data on drug use and supply, aimed initially at audiences in the Asia-Pacific region. The training package will cover topics related to relevant data sources (both survey and administrative data) to monitor the drug situation, quality assurance measurements for data collection and reporting, and guidance in the completion of the annual report questionnaire. In subsequent stages, the training package will be used for “cascade” training (in which trainees become trainers in an ongoing cycle) at UNODC regional and field offices in priority regions such as West and Central Asia and the countries of the Caucasus, and East and West Africa.

6. In the framework of its illicit crop monitoring programme and in the context of the Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, UNODC continued to provide expert advice and capacity-building to countries in the areas of monitoring the illicit cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis plant and estimating the potential production of opium and heroin, cocaine and cannabis and cannabis oil. Currently, Afghanistan, Colombia, Ecuador, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mexico, Myanmar, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Peru benefit from the programme. Estimates of illicit cultivation and production by the global illicit crop monitoring programme, which are based on surveys undertaken using scientific methods, are important benchmarks used for drug policy implementation at the national and international levels and enjoy international recognition. Through the programme, UNODC aims to make available new technological and scientific developments in order to improve the efficiency and quality of the surveys.

7. Within the framework of existing projects, UNODC has also provided technical support in the design of the first national surveys on drug use to be undertaken in Pakistan and the Maldives.

III. Activities undertaken to inform and develop quality assurance standards

8. In order to solicit inputs from international, regional and national organizations and other United Nations organizations on current practices and experiences and the development and structure of existing frameworks for quality standards for collecting and reporting data, UNODC hosted a three-day meeting on frameworks for data quality assurance in Vienna. Meeting participants included

representatives from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Statistics Division, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and Statistics Austria, as well as staff of UNODC. The participants acknowledged the challenges faced by the organizations in collecting and reporting statistics on drugs and crime due to the illicit nature of the activities, the hidden populations involved and the political sensitivity in reporting those statistics. In that context, participants emphasized that elements of quality, such as accuracy, reliability, validity and comparability of data, could be assured through a strong institutional framework, transparent publication methods, alignment with other data collection initiatives at the national, regional and international levels and direct communication with data owners. Those consultations will provide guidance in the development of a UNODC policy and framework for quality assurance in the collection, management and reporting of drug and crime data from different sources, including Member States, for reporting to the Commission and for preparation of the *World Drug Report*.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

9. In its resolution 54/9, the Commission invited Member States and other donors to provide extrabudgetary resources to implement the measures for capacity development and quality assurance in drug statistics outlined in the UNODC programme proposal entitled “Programme on monitoring and information on drug supply statistics and epidemiology”, as well as other measures set out in the resolution. However, limited extrabudgetary resources were made available by Member States, which hindered implementation of those measures by UNODC and prevented it from responding to the requests in a more comprehensive manner.

10. As evidenced by the requests sent by Member States to UNODC, there is an increasing demand for support in setting-up systems to monitor the drug situation, conduct national assessments and surveys on drug use and related harm, and guidance in completing the annual report questionnaire.

11. There is a need to develop and strengthen institutional-level contacts with national, regional and international organizations responsible for the collection of drug-related statistics in order to align data collection and reporting processes. There is also a need to develop a mechanism by which support could be provided in building capacity or in setting-up systems to monitor the drug situation and responses countries and regions identified as having greatest priority.