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COPOLAD III PROGRAMME INCEPTION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current situation regarding the illicit drug phenomenon in Latin America and the Caribbean is complex and changing, impacting economies, the peaceful functioning of fundamental aspects of democratic governance in the region, as well as the well-being of many communities. Recent reports from national and international agencies inform over a steady increase in production, trafficking and problematic consumption in the region, only slightly affected by the mobility restrictions imposed by the health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to significant changes in the economic and social context.

The implementation of anti-drug interventions over the last decades has also generated impacts on many dimensions of sustainable development (human rights and fundamental freedoms, social and economic inclusion and cohesion, gender equality, peace, access to basic services, access to justice, etc.), which further distances the countries of the region from the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets for 2030 and from the orientations and conclusions agreed at the UNGASS on Drugs in 2016.

COPOLAD III builds on the progress made in previous phases, is based on a results-oriented methodology, and has been built on the needs and demands of Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The general objective of the project is to contribute to the reduction of drug demand and supply in LAC countries, facilitating the generation and implementation of more balanced, evidence-based, comprehensive and therefore more effective drug policies, with full respect for the national sovereignty of LAC countries under the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

The specific objective is to improve the design and implementation of drug demand and supply reduction policies in LAC countries, ensuring that they are based on evidence, public health, gender and human rights.

On this occasion, COPOLAD incorporates two novel aspects in its cooperation work: on the one hand, it will address **needs at the national level**, beyond regional or multi-country dynamics; on the other hand, it will launch **innovative processes of design and development of public policy solutions** as part of the programme's strategic tools.

In this third phase, COPOLAD will work on the following areas and lines of action:

Output 1: Strengthened technical capacity and institutional role of the **National Observatories on Drugs**. The programme will deploy its work focused mainly on the generation of greater added value from the National Observatories in different dimensions of their work:

- The development and articulation, from the Observatories, of the different aspects included in the **national systems of scientific research on drugs** will be enhanced: strategic agendas, researchers and research centres networks and consolidation of funds for their operation.
- The **analytical capacities** of the Observatories will be strengthened with respect to the information, research and data generated and their **potential for political incidence**, strengthening aspects of transfer of research results.
- Support will be provided to incorporate a **differential approach** (including gender aspects and aspects related to other fundamental dimensions, such as territorial ones) and a **rights-based approach** in all the Observatories' processes.
- The capacities of the observatories will be strengthened to carry out evaluations of the impact of their policies not only in relation to the objectives set out in the sectoral strategies, but also by highlighting the **important impacts that these policies have on different dimensions of the country's sustainable development**.
- The process of strengthening existing early warning systems in the region will continue, in close coordination between the EMCDDA and the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs of CICAD/OAS.

Output 2: Improved coherence, balance and quality of policies related to **drug use**.

COPOLAD III will support the LAC region to continue to improve the quality, effectiveness and evidence base of policies related to drug use, as well as the availability and access to interventions and services, through dialogue, cooperation and technical assistance based on the needs of the countries, thus enhancing the relevance and comprehensiveness of public policies on drug use. COPOLAD III focuses on the most vulnerable populations to develop systems and interventions to support the most vulnerable and populations with the most difficulties in accessing care services:

- Work will be done to ground quality standards in treatment in care for **both women and vulnerable populations**.
- Emphasis will be placed on the **attention of social vulnerabilities** linked to problematic drug use in the territory, especially in areas that present characteristics of high vulnerability, partly linked to the participation of people in the illicit economy of micro-trafficking or in situations of problematic drug use.
- The programme will be committed to the development of **national systems for social and labour inclusion** of people with drug use problems, connecting the therapeutic processes of the care networks with tools that consolidate the circle of recovery and facilitate the cost-effectiveness of care interventions.

Output 3: Increased number of LAC countries that have designed and implemented **drug supply reduction policies** based on human rights, gender approach, social inclusion, sustainable development and public security.

COPOLAD III aims to improve the results and reduce the negative impact on sustainable development in LAC of supply reduction policies based exclusively on drug interdiction, arrest and prosecution of minor actors in the illicit market. The proposed actions aim to support public policies that offer comprehensive solutions, combining solid intelligence work and impact on the finances and power of criminal organisations with strategies and interventions on citizen security and development, decent employment, social protection, legality and trust in institutions, with a special focus on the most vulnerable groups and women.

In the field of **integral and sustainable alternative development**, COPOLAD will continue to focus on improving the capacities of public actors involved in these processes, sharing best practices and experiences and the latest knowledge worldwide.

In relation to **drug trafficking** issues, COPOLAD III will continue working to facilitate and remove legal and practical obstacles to **police and judicial cooperation** between the countries of the region and those of the EU, improving capacities, knowledge and practical implementation of tools such as special investigative techniques by actors in the law enforcement chain.

On the other hand, in **prevention and fight against money laundering**, COPOLAD III will also work to facilitate **police and judicial cooperation** in this area, strengthening legal frameworks and their implementation to adapt them to international standards and key aspects of inter-agency coordination, including the possibility of developing joint units.

A line of work is included to reduce the impact on sustainable development of interdiction and supply control policies. Improvements in the responsiveness and **proportionality of penal frameworks** to drug-related challenges and the development of **alternatives to arrest or imprisonment** that reduce re-offending will be supported. The programme's innovation tools will be used to generate novel intervention proposals in the latter area.

Output 4: Increased opportunities for **political-technical dialogue between the two regions (EU-LAC)** on the nature of drug-related problems and the best ways to address them.

Support will continue to be given to building strong and effective working relations through **joint and permanent coordination with the EU-CELAC Coordination Mechanism**; the Council of the EU; the European Commission (DG INTPA, DG Home Affairs) and EEAS, CELAC Diplomatic Missions in Brussels, and other key counterparts.

The aim is to:

- Enhance and facilitate contacts, networking, and exchange of information and good practices.
- Provide technical expertise at Technical Committee (TC) meetings and contribute to the preparation of all High-Level Meetings of the Mechanism (HLM).
- Actively contribute to regional and bi-regional cooperation agreements.
- Provide joint training to professionals representing the Technical Committee of the Mechanism with the participation of expert staff from National Drug Agencies and other relevant institutions.
- Ensure the visibility of the work of the Mechanism, through the dissemination of the results achieved.

COPOLAD III will ensure the internal coherence of the programme and the full integration of cross-cutting approaches (human rights, rights-based approach, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, public health and harm reduction, security and rule of law, balanced policy (DDR-DSR), good governance and strong institutions, bi-regional dialogue and shared responsibility).

The partner institutions of the project are: DG INTPA, FIIAPP, IILA and collaborating entities in the implementation of the programme under the grant schemes (EMCDDA and GIZ). Active collaborating entities are the Spanish Government Delegation for the National Plan on Drugs (Ministry of Health), the Intelligence Centre against Terrorism and Organised Crime (CITCO) of the Spanish Ministry of Interior, the Italian Ministry of Interior (with the Central Directorate of the Anti-Drug Service - DCSA) and the Italian Ministry of Justice (with the Italian Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorist Directorate - DNA), as well as other potential EU partners. In addition, other General Directorates of the European Commission.