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**Commission on the Impact of Drug Trafficking on
Governance, Security and Development in West Africa**

Inaugural Meeting

Summary of Proceedings

Accra, Ghana, 31 January 2013



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Summary of Proceedings

Inaugural meeting of the Commission on the Impact of Drug Trafficking on Governance, Security and Development in West Africa

Accra, Ghana, 31 January 2013

Background

West Africa has increasingly become a hub in the global drugs trade, as a conduit, a producer and a consumer. In recent years, the trans-shipment of narcotics from Latin America through West Africa to Europe and North America has increased significantly. Organized crime syndicates are operating in West Africa to ensure safe passage of drug cargos through the region and local consumption of these drugs has increased substantially. These developments pose serious and multifarious threats to the peace and stability of West Africa.

Over the last decade, several initiatives have been launched to combat these dangers. However, experts in the field, meeting in Dakar in April 2012, cautioned that the problems are growing more serious. They called for a renewed and concerted effort to deal with trafficking and use and recommended that a regionally-led, independent, high-level group of “champions” should be established to mobilize political attention and practical responses to these challenges.

The Kofi Annan Foundation, in consultation with international and regional partners, national governments and civil society organizations, agreed to take the lead in setting up this group. The Commission comprises a group of distinguished West

Africans from the worlds of politics, civil society, health, security and the judiciary.

With the support of leading experts, the Commission will analyse the problems of drug trafficking and use in order to deliver an authoritative report and comprehensive policy recommendations by the end of 2013. In preparing its report and recommendations, the Commission will undertake wide-ranging consultations with governments, regional organizations, international institutions and concerned citizens of the region.

To ensure that its findings and recommendations are widely discussed and acted on, the Commission will engage in a follow-up advocacy campaign with governments, regional and international bodies, civil society and the media.

The three principal aims of the Commission are to:

- Mobilize public awareness and political commitment through a campaign to raise public awareness of the impact of drug trafficking and also to inform and advise political leaders and the public on effective and humane ways to tackle drug dependency.
- Develop evidence based policy recommendations to political and civil society leaders on how best problems of drug trafficking and dependency can be addressed.
- Promote local and regional capacities to deal with drug trafficking and dependency issues.

The Commission met for the first time on 31 January 2013 in Accra, Ghana, to set the agenda, work programme and schedule. The commissioners were welcomed by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the convener of

the Commission, former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo, the Commission Chairman, and the Vice President of Ghana Kwesi Amissah-Arthur. Three policy briefs were then presented by academics from the sub region to lay out the major issues followed by a brief presentation from UNODC as one of the major international organizations dealing with drugs and organized crime, and the EU as one of the major donors.

Presentation of Policy Briefs

Drug Trafficking and threats to National and Regional Security in West Africa: Dr Kwesi Aning

Drug trafficking in West Africa is not new and builds on existing smuggling networks and criminal organizations. However, it is rapidly expanding as West Africa is seen as an ideal choice as a logistical transit centre (due to geography and weak state structures). Weak state structures make it easier to corrupt individuals and in extreme case whole institutions. It is also important to note that West Africa is no longer just a transit route but also a destination for drugs, notably cocaine. The current responses are generally under-funded and uncoordinated, which leads to institutional “turf wars”.

In conclusion: Transnational organised crime poses a direct security threat to peace and stability in West Africa. West Africa’s role in production (as opposed to only trafficking) may also be growing. States in the region are ill-equipped to deal with both the organized crime linked to trafficking and the rise in consumption rates and resulting issues for health and human development. However, serious information gaps still exist and there is need for deeper analysis.

Drug Trafficking and its impact on Governance in West Africa: Dr Adebayo O. Olukoshi

West Africa had a range of pre-existing governance deficits which made it relatively easy for the global drug cartels to penetrate the sub-region and establish a foothold. One example is the contraction of the public sector following national austerity programmes combined with Structural Adjustment Programmes which left many unemployed and reduced state presence in remote areas. It is estimated that the combined funds controlled by global drug cartels far exceed the GDPs of some West African countries and provide traffickers with resources to spend on bribes but also, in the absence of public services, on social support thus lending legitimacy to drug traffickers in the eyes of some communities.

To avoid drug traffickers from simply moving from one country that successfully controls trafficking to others that do not, greater attention to cross-border harmonization and coordination is needed in West Africa.

Preventing Drug Use and Managing Dependence in West Africa: Dr Isidore S. Obot

The levels of consumption and drug-related crime in the region are still relatively low. The prevalence rate for drug use disorder for the region as a whole is less than 1%, however in at least two countries it is already about 2.5% among males (Nigeria and Ghana). It is important to act now and pre-empt the spread of drug-related problems as seen in other regions (US, Europe, Latin America).

Prevention can work, especially if it seeks to change the school or other social environment rather than focusing on individual behaviour/choice. Treatment for drug dependence leads to a reduction in

crime rates, unemployment, workplace problems, health care costs and drug use. Unfortunately, there is a gross lack of dedicated professional drug treatment in West Africa. Similar to the low emphasis on prevention, harm reduction is rarely practiced in the region though there is good evidence for the use of harm reduction strategies.

In general, drug policy in West Africa stigmatises users and favours repressive measures. A focus on law enforcement means that most drug control bodies are under the supervision of the national judicial and police authorities with impact being measured in terms of arrests and seizures. Laws applying to end users are severely punitive. In addition to domestic cultural factors, policies tend to be driven by external considerations thus becoming part of foreign relations. Policy tends, therefore, not to be guided by evidence of its effectiveness.

Data on the impact of drug use on health, economic losses and the social harm are lacking. For most countries, evidence on the prevalence rate for drug use is also lacking and evidence of increasing demand for treatment for drug use by young people is anecdotal only.

Addiction to drugs should not be considered as a crime per se but a health and social welfare problem. Broad-based drug demand reduction policies that are humane and guided by public health principles should be developed and implemented. Sustainable monitoring and surveillance systems to provide regular data on different aspects of the drug problem should also be in place together with well regulated and effective treatment services, delivered by qualified professionals, for problem drug users.

Panel discussion

The ensuing panel discussion focused on a number of important themes, including public perceptions of drug trafficking, the judicial and law enforcement dimensions of drug policy and the treatment approaches to drug use in West Africa.

In the region, drug trafficking is often viewed as a US/European, i.e. consumer market, problem. Given the high poverty rates, the lavish lifestyle of some involved in drug trafficking holds a special attraction. It is important, therefore, to change perceptions and raise awareness in West Africa, so that people understand that the region has become a consumer market itself with rising number of users. People also should know that corruption and the political infiltration by drug money is a problem undermining the rule of law and societies as a whole. West Africa can learn from the experience of other regions that are grappling with the same problems. A special focus needs to be put on the rising numbers of unemployed youth who are especially vulnerable and on the wider issue of poverty, i.e. a development approach to drug policy is needed.

The link between drug trafficking, drug consumption and the justice system was considered from different angles. Seemingly, the “big fish” are not brought to justice. On the other hand, criminalization, which treats users as criminals, leads to the “small fish” receiving jail terms where, through contact with hardened criminals, they run the risk of being criminalised by “learning the trade.” Putting people in jail for minor drug offences can be perceived as a “quick fix” with a tangible result. Although policies that address the demand side are slower to work, repressive measures do not provide a viable alternative solution.

In addition to working on policies that address more effectively the demand side of the problem, strengthened and improved systems of justice that clearly embody the integrity of the state are needed ensure that major traffickers are convicted and their assets appropriated. The emphasis needs to shift from going after the small time “peddlers” to prosecuting traffickers. The creation of a regional court or a network of specialized prosecutors was floated as an innovative idea to deal with the problem of cross border jurisdiction.

The problems of drug use need to be seen in a health and human development context and not simply as an issue of criminality and repression. It is important, therefore, to design prevention and treatment strategies accordingly and to mobilize public support (and funding) to deal with the issues in an enlightened and effective manner as has been the case of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

It was agreed that while there are still shortcomings in the data, enough information is already available to guide action while the baseline data is improved and other research is conducted.

Interventions from international organizations and partners

The regional representative from UNODC presented the organization’s policies and strategies for countering transnational organized crime in the region with detailed information on drug flows in and out of the region. Drug abuse is believed to be more widespread than mentioned previously in the discussions with distinctions between producing and consuming countries/regions now effectively defunct. A number of regional frameworks and National Integrated Programmes are in place and UNODC works

with partners at all levels to address organized crime.

The Head of the EU Delegation to Accra affirmed that the EU regards transnational organized crime as a major threat and provides support to initiatives in the region to address this problem.

While the AU, ECOWAS and the UN Office in West Africa (UNOWA) could not be represented in person, they sent letters of support to the Commission, as did the Chair of the Global Commission on Drug Policy.

Programme of Work

In the session focusing on the Commission’s future work, it was proposed that a distinction should be made between drug consumption and drug trafficking and both should receive equal attention.

It was emphasized that the Commission will play a complementary role to on-going institutional efforts such as the *AU Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017)* and the *ECOWAS Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crimes, and Drug Abuse in West Africa (2008-2011)*. The Commission can help to raise public awareness of the issues and prompt action by international and regional organizations, national governments, NGOs and civil society.

As regards the Commission report, it was agreed that: trafficking and consumption issues should be handled in separate chapters; existing policies and their implementation should be reviewed; lessons learned from other regions should be brought in; and recommendations should be evidence-based and realistic. Fact-finding should only be undertaken where current knowledge is very inadequate or totally lacking.

It was decided that a work plan should be prepared for the Commission's approval. The work plan would set out key milestones leading up to the publication of the Commission report, which would be followed by period of advocacy to help mobilize action in favour of the Commission's recommendations.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Commission on the Impact of Drug Trafficking on Governance, Security, and Development in West Africa

1. Background

1.1. In recent years, the trans-shipment of illicit narcotics from Latin America through West Africa to Europe and North America has increased significantly. Organized crime syndicates are now operating in West Africa to ensure safe passage of their drug cargos through the region. At the same time, drug consumption in the region both of locally produced products and trafficked imports, notably cocaine, have increased substantially.

1.2. These developments pose a serious threat to the peace and stability of West Africa, which is emerging from decades of violent strife. As the African Union observed, “drug profits are distorting economies of many African countries and in some of the poorest states, the value of trafficked drugs exceeds the country’s gross national income. Countries have also borne the brunt of negative health consequences and costs associated with fighting drug-related crime.”¹ The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that the drug trade through West Africa alone is now worth \$800 million a year.

1.3. In light of these developments, on April 18-20, the Kofi Annan Foundation, in partnership with the Centre on International Cooperation at New York University (NYU), the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPKTC), and the Intergovernmental Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), with the support of the Open Society Foundation (OSF), organised a workshop in Dakar, Senegal, to analyse the *Impact of Organised Crime and Drug Trafficking on Governance, Security and Development in West Africa*.

1.4. The workshop noted that various initiatives have been undertaken aimed at curbing the inflow and diffusion of illicit drugs in Africa. In 2007, the African Union developed a region-wide policy on drug control with a corresponding action plan. In October 2012, the AU policy and plan was the subject of review by the Conference of African Ministers on Drug Control. While noting some successes, the AU Commission also identified serious capacity constraints that had inhibited the full implementation of the action plan and stated that it “was not sufficiently results based”. The plan has now been revised and updated and awaits endorsement by the region’s heads of state and government.

1.5. In 2008, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in collaboration with UNODC, drafted the Praia Plan of Action and a political declaration against illicit drug trafficking. The Action Plan and the Declaration were later endorsed by ECOWAS Heads of State. Subsequently, the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability included a provision on preventing the financing of political parties and their campaigns by criminal networks, particularly drug trafficking networks.

1.6. Despite these important initiatives, participants at the workshop arrived at a consensus on the need for a regionally-led independent, high-level body or group of “champions” to strengthen and intensify the on-going work of regional and national actors on drug trafficking and related issues

¹ AU Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017). CAMDC/EXP/2(V)

in West Africa. This group, in the form of a high level commission, would aim to mobilize public opinion and catalyse political support for further action at national, regional and international levels before drug fuelled problems become totally unmanageable. At the same time, the Commission will review the impact of increasing levels of drug consumption in West Africa and how current policies and practices can be changed to deal with dependency in a manner that reduces harm and discourages a custodial response to dependency.

1.7. Recent events in the Sahel region have reinforced the concerns expressed at the Dakar workshop. The apparent convergence of drug traffickers, arms traders and armed extremist groups, if left unchecked, could destabilize the region. This makes the design and implementation of preventive measures, based on solid analysis and assessment, all the more urgent.

2. Purpose of the Commission

2.1. The Commission will have three basic objectives:

i. Mobilizing public awareness and political commitment:

- The Commission will examine ways and means to enhance the political priority accorded to drug trafficking and its impact on West Africa. It will undertake a campaign to raise awareness of the drug trafficking problem and its ramifications, including for governance and public health. It will also seek to inform and advise political leaders and the general public on effective and humane ways to tackle dependency without resort to incarceration or criminalisation of users.

ii. Developing evidence based policy recommendations:

- In order to fully understand the scale and impact of trafficking and growing drug consumption, and to be able to make evidence based policy recommendations, the Commission will use available data and analysis, which will be compiled into a series of background papers to help shape the direction of the Commission's work programme. New research work would only be initiated if gaps are clearly apparent in the currently available information. The Commission's work will focus, inter-alia, on the following themes as a basis for policy discussion and follow-up:

- Drug Trafficking and its impact on Governance in West Africa
- Drug Trafficking and threats to National Security in West Africa
- Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependency in West Africa

iii. Developing local and regional capacities and ownership

- The Commission will seek to establish the priority areas for action, and identify the appropriate 'change agents' within the region and the capacity support that will be needed to effect change;
- The Commission will facilitate the development of networks of relevant actors in the region, for example, by bringing together various research institutes, universities, individuals and think tanks to develop and undertake peer reviews for the Commission;
- In all its actions, the Commission will seek to promote regional ownership, engage with existing initiatives and build on and support the valuable work of regional and

other partners, including the AU, ECOWAS, UNODC, and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA)

3. Composition of the Commission

i. The Commission

- The Commission will comprise up to 12 individuals, reflecting the diverse and multi-layered nature of West African society and institutions. These sectors include, but are not limited to political life, civil society, health, security and law enforcement, and the judiciary. It will also be necessary to secure the involvement of individuals with a solid understanding of, and background in, illicit financial flows and their impact on the wider economy;
- One of the members will serve as Chairperson;
- The Commission will also include popular figures to facilitate greater interest and engagement among young people;
- The Commission will aim to achieve a gender balance in its membership and a mix of English, French and Portuguese speaking members.

ii. Review

- The Commission will have access to individuals with knowledge and experience in dealing with drug policy issues at a high political level in other parts of the world. They would be available to share their experiences and lessons learned with the Commission as the work progresses.
- Technical and civil society experts will be on call to review specific reports, studies and recommendations prepared for the Commission as needed.
- Most of the work of the Review Group will be done by electronic exchange but at least one or two meetings of the Group will be arranged at a suitable moment in the calendar of the Commission.

iii. Support

- The Commission will receive support for:
 - Organising meetings of the Commission, and events to launch and reports/findings of the Commission;
 - Liaison among Commission members, with partner organizations and civil society;
 - Communications and media/outreach;
 - Production of Commission reports or studies.

4. Outline of the Programme of Work

4.1. The programme of work will extend over twenty months:

Preparatory phase focussing on:

- The identification of Commission Members and establishment of the Commission;

- Identification of support requirements for the Commission;
- Compilation of background papers for the meetings of the Commission.

Implementation phase, which will focus on:

- Review of background information and inter-action with political and security actors, drug policy experts, and civil society partners as a basis for developing the Commission's findings and recommendations;
- Three formal meetings of the Commission, plus associated meetings with stakeholders and experts as may be needed;
- Preparation, production, launch and dissemination of reports of the Commission;

Advocacy phase: public advocacy and discussion across the region based on the findings and recommendations of the Commission.

5. Provisional Timeline

5.1 The provisional timeline, which may need to be adjusted with experience, is established as follows:

Preparatory phase: November – December 2012

- Completion of Terms of Reference for the Commission;
- Selection of Commission members;
- Identification of support requirements;
- Preparations for the first meeting of the Commission.

Implementation phase: January - December 2013

- *January 2013: Inaugural Meeting of the Commission*
 - Commission Members meet to review and endorse Programme of Work,
- *June 2013: Second Meeting of Commission*
 - Mid-point stock-taking of programme of work
 - Meeting with Review group
- *December 2013: Final Meeting of Commission*
 - Launch of Report
 - Decision on next steps regarding public discussion and advocacy activities.

Advocacy and Dissemination Phase: January – June 2014

- *January – June 2014*
 - Dialogue and Advocacy by Commission members throughout West Africa with political and non-governmental actors and the general public.

6. Outcomes

Expected Outcomes	Indicators
Greater awareness by governments and society at large on the dangers posed by drug trafficking and organized crime.	Increased and prominent political and public discussion, and media coverage, of drug and related threats within and outside the region.
Vulnerability of West Africa to threats posed by drug trafficking is reduced.	Adoption and implementation of preventive strategies at national and regional level that identify and deal with threats from drug trafficking.
Country and regional strategies and policies on dependency are strengthened to reflect a preventive and harm reduction approach.	Reduction in incarcerations for dependency and increase in use of harm reduction and therapeutic practices in dealing with dependency.

31.10.12

Annex 2: Members of the Commission on Drug Trafficking, Governance, Security and Development in West Africa

Name	Country	Position
President Olusegun Obasanjo (Chair)	Nigeria	Former President
President Pedro Pires	Cape Verde	Former President
Dr. Idrissa Ba	Senegal	Professor, Psychiatric Hospital of Thiaroye
Justice Bankole-Thompson	Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone Special Tribunal
Dr. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo	Guinea	National Coordinator, Réseau Afrique Jeunesse
Dr Mary Chinery Hesse	Ghana	Member, African Union Panel of the Wise
Mr Gilbert Houngbo	Togo	Former Prime Minister
Ms Christine Kafondo	Burkina Faso	Founder, Association Espoir pour Demain
Mr Adeolu Ogunrombi	Nigeria	Project Coordinator YouthRISE project on drug policy reform in Nigeria and West Africa
Dr. Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou	Mauritania	Visiting Professor, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies Head, Regional Development Programme, Geneva Centre for Security Policy
Ms. Oumou Sangaré	Mali	Singer/Songwriter/Social activist