

EU-CELAC BI-REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON DRUG POLICIES:

Strengthening technical and political bridges in the face of a common challenge

Created between 1994 and 1998, the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs is an institutionalised space for bi-regional dialogue, formed by the 33 CELAC countries and 27 EU countries. It is based on the principle of common and shared responsibility. Its functioning comprises rotating European and Latin American co-presidencies, annual High-Level Meetings (HLMs) and Technical Committees every six months, as well as joint Political Declarations every five years. Due to the different degree of integration of the

two regions, the Mechanism operates on the basis of different institutional arrangements. European countries meet monthly in the Horizontal Group on Drugs in Brussels (composed of technical officials from National Drug Agencies), while CELAC countries discuss their positions in inter-embassy meetings in Brussels, where diplomatic staff participate.

Since its beginnings, COPOLAD III has provided technical support to the Mechanism, in permanent coordination with the Council of the EU, the European Commission (DG INTPA, DG

Home), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the CELAC diplomatic missions in Brussels and other key actors. This positioning favours the alignment of the Programme's actions with high-level bi-regional political commitments on drugs.

1 implementing partner: FIIAPP
(Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración de Políticas Públicas)



WHAT STRATEGY DO WE FOLLOW?

FOCAL POINT IN BRUSSELS

- ▶ Permanent presence in Brussels to foster coordination and a relationship based on proximity and trust with European actors and, in particular, with CELAC diplomatic missions.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE CO-PRESIDENCIES

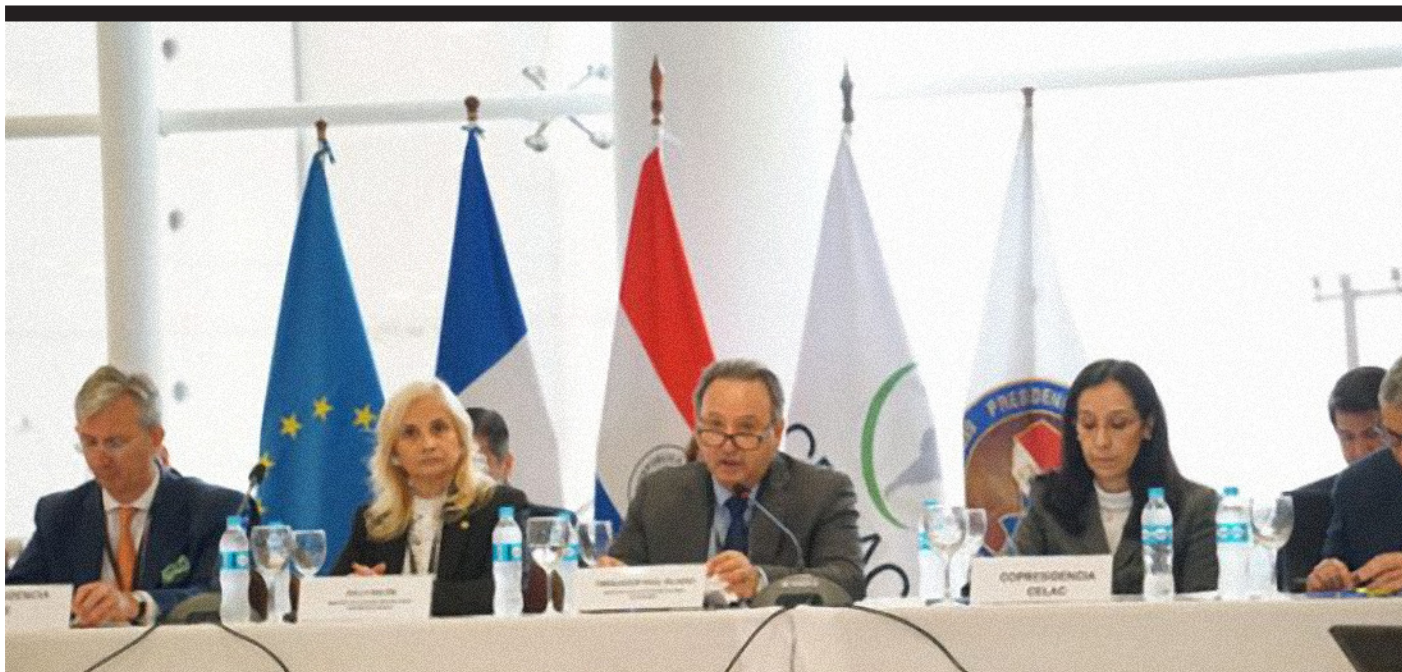
- ▶ Permanent accompaniment and reinforced TA to the CELAC co-presidency:

Paraguay (1st semester 2022),
Bolivia (2nd semester 2022 and 2023).

- ▶ TA for the European co-presidencies (as in the case of the Spanish Government Delegation for the National Drugs Plan - DGPNSD, during the Spanish co-presidency in the second half of 2023).



IN WHICH AREAS DO WE WORK?



STRENGTHENING THE OPERATIONAL FUNCTIONING OF THE EU-CELAC MECHANISM ON DRUGS.

The Programme has strengthened the EU-CELAC Mechanism, based on the multidimensional support provided to the co-presidencies:

- ▶ COPOLAD III supports the host co-presidency in the logistical preparation of the High-Level Meetings (HLM). In addition, it provides

resources for the travel and accommodation of representatives of the EU/CELAC delegations (as the HLM are held in conjunction with the Annual Meetings of the Programme itself).

- ▶ COPOLAD III also contributes to requests from the Co-Presidencies or the EU Council Secretariat.
- ▶ The presence of a permanent focal point in Brussels favours the programme's attendance at the Technical Committees of the Mechanism, as an observer. This continuous

participation allows COPOLAD to be up-to-date on discussions and identify new opportunities for technical collaboration.



SUPPORT FOR THE MECHANISM AS A TECHNICAL-POLITICAL SPACE FOR DISCUSSION ON DRUG POLICIES.

A second COPOLAD III action is aimed at influencing the critical issues faced by the Mechanism in order to fulfill its function as a technical-political space for discussion.



ALIGNMENT WITH BI-REGIONAL COMMITMENTS

Declaración de la Cumbre UE-CELAC, 18 julio 2023

(https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_23_3924)

32. " We recognise the significant challenge and the efforts made in the fight against international criminal groups, especially those involved in illicit drugs production and trafficking as well as the trafficking of firearms and human beings. Preventing and combatting the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is a priority in this regard, for this last purpose, the intervention of all relevant stakeholders is essential. We welcome the work of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs and wish to continue it."

The program contributes to facilitating the participation of CELAC countries in particular, and carries out dissemination and external communication actions for the Mechanism:

- ▶ During 2023 COPOLAD III has provided specialised technical support to the Spanish and Bolivian co-presidencies, in parallel and in a coordinated manner, in the process of discussion, drafting and political negotiation of the CELAC-EU Political Declaration of La Paz (2024), also in coordination with the Technical Secretariat of the Council of the EU:
 - The specialised TA to both co-presidencies has served to facilitate the discussions within each regional forum and to bring positions closer together and maximise the points of convergence and richness of the final text.
- ▶ The La Paz Declaration will have a clear added value:
- I) it identifies new challenges (new psychoactive substances, environmental dimension, links

between drug trafficking and arms trafficking);

- II) it makes a more decisive commitment to Integral and Sustainable Alternative Development (AD);
- III) it recognises the wealth of technical cooperation programmes with a focus on social inclusion.
- ▶ The programme also provides permanent accompaniment to the diplomatic staff of CELAC countries in Brussels. This support is well appreciated by the embassies, reinforces their participation and ultimately improves the scope and projection of bi-regional discussions:
 - Bilateral meetings have been organised in Brussels with CELAC Embassies and 5 collective meetings with the participation of CELAC countries, together with the Central American Integration System (SICA).
 - In addition, the participation of diplomatic staff (from at least 28 CELAC Embassies in Brussels) in the specialised seminars

organised by the programme has been facilitated, as well as their free access to online training.

- ▶ Finally, COPOLAD III has contributed to improving the communication of the Mechanism by supporting dissemination actions through the holding of side events in international fora:
 - For example, it has supported Spain in the organization of the side event in the framework of the annual meeting of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna, where the work of COPOLAD III was highlighted as a platform to support the Mechanism in relation to the bi-regional exchange on drug policy dialogue.
 - It has also promoted the dissemination of the Mechanism in events such as the Latin American Conference on Drugs (August 2022), the Brussels Crime Week (September 2022), or the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) Conference on Addictions (November 2022).



COPOLAD III supports political-technical dialogue between the two regions (EU-CELAC) on the nature of drug-related problems and the best ways to address them.



GENERATION OF TECHNICAL INPUTS TO FEED THE BI-REGIONAL DIALOGUE WITH INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND THEMES ON DRUGS.

The technical reports produced by COPOLAD are providing new perspectives to improve drug policies. In this sense, the contribution of several reports at regional level is noted, prepared in the framework of the programme to feed into the HLM, based on the thematic priorities identified:

- a) XXIII HLM in Asuncion (June 2022): A report on Women and Drug Policy (elaborated in COPOLAD II) was updated, incorporating the pandemic dimension in order to respond to the thematic priorities agreed to be discussed in Asuncion (gender and COVID).
- b) XXIV HLM in La Paz (February 2024):

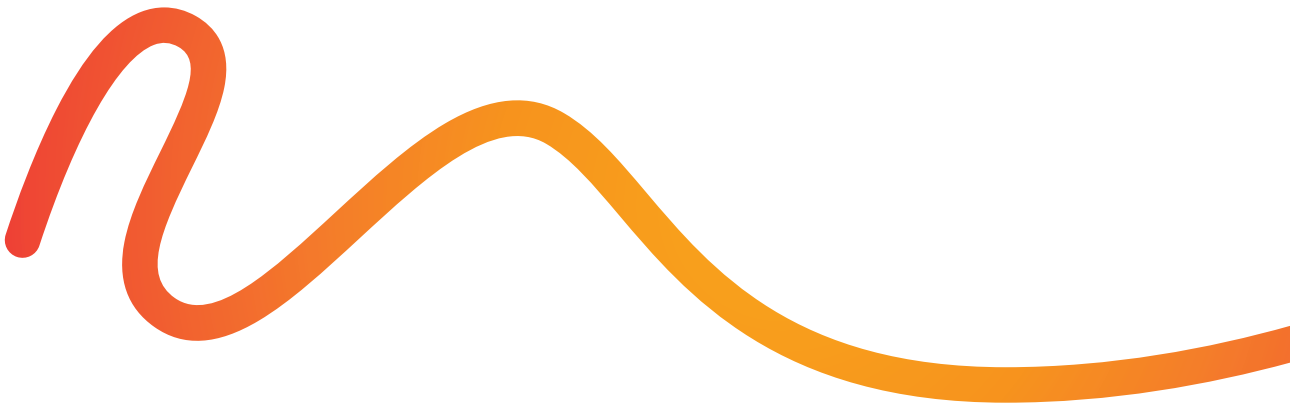
- i) The joint declaration and final recommendations of the International Seminar "Follow the Money" (2023) analyses new modalities of money laundering and the fight against drug trafficking.
- ii) The conclusions document of the International Seminar "Drugs, Vulnerabilities and Urban Territories" (2023) characterises the problem of micro-trafficking at the community level, identifying challenges and effective responses for LAC.

In addition, the programme provides to the Mechanism documents and guides related to COPOLAD's areas of intervention, such as the strengthening of national drug observatories, demand reduction and drug supply reduction, which are proposed as inputs for analysing and deepening this debate within the Mechanism's framework.



PROMOTING A COMPREHENSIVE AND BALANCED APPROACH TO THE DRUGS AGENDA

In short, COPOLAD III's contribution has been oriented towards promoting a comprehensive approach, based on the combination of supply reduction policies with demand reduction policies. In this regard, actions to improve care, social inclusion and the community approach are complementary approaches to the security and interdiction pillar that has characterised drug policies. The adoption of a comprehensive approach not only improves the effectiveness of drug policies, but also fosters prospects of sustainability and ownership among the different actors involved in implementing them. The declarations of the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy point in this direction when linking the fight against organised crime with parallel efforts in social cohesion.*



* EEAS (2024), "Deepening EU-Latin America cooperation against organised crime and violence." Brussels, External Action Service (EEAS), speech by Josep Borrell, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, 30 January 2024. (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/deepening-eu-latin-america-cooperation-against-organised-crime-and-violence_en).

COPOLAD III is a consortium formed by:

Collaborating partners:

