

# CONTROL OF CHEMICAL PRECURSORS:

## Strengthening the comprehensive chain of control, management and final disposal

Following the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988), most LAC countries have made regulatory development efforts to control substances that are diverted to illicit drug production. In this context, the cooperation programmes of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the EU - among which are the previous phases of COPOLAD - have contributed to strengthening control and oversight systems of precursors in LAC countries. Current regulations are based, however, on strategies to pro-

hibit and control precursor trafficking, as well as preserving the legitimate market, but do not usually address the safe management and final disposal of chemical substances with environmental safeguards. In addition, areas for improvement are identified in the structure of the control bodies, as well as in the effectiveness of the authorisation and inspection processes. This line of action is supported by technical advice from the Intelligence Centre for Counter-Terrorism and Organised Crime (CITCO in the Spanish acronym), an organisation that has collaborated in previous phases of the programme,

and that has helped prioritise three axes of intervention: improvement of management systems and final disposal of precursors, regulatory development, and strengthening the exchange of information between countries.

**1 implementing PARTNER: FIIAPP**  
(International and Ibero-American  
Foundation for Administration and  
Public Policies)

**1 technical PARTNER: CITCO**  
(Intelligence Centre for Counter-  
Terrorism and Organised Crime)



## WHAT STRATEGY DO WE FOLLOW

### REGIONAL SCHEME

- ▶ A Working Group of 17 countries has been formed to generate debate and reflection, based on:
  - Webinars;
  - Two regional meetings, an initial one in April 2023 and a final discussion and closing one at the end of 2024.

### MULTI-COUNTRY AND NATIONAL APPROACH

- ▶ 12 national actions were specified to adapt the multi-country Technical Assistance arrangements to the national policy objectives:
  - Bilateral assistance is provided virtually (with the exception of computer development, support for which is in person).



# IN WHICH AREAS DO WE WORK



## MANAGEMENT AND FINAL DISPOSAL OF PRECURSORS AND CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES

The existing precursor protocols in the region focus on safeguards to avoid distorting legal markets (at the level of prices or marketing procedures), but they do not take into account the chain of custody of the precursors.

At the **MULTI-COUNTRY** level, the programme has laid the methodological

foundations and put in place the institutional arrangements to promote management resources and final disposal of precursors in 2024:

- ▶ After a regional meeting in Quito (April, 2023), a group was formed of seven countries committed to advancing along this line (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic)
- ▶ Seven technical-institutional diagnoses were carried out in the coun-

tries involved, with the support of the Chemical Control Unit of the University of Costa Rica. The diagnoses include: an analysis of the legislative and regulatory framework, an institutional mapping, aggregated statistical information on precursors, and the specific demands of the countries.

- ▶ Technical Assistance starts from the preparation of Basic manuals for the management and final disposal of precursors, which address the comprehensive management cycle,



## ALIGNED with REGIONAL POLICIES on precursors

### Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2021-2025, OAS/CICAD.

Pillar 3, measures to control and counter the illicit cultivation, production, trafficking and distribution of drugs and to address their causes and consequences; "Strengthen or develop legal and institutional frameworks for the effective monitoring and control of essential chemical substances and precursors to prevent diversion of these substances to the manufacturing of illicit drugs and counter [their] trafficking, including periodically updating national lists of controlled chemical substances."

### EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025, European Council.

Strategic priority 4: "Dismantle illicit drug production and counter illicit cultivation; prevent the diversion and trafficking of drug precursors for illicit drug production; and address environmental damage."

including issues of safe seizure, safe storage of chemical substances, and destruction of precursors with a focus on environmental sustainability:

- The manuals incorporate the cases of all countries, either by type of chemical substances, or by the existence of synthetic precursors.
- It is planned to adapt the manuals to the precursors covered by the regulations of each country, in order for them to be validated and approved.

From a **REGIONAL** perspective, formal training spaces have been promoted aimed at all countries in the region:

- ▶ 'In coordination with the Foundation of the National Distance Education University of Spain (FUNED), a Specialist Graduate Course in Precursor Control and Research is being launched, aimed at a variety of profiles (police and military personnel, administrative control and judicial authorities) with a capacity of 100 places:
- The content programme has been developed in Spanish (500 training hours), and it is planned to have it translated into English to serve Caribbean countries.

- In the first edition, FIIAPP finances a line of scholarships for 66 civil servants from 33 LAC countries. Invitations have been sent to start the course in June 2024.
- An agreement has been signed between FIIAPP and FUNED to continue the course in the future, given the dynamics of rotation of civil servant personnel in several LAC countries.

Likewise, COPOLAD contributes to strengthening some organisations and political strategies in Central America and the Caribbean:

- ▶ On the one hand, the programme supports the Subregional Cooperation Strategy to improve the interdiction of Drug Trafficking and Chemical Precursors in Central America (2020). This is an initiative of El Salvador to exchange information between countries, signed by most Central American countries, Colombia and Ecuador. The programme has contributed to making the benefits of the Strategy visible within the regional Working Group, with the intention of stimulating reflection on its benefits. In fact, although they have not formally joined, some transit countries (Panama and Peru) have established information exchange relations with the countries that have signed the Strategy.

- ▶ On the other hand, the possibility of coordinating the Precursors Course with CARICOM IMPACS (Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security) is being explored. In this way, the institutional framework for subregional integration would be strengthened, while at the same time it would provide greater projection and sustainability to the development of precursor management capacities in the Caribbean.



## REGULATORY DEVELOPMENT

The second line of intervention focuses on regulatory reforms aimed at improving legal tools to comprehensively manage the chain of custody and final disposal of precursors.

In the first phase, progress has been centred on the **MULTI-COUNTRY** aspect:

- ▶ After a regional meeting in Quito (April, 2023), a group was formed of three Latin American and two Caribbean countries interested in moving forward along these lines (Colombia, Honduras and the Dominican Republic and Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Lucia respectively)



The program prioritizes three areas of intervention, based on the scenario and challenges faced in the region: strengthening information exchange, improving precursor management and disposal systems, and regulatory development.

► In this case, the [CICAD Model Precursor Control Regulations](#) are used as a starting reference:

- Due to the heterogeneity of legal regimes, there is a wide range of cases in the region as regards the extent if any to which the CICAD model regulations have been adopted.
- The diagnosis indicates how to intervene in each country, either by developing a technical proposal from scratch as in the case of Saint Lucia, or by accompanying the process of updating an existing protocol as in the cases of Colombia, Dominican Republic and Antigua and Barbuda.

From a **REGIONAL** perspective, the programme is coordinated with CICAD for information purposes:

► As a result of the regional meeting in Quito, the programme made a recommendation to the [CICAD Group of Experts on Chemical Substances and Pharmaceutical Products](#) to include management

and disposal issues in their model precursor control regulations.



## IT DEVELOPMENT

Most of the countries have a [basic computer system](#), which issues permissions to operators, but does not allow the dumping and cross-referencing of precursor transaction data, and is also not capable of detecting diversion risks. In this context, COPOLAD provides technical assistance to improve computer systems in order to carry out effective and traceable control of transactions in real time.

In the first phase, a peer-to-peer technical assistance scheme was explored, based on the knowledge of the computer systems of the most advanced countries (Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru). However, software incompatibilities discouraged this strategy. Finally, it has been decided to work on the basis of a technical assistance scheme at the **NATIONAL** scale in [two countries](#) (Ecuador, and Antigua and Barbuda), with the following advances:

► ECUADOR: The Ministry of the Interior has a roadmap to develop new software with three features: an authorisation module (already completed); another for transactions and data crossing; and a third for risk profiling (using artificial intelligence). Given the overload of work of the Ministry's IT team, the programme provides specialised human resources to advance in a more agile and targeted way in the design of the application. We work with free software to ensure updates at the lowest cost.

► ANTIGUA and BARBUDA: The country is still in the preliminary phase of identifying the roadmap and the resources necessary to carry it out.

Simultaneous progress in both countries (one Spanish-speaking and the other English-speaking) would have the potential to promote a peer-to-peer intervention scheme in the future, based on the exchange of lessons learned on the continuous improvement of software solutions and their use in terms of public policies.



## INTERVIEWS

[Patricio Navarro. Commissioner and Head of the Chemical Substances Investigation Brigade of the Chilean Police.](#)



## MEETINGS

[Workshop on information exchange on precursor management and disposal systems](#)



COPOLAD III is a consortium formed by:

Collaborating partners:

