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to : Horizontal Working Party on Drugs and Associated Candidate Countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus

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Subject : **Enhancing Cooperation with the Associated Candidate Countries to Counter the World Drug Problem**

Introduction

Most of the Associated candidate countries face increasing problems related to the traffic and transit of illicit drugs as well as the rise in drug abuse. Whereas many efforts and achievements have been made in the field of supply reduction, drug demand reduction seems still to be a low priority objective in most countries.

Despite considerable efforts of the EU and other international organisations, as well as the Associated candidate countries themselves to combat drugs trafficking and drug abuse, more needs to be done to further develop and maintain an effective and reliable system to combat organised crime and drug trafficking. There might also be further scope to enhance the cooperation between the EU and the Associated candidate countries in this field.

In the perspective of accession negotiations efforts to implement and to actually apply the relevant third-pillar acquis are already being undertaken at various levels. For instance, a pre-accession agreement on the fight against organised crime was concluded following the May 28 meeting, by the Ministers of Justice and the Interior of the EU and their counterparts of the Associated Countries of Central and Eastern Europe including the Baltic states and Cyprus.

In this respect, the EU also welcomes the establishment in almost all partner countries of an inter-ministerial body on drugs for planning and co-ordinating drug-related efforts between the different ministries and agencies involved.

Also, the need for active involvement of NGOs is not always fully recognised, and they lack experience and funds. The use of new synthetic drugs has risen tremendously among the young generation, and the region seems to play an important role as a producer of synthetic drugs for Western European markets.

In 1992, the European Commission launched within the framework of PHARE a Multi-beneficiary Programme, which has aimed at strengthening the capacity of all partner countries to fight against drugs by developing a regional approach, facilitating the gradual adoption of the relevant acquis, and strengthening cooperation both at the intra-regional level and with MS. The Programme, which is coordinated by the PHARE Co-ordination Unit (PCU) in Riga, Latvia, encompasses three main strategies (supply reduction, demand reduction, policy development) focusing on various projects in the area of information, precursors, staff training, money laundering, and synthetic drugs, part of which have been already implemented.

The structure of the information system being developed by EMCDDA and EUROPOL in general, and on synthetic drugs in particular, is serving as a model for the system of focal points that is being implemented in the CEECs and that is currently entering its final phase. In particular, it still needs to be determined how far a necessary legal basis has been created for the focal points, as it is already the case in the EU Member States.

Despite the already achieved results, there is still a need for improvement. In this respect, the European Commission drew up a report on drugs demand reduction as a follow-up to the March 1998 European Conference. In this report, which was based on PCU's assessments and analyses, it was recommended to improve the drug demand reduction strategies in the CEECs by

- focusing on prevention measures,
- providing for a full-scale and full-range treatment and rehabilitation services,
- promoting the participation of NGOs and the community,
- expanding available manpower and resources, and
- mobilising vertical and horizontal governmental cooperation

At the international level, UNDCP has been engaged since the early 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe with several national projects with the overall objective of helping these countries to meet the international requirements laid down by the UN conventions. At the inter-regional level, the Joint UNDCP-Phare Drug Law Enforcement Programme in Southeastern Europe aiming at strengthening the drug enforcement capacities, has completed its preparatory phase and is about to enter its follow-up phase.

HDG/ CODRO and Cooperation with Associated candidate countries

Under the UK Presidency, in June 1998, a Troika meeting was organised at CODRO format, thus paving the way for further developing the cooperation. During the Austrian presidency CODRO's Troika meeting with the Associated candidate countries on October 22 is to discuss a variety of issues including the EU's post-1999 drugs strategy, the UNGASS follow-up, and the improvement of international cooperation.

It has been one major objective of the Presidency to intensify and broaden the already existing cooperation dialogue, exchange of information, and sharing of experiences and practices with the Associated countries.