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# Speech • Discours

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Speaker • Orateur    Wolfgang Götz, EMCDDA Director

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Good morning

- Mr Mikuriya, Secretary-General of the World Customs Organization,
- Dear colleagues working nationally and internationally to combat drug trafficking and related threats...

May I start by thanking the World Customs Organization for inviting me to this important meeting. The topic we will address over the next three days is one of growing significance and I am pleased, on behalf of the EMCDDA, to be able to make a contribution to this important debate.

[Threats]

I think we all recognise that we live in an ever more interconnected, open and faster-moving world. We can see this in the global economy, we can see this in the way the lives of our young people are changing and we can see this in the way new technology is transforming the way we communicate. Our modern, joined-up world brings with it many opportunities, but unfortunately it also brings new threats. Drug trafficking and the trafficking of precursor chemicals, together with the related issues of money laundering and corruption, are foremost amongst these. And I am very pleased that the WCO has prioritised these topics and made them the subject of discussion at this forum.

[EMCDDA]

The task of my agency, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), is to provide the European Community and its Member States with factual, objective, reliable and comparable information on the drugs problem in Europe. And this morning, I would like to say a few words — from the perspective of a monitoring and analysis centre — on how we see the drug problem evolving in Europe and how these developments are challenging our current policies and responses.



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## [Responses to drug trafficking]

When I look at developments in drug trafficking in Europe today... I see more innovation, I see organisations that are quick to adapt to threats and exploit opportunities, and I see drug traffickers taking on a more global perspective in their operations. My message to you is a simple one, and one that I know is endorsed by Mr Mikuriya and the WCO... in fact it is the theme running through the agenda for this meeting... We need to ensure that our responses to drug trafficking are equally innovative, equally quick to adapt to changing circumstances, and equally global in their outlook.

From our monitoring work in Europe, I can say with certainty that whenever we see Member States basing their action on sound analysis, sharing information and working closely together we see concrete evidence of effectiveness.

## [Developments in Europe]

Let me now tell you about some of the developments in Europe and why these developments convince me of the value of acting collectively within the European Union and how they underline the need for a stronger and more coordinated global response.

If I had been addressing this meeting a few years ago, I would have talked essentially from the perspective of countries that were drug consumers rather than producers. This is certainly not the standpoint I can take today. Europe is an important producer of drugs, both for its own market and the export market — particularly for synthetic drugs such as amphetamine and ecstasy. For example, Europe is probably the world's largest illicit amphetamine producer and although much is consumed within Europe, large quantities are exported to long-standing consumer markets in the Middle East and Arabian Peninsula and sold as Captagon tablets.

## [Cannabis]

We also see significant cannabis production in Europe today. The situation developing with cannabis is an interesting example of how drug markets are evolving. We have seen a shift towards domestically-grown herbal cannabis and away from imported cannabis resin. 26 of our Member States now report the existence of indoor production sites. There are obvious benefits to suppliers of producing the drug near to its intended marketplace and avoiding the need to cross external borders.

The collateral damage on local communities associated with this sort of production is of growing concern and there are an increasing number of reports on the involvement of organised crime gangs and violence linked to domestic production. The high-potency cannabis produced by these intensive methods may have greater negative implications for public health. And the link between drug crime and other criminal activities is illustrated by the fact that some of the people working in cannabis plantations have been trafficked into Europe, and may themselves be subjected to violence or other forms of abuse.

Despite what we are seeing in terms of increased domestic production, Europe still has a large appetite for cannabis resin. Most of the cannabis resin for the European market is produced in Morocco and enters Europe



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via the Iberian Peninsula. Although seizures are down a little, we are not seeing the big decreases one might expect. We do have some evidence to suggest that the infrastructure developed for cannabis trafficking is being used for other drugs such as cocaine as well as for other illicit cargoes — which demonstrates why we have to take a holistic approach to these problems.

We will shortly be releasing a major new analysis of the European cannabis market... One of the things that strikes me in this analysis is the fact that more and more cannabis is entering Europe through our eastern borders and I think this will be a growing problem for the future. We do not yet see much cannabis resin used in the EU originating from Afghanistan, for example, but we know from UNODC sources that Afghan production has increased dramatically, making the country by volume probably the biggest global producer of cannabis resin, with production estimated at between 1 200 and 3 700 tonnes in 2010. Currently most of the Afghan cannabis is consumed outside Europe but this could change in the future and we need to remain alert to this kind of potential market development.

So if we look at future threats posed by cannabis trafficking in Europe as a whole, we see a complex picture which includes domestic production, links with other criminal activities and potentially new source countries.

I think this example has wider implications. Overall, we need to take into account a more dynamic situation in markets and trafficking routes. This is illustrated, not only by the fact that cocaine is now being trafficked on the cannabis route, through North Africa, but also by reports that suggest increasing interaction between heroin and cocaine trafficking operations. Historically, our analysis has tended to be drug and route specific, but I think this can no longer continue — and in my view this is an important topic for our discussions at this meeting.

[Cocaine]

Over the last few years, the development of the European cocaine market has brought with it several unexpected problems. At the international level, the development of new drug trafficking routes through West Africa has added instability and corruption to a region that was already fragile. All of us here recognise that drug use feeds corruption and undermines social development.

We are also seeing new innovative trafficking methods, such as the incorporation of cocaine into plastics, food or clothes and subsequent removal of the drug in so-called secondary extraction laboratories that are located within Europe. This kind of market innovation presents new challenges to our law enforcement efforts.

The cocaine market continues to develop and we now receive reports of trafficking routes that use East Africa to smuggle cocaine into Europe. There were also reports of some major seizures in eastern Europe, a region where, until now, cocaine use has been very low. All these developments show that drug traffickers are quick to adapt to interdiction successes and actively seek out new routes and vulnerable entry points to Europe. We are faced with the challenge of keeping pace with an innovative and fast-moving opponent. But it is important not to be too pessimistic on our performance as we also have examples of how these challenges are being met by better targeted and more coordinated responses.



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[Coordinated responses]

We know from seizure data that cocaine enters Europe through different ports and airports. Large cocaine seizures have been reported in recent years by Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Italy, Bulgaria and France. While in many cases these seizures were the result of the work of national law enforcement bodies, there have also been seizures that were the result of cooperation between European countries. A good example for this is certainly MAOC–N (the Maritime Analysis and Operation Centre – Narcotics) that is located in Lisbon. MAOC–N allows participating countries to share information and prepare interventions targeting cocaine trafficking across the Atlantic. The organisation has facilitated the seizure of more than 60 tonnes of cocaine since its inception in 2007 — or to put that more concretely, cocaine with a wholesale value of around 5 billion euro.

A similar body — CECLAD–M — also operates in the Mediterranean. The ‘European pact to combat international drug trafficking’ is another promising initiative which will allow better information exchange and cooperation among European law enforcement bodies to disrupt the cocaine trade.

It is not only important that we coordinate our activities at the international level. We also need to see closer and more coordinated working practices developed between customs, border control and police services. Again there is some evidence that we are moving in the right direction... The work done by CEPOL and Europol to increase the integration of European customs services into law enforcement training programmes is a good example — as well as the efforts being made to better use information from customs services in the assessment of the threats posed by serious and organised crime.

The importance of such joined-up working practices between police and customs services becomes evident when we look at some of the successes we have had in disrupting heroin trafficking on the Balkan route.

[Heroin]

When we look at the use and availability of heroin in Europe today, I have to say I am becoming increasingly, if cautiously, optimistic that this drug will play a less important role in our drug problem in the future. Effective interdiction is not the only reason for this. We have also seen impressive investment in demand-reduction measures — and nearly half of those with heroin problems are now in treatment.

An example of successful supply reduction work can be seen in the recent heroin drought experienced in a number of European countries from early 2010. This drought can be directly attributed to successful cooperation between police and customs services — in this case joint work between Turkish and EU services (in particular UK). There is increasing evidence that this kind of activity — combined with measures in and around Afghanistan and with a comprehensive demand-reduction strategy within Europe — is impacting positively on Europe’s most important drug problem.

We do then have grounds for optimism and grounds to counter the voices of those who still claim — mistakenly in my view — that we are wrestling with an intractable problem. However, I have to temper my optimism with realism and we are clearly facing some major new challenges...



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[Synthetic, precursors]

Synthetic substances are becoming a more significant problem on both the European and international drug markets. Here we are increasingly playing a game of cat and mouse with drug producers. Our successes are met with new strategies and we are struggling to keep up with developments. For example, we have seen in Europe that more intelligent enforcement targeting the precursor chemicals for ecstasy has had a major impact on availability of this drug on the European market. However, this has been met by a more chemically sophisticated response from the illicit trade, which has undermined the progress made. If we look at synthetic drug production in Europe today, we see that the illicit trade is not only manufacturing the precursor chemicals themselves but also importing uncontrolled chemicals that can easily be converted into precursors once they are in Europe.

[‘Legal highs’]

A linked and growing challenge for drug policies is the expanding market in uncontrolled new psychoactive substances, the so-called ‘legal highs’. Around one new chemical a week is reported to the European early-warning system on new psychoactive drugs, the mechanism established to monitor this area in the EU. We are seeing the development of a dynamic new market with considerable effort being invested in identifying substances that can be used as alternatives to controlled drugs. These substances are packaged and marketed sophisticatedly, often sold via the Internet, and are of growing popularity in various parts of the world. Many of these chemicals are difficult to detect and highly active, meaning that a small-volume package can contain many thousands of doses. As control measures begin to target these products, they are likely to pose a new and difficult challenge for customs and border control services.

Let me conclude by saying that I have outlined a number of areas where we are facing a growing challenge to the way we protect our citizens from drug trafficking and the collateral damage that it brings with it. The importance of a meeting such as this one is that it provides an opportunity for us to ensure that we meet these challenges effectively. Criminal organisations involved in trafficking have short-term goals, a high degree of flexibility and no concern for the damage that they inflict. We, on the other hand, have values, respect decision-making processes that are accountable, and have the long-term goals of preserving society and the life and wellbeing of our citizens. Within this framework we need to be as proactive, flexible and innovative as those we face. How we better achieve this will be the subject that this forum should focus on over the next three days — I wish you a productive meeting.

Thank you very much for your attention.