



# news release

from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

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## Drugs agency signs friendship declaration with Chile

The **EU drugs agency** (EMCDDA) and the **Government of Chile** signed a '**Declaration of Intent**' in Lisbon today expressing their will to initiate 'relations of friendship and mutual co-operation in the field of the prevention and control of drug abuse'.

The signing came during the official visit of **His Excellency the President of Chile, Ricardo Lagos** to the EMCDDA this afternoon as part of a State visit of Chile to Portugal.

During the visit, the Head of State met with **Chairman of the EMCDDA Management Board, Mike Trace (UK)** and **EMCDDA Executive Director, Georges Estievenart**. Also present were **Vitalino Canas**, Secretary of State of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – responsible for the Portuguese drugs portfolio – and **Elsa Pais**, President of the *Instituto Português da Droga e da Toxicodependência* (IPDT). The Chilean delegation included the Ambassador of Chile in Portugal, **Belisario Velasco**; Minister of the Economy, **Jorge Rodriguez**; and Under-Secretary of State for External Relations, **Heraldo Muñoz**.

In his address, **President Lagos** underlined the preoccupation of his and previous democratic governments of Chile with the problem of drug trafficking, a problem 'affecting all countries of the international community'. He referred to the 'complex and multi-faceted nature of the drug problem' and underlined the need to approach it 'in its globality...with the participation of all governments of the world'. This would help 'raise civil society's awareness of this global problem and its effects, particularly those on young people and the poorest sectors of the population'. The President also regretted the effects that corruption, caused by money laundering activities closely linked to drug trafficking, had on society.

Commenting on the **EMCDDA** and its work, President Lagos said the agency had made a 'valuable contribution' enabling governments to 'formulate their policies and take decisions based on sound and reliable information'. On this note, he expressed his satisfaction that Chile was the first country outside Europe to sign a Declaration of Intent with the EMCDDA to initiate reciprocal co-operation activities.

Commenting on the visit, **Mr Trace** welcomed the opportunity for the EU and Chile to exchange information and perspectives on their respective drug situations, an exchange he hoped would 'deepen our understanding of a problem we all face'.

**Georges Estievenart** spoke on issues of co-operation with Chile, in particular, and with Latin America, in general, where drug observatories are currently being set up or considered at national and regional level <sup>(1)</sup>. In his address, the Director upheld the concept of standardised drug information systems as a reflection of a firm will by politicians to take responsibility for the drug policies they adopt.

In today's Declaration, the two parties share the view that information on the drug phenomenon is a 'necessary instrument for the design of drug policies' and also for the 'evaluation of the impact of measures and actions to reduce problems related to drug abuse and trafficking'. They express their willingness to co-operate on a concrete basis by 'organising a regular exchange of, and mutual access to, statistical, documental and Internet-based information'.

In particular, they express a mutual interest in 'exchanging knowledge and expertise on methodologies aiming to develop harmonised indicators and information systems in close co-operation with the United National International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)'.

The development of harmonised indicators in the European Union is a key point in the EMCDDA's ongoing work programme and crucial to the agency's central task of improving the comparability of data across the 15 Member States and Norway <sup>(2)</sup>. The statement outlines the possibilities of training sessions in this area involving the EMCDDA and its Reitox network of National Focal Points.

The co-operation envisaged will involve the EMCDDA and its National Focal Points and the relevant Chilean bodies, namely the Chilean Ministry of the Interior and the National Council for the Control of Narcotics (CONACE).

**Notes for editors:**

*The EMCDDA and Latin America*

- In October 1998, the EMCDDA and the European Commission co-operated with His Excellency the President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio and the Portuguese Government in the organisation of the 'Euro-Ibero American Seminar: Co-operation on Drugs and Drug Addiction Policies'. (<http://www.emcdda.org/infopoint/publications/adhoc.shtml>). The event culminated in the 'Declaration of Oporto' which concluded that political decision-makers in Europe and Latin America should intensify co-operation in the area of drug addiction. It also underlined that for political co-operation to be achieved, it was 'both necessary and crucial that reliable and compatible information systems be set up allowing for a comparison of existing data'. The seminar was held in the perspective of the Ibero-Latin American Summit convened in the same month and city.
- The EMCDDA signed a *Memorandum of Understanding* with the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) (<http://www.cicad.oas.org>) in 2000. In this statement, the organisations pledged to exchange information and know-how on the evaluation of drug-prevention projects; data on drug-abuse and production; experience on projects related to drug-abuse in prisons; and actions in the field of training on epidemiological issues.

**Footnotes:**

<sup>(1)</sup> The EMCDDA participated from 11–12 June, 2001, in the Third high-level meeting of the Co-ordination and Co-operation Mechanism on Drugs between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean in Cochabamba (Bolivia). Here leaders from the respective regions stressed 'the need for creating regional and national information networks and observatories to promote effective data collection and analysis' which should 'focus on monitoring drug trends in order to help appropriate drug control programmes'. The EMCDDA Director addressed the meeting on the 'Exchange of information and experience: collecting information' in which he examined the concept and role of drug monitoring centres (see *Drugnet Europe*, No. 31).

<sup>(2)</sup> [http://www.emcdda.org/situation/methods\\_tools/key\\_indicators.shtml](http://www.emcdda.org/situation/methods_tools/key_indicators.shtml)

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