

Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Organized Crime¹

Tbilisi, 8 August 2013

Protocol of the first session

On 8th of August 2013 the first session of the Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Organized Crime was held at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The session was chaired by Mr. Aleksandre Tabatadze, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs. The session was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Chief Prosecutor's Office. Representatives of the US Embassy, US Department of Justice, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Council of Europe and European Union were also present at the session.

The draft National Strategy for Combating Organized Crime was presented at the session.

The presentation was followed by the discussion, where participants of the session voiced their comments and recommendations.

The representative of the US Embassy mentioned that due to the transnational character of organized crime, it would be desirable to create a unified strategy, where issues regarding corruption, drug trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, terrorism etc. could be discussed in detail. Commenting the abovementioned, the MoIA representatives stated that strategies and/or action plans regarding corruption, drug related crime and human trafficking have already been elaborated and in order to avoid overlapping of different strategies, these issues were not addressed in the Organized Crime Strategy. Instead, the reference to those documents was made in the Strategy.

The MoIA representative further commented that where "other organized criminal groups" are mentioned together with "the community of thieves in law", the groups which could be involved in criminal activities such as extortion, fraud, drug related crime and human trafficking are meant. The Strategy includes the matters of raising public awareness, conducting information campaigns and informing business sector regarding abovementioned issue.

¹ The Statute and Composition of the Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Organized Crime was approved on 13th of June 2013 by the Resolution №145 of the Government of Georgia.

The representative of the Council of Europe welcomed the elaboration of the abovementioned Strategy and expressed preparedness to support the Council, especially in the field of combating cybercrime. As a recommendation, the representative mentioned that it would be preferable to include in the Strategy statistical data and performance analysis, in order to demonstrate the decreasing crime trends, which, in turn, is very important for the society.

In response to this comment the MoIA representative stated that the draft Strategy and respective Action Plan were sent to foreign partners and relevant international organizations for remarks and recommendations and that the MoIA is ready to receive remarks and recommendations in a reasonable timeframe.

The representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime expressed preparedness to support the MoIA in the implementation of the Strategy. The representative stressed the importance of cooperation in the field of money laundering and drug related crime. The UNODC representative mentioned that the Customs Department and Revenue Service were not included in the Action Plan as partner agencies, despite the fact that UNODC supports initiative concerning control of containers in the port of Poti, where police and Customs Department work together. The representative mentioned that deepening of interagency cooperation is important, when it concerns cargo transit control and put forward an initiative of creating a small working group, which will work on these specific issues.

The Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs declared that the interagency council for combating drug related crime already exists and it is chaired by the Ministry of Justice. The MoIA is itself in close cooperation with the Drug Enforcement Administration of the United States (DEA), there is also a joint working group of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Revenue Service of Georgia.

The representative of the United States Department of Justice assessed the Strategy and Action Plan as an ambitious and comprehensive undertaking. The representative expressed an interest whether the MoIA was planning to restructure its departments in order to achieve its objectives more effectively and avoid overlap. In the representative's opinion, it would be interesting to form police units with narrow specialization, working on specific crimes, because investigation always requires specific tactics and technique. The representative also stressed the importance of including this issue in the Strategy.

The Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs noted that the Reforms and Development Agency was established within the MoIA, which works on the improvement of structure and approaches of the Ministry. The Constitutional Security and Special Operative departments were abolished. State Security and Anti-corruption agencies and Central Criminal Police Department were established. As for the police units with narrow specialization, respective divisions of the MoIA are working on the

issues of combating drug related and organized crime. Respective activities for their improvement and perfection are carried out persistently.

The EU police representative was pleased with the elaboration of the Strategy and expressed her gratitude to the MoIA for the performed work. The representative positively assessed cooperation of MoIA with European structures and underlined the importance of Georgia for Europol.

The Chairman of the Council, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs expressed his gratitude to the EU police representative and noted that conclusion of the Agreement on Strategic Cooperation with the Europol is important for Georgia, because the latter is one of the most efficient organizations that carry out the fight against organized crime with actual results.

The representative of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia positively assessed consultative meetings held in the process of the Strategy elaboration. The representative expressed interest about who would monitor the implementation process of the Strategy and Action Plan, which mechanisms would be used in this process and what would be the role of the Interagency Coordinating Council. In the representative's opinion it would be reasonable to include mentioned procedures in the Strategy.

In response to the abovementioned, the MoIA representative stated that the secretariat of the Council, with other relevant agencies, will be responsible for the implementation of the Strategy and monitoring of this process. Establishment of the working groups is already included in the agenda of the session. Members of the working groups will analyze the Action Plan and monitor its implementation. Working groups will elaborate recommendations and submit them to the Council. It will enable to further refine and amend the Strategy and Action Plan. It was also noted that the members of the Interagency Coordinating Council are expected to nominate candidates within the period of one week in order to form the working groups.

The representative of the European Union declared that EU is ready to support Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Organized Crime. Namely, in the nearest future, TAIEX program might be used to cover the needs of the Secretariat of the Council.

By the end of the session the Council approved four working groups:

1. Working group for combating "community of thieves in law" and other organized criminal groups.
2. Working group for detecting stolen motor vehicles.
3. Working group for combating cybercrime.
4. Working group for deepening international cooperation.