

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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# "ORGANIZATIONAL AND LEGAL PECULIARITIES OF CARICC ACTIVITY IN THE SPHERE OF COMBATING DRUG TRAFFICKING IN CENTRAL ASIA"

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## Abstract

The article is devoted to organizational and legal peculiarities of activity of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors (CARICC) as an interstate body designed to assist regional cooperation in combating illicit drug trafficking through exchange and analysis of operational information, organization and coordination of joint operations.

The author of the article notes the importance of multilateral format of cooperation in Central Asia in the field of combating drug trafficking and search for joint responses to the drug threat. It is suggested to use CARICC analytical materials in terms of strategic analysis of the situation related to drug production in Afghanistan, assessment of potential risks and threats to Central Asian states from drug trafficking.

In recent years, Uzbekistan's role in the world arena has been growing, and the country's positive influence on international processes has been increasing due to the pragmatic and active foreign policy pursued by the country's leadership. In this context, the country's active participation in multilateral cooperation institutions - international and regional organizations, including the CARICC format - plays an important role.

**Keywords** Drug trafficking, international cooperation, drug situation, information exchange, research.

## INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Agreement between the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan on the establishment of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center for Combating Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic

Substances and their Precursors (signed in Astana on July 24, 2006, entered into force on March 22, 2009), CARICC is functioning in Almaty under the auspices of the United Nations as an interstate body coordinating the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) <sup>1</sup>.

The history of CARICC dates back to December 2004, with the meeting in Moscow of

<sup>1</sup> <https://caricc.org/index.php/tsarikts/o-tsarikts/o-tsentre>

representatives of the participating states of the Memorandum of Understanding on Regional Cooperation in Drug Control of May 4, 1996 (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), where the idea of establishing CARICC was agreed and approved<sup>2</sup>. The initial initiative to establish CARICC came from Uzbekistan<sup>3</sup>.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are the participants of the Agreement on the Establishment of CARICC. CARICC is financed by donor states (USA, Japan, etc.) through the project of the Regional Office of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime "On the Establishment of CARICC"<sup>4</sup>.

The main objective of CARICC is to promote regional cooperation in combating drug trafficking through exchange and analysis of operational information, organization and coordination of joint operations<sup>5</sup>.

Since its establishment, CARICC has become an integral part of the regional mechanism for combating drug trafficking. As part of the development of cooperation in combating drug trafficking, a number of countries have been granted observer status at CARICC (Afghanistan, Austria, Belarus, Canada, China, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Mongolia, Pakistan, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Finland, France, Iran, Sweden)<sup>6</sup>. Memoranda and Cooperation Agreements were signed with specialized international organizations (World Customs Organization, Interpol, CIS BCBOP - Bureau for Coordination of Combating Organized Crime and Other Dangerous Types of Crime on the Territory of CIS Member States, CIS ATC CIS - Anti-Terrorist

Center of CIS Member States, CELEC Center - Regional Center for Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe on Combating Transnational Crimes, etc.).

CARICC has been positively noted by specialized international organizations as a unique example of multilateral cooperation in countering drug-related crime in Central Asia. According to foreign experts, in recent years, initiatives such as CARICC have improved the effectiveness of regional cooperation in drug law enforcement. CARICC, modeled after the European Police Office (Europol) and supported by UNODC, acts as a focal point for information exchange and operational cooperation among drug law enforcement agencies in Central Asia<sup>7</sup>.

## **METHODS**

In the process of research, the author tried to highlight the history of CARICC formation, practical results of its activity with statistical data, as well as the prospects of expanding international anti-drug cooperation of Uzbekistan within the framework of this organization.

On the basis of comparative and statistical methods of research of the scientific article the author's position on these issues with proposals to improve the effectiveness of international cooperation of Uzbekistan in the field of drug control and counteraction to drug trafficking was developed.

## **RESULTS**

During the period of the Center's activity, 84 anti-drug operations have been carried out under its coordination, including international controlled delivery. About 7.5 tons of drugs and more than 62 tons of precursors were seized, 121 leaders and active members of organized crime groups were detained.

<sup>2</sup> <https://caricc.org/index.php/tsarikts/o-tsarikts/o-tsentre>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.uzbekistan.org.ua/ru/vneshnyaya-politika/uzbekistan-i-mezhdunarodnye-organizatsii.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://caricc.org/index.php/tsarikts/pravovaya-osnova/soglashenie-o-tsarikts>

<sup>5</sup> Соглашение между Азербайджанской Республикой, Республикой Казахстан, Кыргызской Республикой, Российской Федерацией, Республикой Таджикистан, Туркменистаном и Республикой Узбекистан о создании

Центральноазиатского регионального информационного координационного центра по борьбе с незаконным оборотом наркотических средств, психотропных веществ и их прекурсоров. Ст.3

<sup>6</sup> <https://caricc.org/index.php/tsarikts/o-tsarikts/etapy-stanovleniya>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.incb.org/documents/Publications/ePublication/E-Publication\\_R\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.incb.org/documents/Publications/ePublication/E-Publication_R_FINAL.pdf) С. 12

During the period 2021-2022 alone, under the coordination of CARICC, a multi-pass international controlled delivery of 26 kg of heroin en route Afghanistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-Russia-Italy and 30 kg of heroin en route Afghanistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-Netherlands was successfully implemented, with local seizures and arrests of those involved. The operation also included a controlled delivery of 45 kg of methamphetamine to China. As a result, the leader and 10 members of an international drug trafficking group specializing in smuggling drugs into Malaysia, the Philippines and Australia were apprehended.

The CARICC 2022 Newsletter noted the work being done in the framework of the implementation of the CARICC Development Strategy 2018 - 2022, aimed at:

- Developing and supporting analytical products and programs to monitor the drug situation;
- conducting science-based studies of drug market trends and drug trafficking with forecast assessments of its development;
- conducting international trainings and seminars on topical problems of anti-drug activities and re-equipping training facilities;
- technical support of the Centralized Data Bank and analytical programs developed by the Center, etc.

In 2022 alone, CARICC information and analytical activities prepared and sent to the competent authorities of CARICC member states and other partners 38 weekly summaries on the facts of seizures of large amounts of drugs based on information from the media, 35 weekly news releases on past events in the anti-drug sphere, prepared on the basis of electronic media materials, 12 monthly reviews on the identified methods of concealing drugs. In the course of analyzing the drug situation, information reports "On Changes in the Anti-Drug Legislation of CARICC Member States in 2021", "Drug Situation in CARICC Member States at the End of 2021", "CARICC Newsletter", etc. were prepared.

### **Analyzing the results of the study**

According to I.N. Kondratyev, the development of international regional cooperation should be aimed at coordinating efforts and mobilizing the potential of countries to implement systemic measures to combat drugs, taking into account the national interests of states and strengthening the openness and trust of participating countries to each other. The implementation of international regional projects (such as the "Establishment of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC)") will become the basis for the formation of the Global Information and Coordination System in the field of drugs in the future.

Agreeing with the opinion of this scholar, it is also necessary to note the importance of the development of international criminal law, which determines the effectiveness of cooperation in this area.

According to D.Sh. Umarkhanova, in the sphere of international cooperation in criminal cases, the place and importance of treaties is truly limitless. For the absence of such treaties becomes the reason for the impossibility of taking any measures to apprehend the criminal, render mutual legal assistance and search, and also prevents the achievement of such goals as ensuring inevitability of punishment for the committed crime, restoration of social justice, prevention of offenses, correction of the criminal.

Agreeing with the opinions of the above-mentioned scholars, it is necessary to note the fact that, like any other international organization, CARICC, along with fulfilling its functions of coordinating multilateral cooperation in the field of combating drug-related crime, is increasingly acting as an instrument of multilateral diplomacy. In the context of deteriorating drug situation and aggravation of geopolitical competition in the region and the world as a whole, the participating states and donor states are trying to use CARICC not only as an instrument of multilateral anti-drug cooperation in the region, but also to promote their interests within the framework of bilateral and multilateral formats in various spheres of interaction.

In particular, CARICC is the only regional structure

for the U.S. and EU through which security cooperation with the countries of the region takes place. This is evidenced by regional and national simulation trainings regularly held at CARICC for practitioners on combating drug trafficking, the use of analytical programs in the investigation of drug crimes and human trafficking. The events are organized by law enforcement training institutions of CARICC participating States, the U.S. Embassy in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the OSCE Programme Office in Astana.

## **CONCLUSION**

Taking into account the above-mentioned and taking into account the fact that for Uzbekistan the main priority of foreign policy activity is the Central Asian region, CARICC remains for our country the only international organization in the region serving as a platform for coordination of multilateral cooperation in the field of combating drug-related crime. In this context, it is necessary to outline a number of priority aspects of CARICC activity:

1. Today, the countries of the region are facing not only the growing drug threat from Afghanistan, but also the problem of the spread of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances, the sources of illicit production and export of which are Afghanistan, CARICC member states and such socio-economically prosperous countries as the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, South-East Asian states - China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and others.

The invention of new recipes and the modification of the chemical structure of synthetic drugs complicates the task of prompt response, including at the legislative level, to new challenges and threats of the spread of new psychoactive substances. There is an active use by criminal elements of new marketing opportunities of the Internet, payment of the cost of "goods" through virtual payment systems and their delivery by postal mailings. At the same time, drug syndicates are becoming truly transnational in nature, producing drugs in one country, administering Internet stores in another, selling them in third countries, and distributing money through electronic systems all over the world.

At the Meeting of Heads of Competent Authorities of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States with Competent Authority to Combat Illicit Drug Trafficking, held in Tashkent on 20 April 2022 under the chairmanship of Uzbekistan, the parties stressed that the rapid spread and abuse of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances, as well as the increasing trafficking of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs, posed a serious threat to regional security and stability.

The rapid spread of synthetic drugs in the world, including in the territory of CARICC member states, once again actualizes the issues of uniting efforts of competent authorities of member states in the field of investigation of synthetic drug seizures both in transit and destination countries, as well as the exchange of operational information and assistance in the organization of relevant activities with the involvement of international experts.

2. Taking into account the special interest of Kazakhstan in CARICC functioning, Uzbekistan's participation in the Center's activities is one of the elements of multifaceted cooperation between these countries. Further interaction of our countries within CARICC opens an opportunity to consolidate positions of the two states on topical issues of regional policy, including in water-energy, transport-communication and other spheres of mutual interest.

3. The continuing geopolitical tension actualizes the issues of combating drug trafficking, which is one of the effective means of financing terrorism and destabilizing the socio-political situation in a particular country.

In this context, CARICC provides the participating states with an opportunity to coordinate multilateral work on combating organized crime and to influence the processes of formation of positive information flows on the drug situation in the participating states, as well as the work carried out by them to prevent drug trafficking.

Taking into account the fact that the Central Asian region is the main priority of Uzbekistan's foreign policy activity, its role is particularly actualized in the light of the forthcoming chairmanship of the republic in CARICC in 2024-2026.



In recent years, Uzbekistan's role in the world arena has been growing and its positive influence on international processes has been enhanced thanks to the pragmatic and active foreign policy pursued by the country's leadership. An important role in this is played by the country's active participation in multilateral cooperation institutions - international and regional organizations. Following the strategy being implemented in Central Asia under the leadership of the President of Uzbekistan, based on the principles of constructiveness, pragmatism and initiative, it is considered expedient to activate the unrealized opportunities of CARICC by elaborating specific proposals on enhancing the joint potential in countering new challenges of drug threat.

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