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WACD
West Africa Commission on Drugs

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

28/07/14

Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary General
United Nations

Geneva, July 2014

Dear Mr. Ki-moon,

As you may be aware, West Africa faces a growing problem of drug trafficking and consumption. Deeply concerned by these threats, we launched the West Africa Commission on Drugs (WACD) in January 2013. The Commission is comprised of a diverse group of West Africans drawn from politics, civil society, health, security and the judiciary.

We are very pleased to transmit to you a copy of the final report of the Commission on Drugs entitled, *Not Just in Transit: Drugs, the State and Society in West Africa*, which was released on 12 June 2014 in Dakar.

In preparing its report, the Commission visited a number of countries in the region and met with political leaders, policy makers, experts in the field, civil society organisations and people whose daily lives are directly affected by drugs. The WACD commissioned as well a series of technical papers that provide expert analysis on various aspects of the drug problems of the region.

While the report focuses on West Africa, many of its findings and recommendations are relevant to other countries on the continent and have implications outside the region.

In this report, the Commission reaches a number of conclusions, namely:

- West Africa is no longer only a transit zone for drugs. Drugs are having a profound and disturbing effect on the stability of countries in the region and their development prospects;
- West Africa is ill prepared for this assault on its societies. Institutions of governance and justice are still quite fragile and vulnerable to penetration by organized crime and drug money;
- Health systems in the region do not have the means or capacity to offer adequate prevention, treatment or harm reduction services to drug users;
- Illicit drugs are an international problem that cannot be solved by West Africa alone.

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The report sets forth several policy recommendations that seek to address these urgent political, social and economic challenges for West Africa. They are:

- Treat drug use as a public health issue, rather than as a criminal justice matter;
- Confront openly the political and governance weaknesses, which traffickers exploit;
- Reform drug laws on the basis of existing and emerging minimum health standards and pursue decriminalization of drug use and low-level, non-violent drug offences;
- Strengthen law enforcement for more selective deterrence, focusing on high-level targets;
- Avoid militarisation of drug policy and related counter-trafficking measures of the kind that some countries have applied at great cost without reducing drug supply;
- Intensify cooperation between producing, transit and consuming countries not only on interdiction but also on prevention, treatment and harm reduction.

We hope that this report will generate not only greater public awareness of the drug problems that West Africa faces but also the political engagement needed to ensure that these problems are tackled in an effective and timely manner. This will require the active engagement and strong commitment of leaders and civil society in West Africa and in regions in other parts of the world that are major producers and consumers of drugs to ensure that societies everywhere are adequately informed and protected.

Yours sincerely,

Kofi A. Annan

Convenor

Olusegun Obasanjo

Chairman