

## **The Government of Japan Allocates \$ US 6.8 Million to Support UNODC Regional Border Cooperation Initiative in Central Asia and Interagency Mobile Teams in Uzbekistan**

27 February 2020, Tashkent, Uzbekistan. - The Government of Japan and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) signed a grant agreement for the amount of US\$6.8 million to support UNODC initiatives on countering illicit drug trafficking and transnational organized crime through enhancing regional cross border cooperation by strengthening the capacity of Border Liaison Offices in Central Asia and Interagency Mobile Teams (IMTs) in Uzbekistan.

The Exchange Notes was signed by H.E. Mr. Yoshinori Fujiyama, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Republic of Uzbekistan and Ms. Ashita Mittal, UNODC Regional Representative for Central Asia in the presence of Mr. Olim Narzullaev, the Director of the National Information-Analytical Center on Drug Control under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NCDC), the Ambassadors of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to Uzbekistan, , senior representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interiors, State Customs Committee, Border Services and General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Speaking on this occasion, H.E. Mr. Yoshinori Fujiyama, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Republic of Uzbekistan. "Though this project, we would like to see greater cross border cooperation and coordination among the countries in Central Asia to jointly address the challenges of drug trafficking through enhanced border management. This is also expected to lead to on one hand increase in seizure of drugs and decrease in related cross border organized crimes"

"These new IMT (Interagency Mobile Teams) and BLO (Border Liaison Offices) initiatives are the outcome of successful cooperation of UNODC with law enforcement agencies in Central Asia, in particular in Uzbekistan. Technical assistance under these initiatives will focus on developing legislative and institutional framework, provision of specialized modern law enforcement equipment, as well as to improve the capacities of law enforcement agencies through delivery of training courses, practical workshops and organisation of joint interagency anti-drug operations" - highlighted Mr. Olim Narzullaev, the Director of NCDC.

According to Mr. Yusuf Kurbonov, a UNODC International Programme Coordinator, over US\$4.5 million will be directed to strengthening the capacities of international border-crossing points in Central Asia through setting up new Border Liaison Offices, to support the enhancement of the analytical capacity of border law enforcement agencies, as well as establishing a Situation Centre in Uzbekistan and strengthening those in place in other countries.

\$2.3 million USD is allocated to implement an Uzbekistan-UNODC joint initiative on establishing Interagency Mobile Teams. The new IMT project will focus on further strengthening counter-narcotics capacities of the law enforcement agencies of Uzbekistan in the face of the evolving drug situation. The beneficiaries of the initiative are State Security Service, Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Customs Committee and NCDC. The Department on Combatting Economic Crimes under the General Prosecutor's Office will also participate for financial backtracking in significant cases to address drug-related illicit financial flows. New offices will be set up in Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzakh, Karshi, Namangan, Navoi, Urgench, and existing six IMTs in Tashkent, Samarkand, Nukus, Termez, Fergana and Syrdarya will be strengthened. They will be networked and coordinated through the Operations Coordination Team.

While thanking the People of Japan, as well as the Central Asian countries for the partnership with UNODC, Ms. Ashita Mittal, emphasized that it is our joint shared responsibility to ensure that the region remains safe from drugs and crime that have far reaching impact on the countries, communities, families and the young people. The only way forward is to foster greater cross border and inter agency cooperation for achieving our shared vision to strengthen progress security, health and suitable development.

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