



## **PRESS RELEASE**

Cartagena, 1 July 2010

### **INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION THE KEY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MONEY LAUNDERING AND TERRORIST FINANCING**

The Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) met this week in Cartagena to discuss international cooperation in the sharing of information and financial intelligence.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Egmont Group Plenary, held at the Center de Convenciones Cartagena de Indias, was attended by over 230 participants representing FIUs from 90 jurisdictions and 11 regional and international bodies who work to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.

More than 30 bilateral cooperation agreements were signed between Egmont members during the week, signaling an increased willingness to work together across borders in the exchange of information. This will deliver very practical results in expanding and systematizing the flow of intelligence, fostering better communications among FIUs.

The Plenary Co-Chairs, Mr. Luis Urrutia, Chair of the Egmont Group and Mr. Fernando Niño Niño, Director of the Colombian Unit for Financial Intelligence and Analysis (UIAF), the Colombian FIU, congratulated the four (4) new member FIUs who were admitted to the Egmont Group: Afghanistan, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Uruguay. Mr. Luis Urrutia added that these new members strengthened the global network of information sharing in areas of particular strategic significance.

Mr. Luis Urrutia expressed particular satisfaction to see two (2) more FIUs from the African continent becoming members of the Egmont Group and Mr. Fernando Niño Niño also welcomed the Uruguay FIU from the South American region and offered his full support to collaborate in any activity that will help them carry out their important mission.

Mr. Fernando Niño Niño noted that “the breakneck speed of technological advancements makes it easier for assets to be moved around the world at the speed of a wire transfer and concluded that this should not allow offenders to put their assets out of reach from the national authorities”. FIUs are key to enabling investigators to identify and follow the money trail to counter money laundering and terrorism financing.

A keynote presentation by the IMF focused on the impact of the financial crisis and FIUs were encouraged to contribute to money laundering and terrorist financing risk assessments and to cooperate with other national authorities in order to target resources to areas of greatest vulnerability.

The World Bank emphasized the importance of financial inclusion as a means of strengthening Anti-Money Laundering / Counter Terrorist Financing (AML/CFT) regimes; resulting in less demand on the informal sector and an improved ability to monitor and trace transactions. A need to work on anti-corruption initiatives was also stressed, with many FIUs indicating that corruption is a significant factor that influences their ability to work effectively at both the national and international level.

Egmont Regional Representatives met with representatives of FATF-Style Regional Bodies (FSRBs) to coordinate efforts at a local and regional level to build the capacity of existing FIUs, and to support the development of emerging FIUs.

The Plenary heard that the FSRB for the Middle East and North Africa (MENAFATF) had established a special forum for FIUs. This initiative was welcomed and a commitment made to assist this forum where possible.

In an address reflecting on the achievements of the 17<sup>th</sup> Egmont Plenary, held on Doha, Qatar in June 2009, Sheikh Ahmed bin eid Al Thani, Head of the Qatar Financial Information Unit, announced that the Government of Qatar would provide some financial support to assist the Egmont Group's work with FSRBs. This news was warmly received by the Chair of the Egmont Group and the members.

Training sessions held throughout the plenary week focused on topics of operational concern to FIUs. Other sessions and included an examination of bulk cash smuggling, the methods used to launder money through Free Trade Zones, work with supervisors and regulatory entities, STR sharing, and the use of IT tools in FIU case development. The meeting also looked at a Financial Instruments Manual developed by the UNODC and received information on the topic of 'Proliferation Financing'.

The Heads of FIUs were very pleased to hear that the Government of Canada had provided a generous contribution of USD\$800,000 to assist the Egmont Group with training activities. One of the projects will be carried out in collaboration with the World Bank.

A strong emphasis was placed on the need to work effectively with law enforcement authorities at the national level, with many FIUs sharing their best practice experience. Several international organizations jointly presented on their money laundering / terrorist financing assessment projects and risk based approach studies highlighting the Egmont Group's enhanced focus on understanding current and future money laundering and terrorism financing threats.

Mr. Fernando Niño Niño explained developments at the UIAF. The Plenary participants acknowledged the UIAF's past distinction as the best Colombian state entity according to Transparency International and the Colombian National Award for High Management in 2008. Heads of FIUs also noted the impressive performance and solid reputation of the UIAF, since it has been a member of the Egmont Group.

The Cartagena Plenary meeting brought together the Egmont membership for training, liaison, and in-depth corporate discussions to further the development of the international FIU network. The Plenary saw a change in the Chair of the Egmont Group. Mr. Luis Urrutia, Head of the Mexican FIU, concluded his term as Chair. Heads of FIUs unanimously endorsed Mr. Boudewijn Verhelst, Deputy Head of the Belgian FIU, as the new Chair of the Egmont Group.

Outgoing Chair, Mr. Luis Urrutia, who was recently appointed as President of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), committed to continue close cooperation between the Egmont Group and the FATF in recognition that the FIUs are a central component in jurisdiction's AML/CFT strategies.

The Egmont Group is grateful to the Unidad de Información y Análisis Financiero (UIAF) of Colombia for efficiently delivering the 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting in Cartagena, and acknowledges the valuable contribution that the UIAF has provided to the activities of the Egmont Group since its admission as member FIU in 2000, in line with its commitment to fight money laundering and the financing of terrorism in Colombia and abroad.

In closing the Plenary today, the Minister of Finance of Colombia, Hon. Oscar Ivan Zuluaga Escobar, stated that "the financial crisis was a lesson for the world, and arose from a lack of rigor, action and procedure". He continued "the important message we have before us today, is the need for more precise and decisive actions in this fight against money laundering and terrorism".

The Minister noted that "the value of the Egmont Group that has met here this week is its ability to assist in mobilizing internal solidarity and the international global standards". He assured the meeting "in these efforts, Colombia is an unconditional ally in calling for international cooperation".

## **Background**

In 1995 a number of financial intelligence units (FIUs) began working together in an informal organisation known as the Egmont Group. Named for the location of the first meeting at the Egmont-Arenberg Palace in Brussels, the goal of the Egmont Group is to provide a forum for FIUs to improve support to their respective national anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing programs.

The FIUs are central, national authorities responsible for receiving, analyzing, and disseminating to competent authorities, disclosures received from the respective financial sectors.

The place of FIUs is now well established in the arsenal of measures to combat serious crimes. To ensure the effectiveness of these measures, each FIU must adhere to all of the Egmont Group principles. One of the major principles of the Egmont Group is to enhance the potential for bilateral and multilateral international collaboration in strategic analysis among the FIUs.

Further information about the Egmont Group and a list of Egmont member FIUs can be found at [www.egmontgroup.org](http://www.egmontgroup.org). The Egmont Group 2008-2009 Annual Report is also available on this website.