



CO-CHAIRS STATEMENT

21st PLENARY OF THE EGMONT GROUP OF FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNITS

The Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) met this week in Sun City, South Africa, to discuss ways to meet the challenges faced by FIUs in combating money laundering and terrorist financing especially in the areas of international cooperation, information sharing and the improved development of financial intelligence.

The 21st Egmont Group Plenary was attended by 380 participants who were representatives of FIUs from 107 jurisdictions, 15 international organizations and 3 other agencies. The Egmont Plenary, held annually, brings together the Egmont member FIUs and observer organizations for in-depth discussions and training sessions in order to further the development of the international FIU network.

The Plenary was co-chaired by Mr. Boudewijn Verhelst, (Deputy Director of the Belgian FIU) Chair of the Egmont Group, and Mr. Murray Michell, Director of the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC), South Africa.

In his opening address, Mr. Murray Michell highlighted the important role the Egmont Group plays in enhancing greater understanding of the threats and problems faced within different regional and country contexts and enhancing the group's capacity to better address these through operational information exchange. "Rhino-poaching is a prime example," said Mr. Michell. "This scourge can be brought to a halt through greater cooperation and information exchange between FIUs and the work of the Egmont Group".

In his response, Mr. Verhelst noted that "the hosting of the Egmont Plenary, as well as South Africa's involvement and leadership in many other prestigious AML/CFT international bodies signals the strong commitment of South Africa in preventing and combating money laundering and terrorist financing not only in this beautiful country, but also in the region." Mr. Verhelst continued, "FIC South Africa joined the Egmont Group in 2003 and has been a very active and respected member ever since. The FIU has been described as the 'leading force' in South Africa's efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. Moreover, FIC South Africa has played a prominent role in the development of other FIUs within the continent of Africa."

The Co-Chairs congratulated the eight (8) FIUs of Algeria, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Holy See (Vatican City State), Seychelles, Togo, and Trinidad and Tobago who were endorsed as new members of the Egmont Group during the meeting. The Chair of the Egmont Group noted that these new members will strengthen the global network of information sharing in areas of particular strategic and regional significance.

The Heads of FIUs and the Plenary also heard the remarks of the new President of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Mr. Vladimir Nechaev, who highlighted the need for closer cooperation between the FATF and the Egmont Group, and described some measures to further develop the synergies between two of the leading organizations mandated to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

The Egmont Heads of FIU approved revised Egmont Group foundational documents which will provide the guiding principles for financial intelligence units in the future: The *Egmont Charter*, the *Principles of Information Exchange Between FIUs*, and *Operational Guidance for FIU Activities and the Exchange of Information*. Recognizing the areas of mutual interest and the opportunities for cooperation, the Heads of FIUs approved *Egmont Group Partnership with Observers and International AML/CFT Partners* which will further enhance the Egmont Group's collaboration, cooperation and coordination with its AML/CFT partners. Egmont is looking to better align itself with its partners and the FSRBs.

In addition to the growth in membership, 51 bilateral cooperation agreements were signed between Egmont members during the week. Whilst information can, in most instances, be exchanged between FIUs without recourse to Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). The cooperation agreements signal an ever-increasing willingness for Egmont members to work together across borders in the exchange of information. This will deliver very practical results in expanding and systematizing the flow of intelligence and fostering better communications among FIUs.

Thirteen training sessions held throughout the plenary week focused on topics of operational concern to FIUs. Four (4) were in different languages International Cooperation (Spanish), International Cooperation and information exchange (French), Financial flows related to Afghan opiate trafficking (Russian and English), Cross border currency flows and the quality of STRs (Arabic and English). Nine (9) English language workshops were held on the following topics: International Cooperation, Anti-Money Laundering and Corruption, Membership procedures for Egmont sponsors, Terrorist Financing Analysis, Serious Tax Crimes as a predicate offence to money laundering, Tax Crimes, PEPs and Risk Assessments: the impact of the FATF Recommendations and Securing an FIU.

The open plenary session heard from the Egmont working groups who have coordinated their business plans in order to better prioritize their work over the coming year. The plenary audience also heard a presentation from the host FIU entitled *Preparing for a new world of financial intelligence*, noting how the FIC, South Africa supported Presidential priorities, combatting corruption, organised crime and poaching.

In the third year of the Best Egmont Case Award (BECA) presentations were made by the 2013 finalists to the plenary. The first was a video presentation from the UIAF, the FIU Colombia followed by a presentation on a joint case from the Nigerian and South African financial intelligence units NFIU and FIC. After all votes were counted, UIAF, Colombia was declared the winner of the 2013 BECA trophy.

The Egmont Group is grateful to the South African FIC for so efficiently delivering the 21st Egmont Plenary meeting in Sun City, and acknowledges the valuable contributions that FIC South Africa has provided to the activities of the Egmont Group since its admission as a member in 2003. FIC South Africa, as a member of the Egmont Group, FATF, and ESSAMLG provides active leadership on international AML/CTF efforts.

The Egmont Group announced the selection of a new Chair, the Director of the FIC, South Africa, Mr. Murray Michell. "In accepting the role of Chairman for the next two years," Mr. Murray Michell said "I am honoured to be elected as the Chairman of the Egmont Group. There is a huge amount of work to do. But the Egmont Group has built a wonderful platform on which to work. My intention is to show the relevance of financial intelligence throughout my tenure at the Egmont Group."

Sun City, South Africa
5 July 2013

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 and non-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. The Egmont Group 2011- 2012 Annual Report is also available on this website.