

## **Cocaine Smuggling through Africa is an „Enormous Problem”**

**by Hartwig Fischer, MdB**

The latest World Drug Report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) presents a depressing picture of the worldwide drug smuggling scene. Cocaine traffic headed to wealthy industrialized countries through poverty-stricken developing countries is taking on a completely new dimension. “Although only a little more than one percent of worldwide cocaine finds are in Africa, a dramatic development is taking place there,” said Bundestag member Hartwig Fischer, who is the Africa expert for the CDU/CSU parliamentary group. The current UNODC drugs report makes it clear that the amount of cocaine uncovered in Africa has multiplied in recent years, Fischer said.

### **West Africa Particularly Affected**

Referring to the drugs problem, UNODC Director Antonio Maria Costa said in an article in the Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung from 6 June 2007 that West Africa is “under fire.” Interpol, too, is aware of the latest developments. Cocaine trafficking to Europe has developed in the West African countries of Guinea, Mali, and Cape Verde, among others.

Smuggling is also flourishing on the seaways to Europe, which means the statistics regarding Africa can be misleading, since a large portion of the smuggled cocaine remains undiscovered.

Corruption caused by drug traffic in the transit countries complicates the picture further. Countries with corrupt administrators and politicians, where police are bad or go for months without pay, provide the perfect environment for the criminal machinery that cocaine smugglers use to carry out their logistics.

### **Cape Verde Aspires to a Privileged Partnership with the EU**

In a visit to the island nation, Hartwig Fischer spoke with the president, ministers, and the chief of police about the problems of migration and illegal drug trafficking. Cape Verde aspires to a privileged partnership with the EU because Cape Verde lacks the means to guard the seaways against illegal migration and drug trafficking.

The Cape Verde government hopes to be able to install a radar surveillance system with the support of the EU in order to monitor the extensive island chain. “The next EU Council

presidency under Portugal should work toward the establishment of a privileged partnership with Cape Verde,” Fischer emphasized. Both as a drug haven and as a stop for migrants from mainland Africa, Cape Verde serves as a gateway to Europe.

### **Fight Against HIV/AIDS Endangered**

Fischer is particularly concerned about the UNODC’s report that the drastic increase in drug trafficking has led to an upswing in drug use among the African population. If this trend continues, the fight against HIV/AIDS could also be in danger. The needle sharing and alcohol consumption that normally accompany drug use, as well as the danger posed by sexual transmission, have led to an increase in the HIV infection rate. With that in mind, Fischer believes, it is indispensable that Germany and the European Union support West African countries in exposing trafficking and impeding the formation of additional criminal mechanisms. “Because local, regional, and multilateral instruments for fighting drug trafficking are underdeveloped or simply do not exist at all, the development of Africa as an in-between stop for drugs could become an enormous problem for the continent,” Fischer said.



Hartwig Fischer, MdB

Remarks:

*This article reflects the personal opinions of the author.*

*Hartwig Fischer is a member of the German Bundestag. He is the chairman of the Parliamentary Group for West and Central Africa and sits on the Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid. He also chairs the “Africa” workgroup for the CDU/CSU Bundestag faction.*