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PRESS RELEASE

EL PAcCTO supports the formation of task force in Panama

On May 24, two task force specializing in tax and environmental crime were formalized in Panama with the support of the European Union.

The European Union EL PAcCTO programme is supporting the formation of two task force in Panama. Their launch will be made official on 24 May at an official signing ceremony in Panama City. The event will be attended by the Panamanian ministers of public security, economy and finance, environment, the national attorney general and the director of the Financial Analysis Unit. All of them are institutions that make up the SMTs.

The task force to combat tax crimes and environmental crimes

The **SMT to combat tax crimes** will work **in a coordinated** and comprehensive manner on sensitive and complex cases which are related to serious or organised **crime**, such as offences relating to **tax fraud or the associated crimes relating to money laundering**. It will also seek **synergies** between the institutions involved such as the Panamanian [National Attorney General's Office](#), the [Ministry of Economy and Finance](#), the [Ministry of Public Security](#) and the [Financial Analysis Unit](#).

The **SMT to combat environmental crimes** seeks to **strengthen** the joint response from the **security forces' investigation units, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of the Environment to confront a criminal phenomenon that continues to grow in the region**. A phenomenon that, in addition to causing tremendous damage to biodiversity, is today an immeasurable source of economic resources for organised criminal groups.

Inter-agency coordination to combat crime

Inter-agency coordination is essential to fighting **organised crime** in **Latin America**. For this reason, the formation of these **specialised operational groups** will make it possible to **face and respond** to complex cases to which an institution on its own cannot respond.

These SMTs enable the **procedures** for **investigations and prosecutions** to be **harmonised**, as well as a high degree of specialisation by their members who come from different institutions directly involved in combatting these crimes.

Since its inception, **EL PAcCTO** has worked to encourage greater **inter-agency coordination** in the fight **against organised crime** by publicising **European experiences through exchanges between peers** on issues of priority interest to **Latin American countries**.

EL PAcCTO (Europe-Latin America Assistance Programme against Transnational Organised Crime) is an **international cooperation programme funded by the European Union** that **seeks to contribute to security and justice in Latin America** by supporting the fight against transnational organised crime. In its activities, **EL PAcCTO addresses the entire criminal chain from a perspective**.

