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Illicit drug traffic and supply: follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly: Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development

Using alternative development programmes to reduce the cultivation of cannabis plants

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/31, entitled “Using alternative development programmes to reduce the cultivation of cannabis plants”. It presents a summary of the work undertaken by Member States and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in areas covered by the resolution and provides recommendations for further action.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 59/160 of 20 December 2004, entitled “Control of cultivation of and trafficking in cannabis”, the General Assembly urged Member States to extend cooperation to affected States, particularly in Africa, in the area of alternative development to address illicit cannabis cultivation; also urged Member States to encourage appropriate access to international markets for products of alternative development projects; encouraged Member States with experience and expertise in the eradication of illicit drug crops and alternative development programmes to share their experience and expertise with affected States, particularly in Africa; encouraged Member States to apply new strategies and tools to complement existing ones in efforts to combat trafficking in cannabis; and called upon all States to ensure strict compliance with the provisions of the international drug control treaties. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to begin a global survey of cannabis, initially with a market survey, before the forty-eighth session of the Commission and to support the creation or strengthening of national and subregional strategies and plans of action for the eradication of cannabis crops.

2. The present report is submitted in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/31 of 27 July 2006, in which the Council called upon Member States to continue to adhere to the international drug control treaties and to adopt policies that promote international cooperation; also called upon Member States to implement General Assembly resolution 59/160 of 20 December 2004 on the control of cultivation of and trafficking in cannabis; urged Member States to extend cooperation to affected States, especially in Africa, in the area of alternative development; called upon Member States to share experience and expertise in the eradication of illicit crops and in the design and implementation of alternative development programmes, upon request, with States seeking to develop and implement such programmes with a view to reducing the cultivation of cannabis plants, especially in Africa.

3. In the same resolution, the Economic and Social Council urged Member States in which the large-scale cultivation of cannabis plants was taking place to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the extent of such cultivation and to use that assessment to inform both eradication and alternative development strategies with a view to further reducing the supply of cannabis; and also urged Member States implementing alternative development programmes to integrate them into other drug control measures, including demand reduction strategies, at the national and regional levels in such a way as to ensure the sustainability of those programmes. The activities of Member States carried out pursuant to Council resolution 2006/31 are outlined in section II of the present report.

4. In the same resolution, the Economic and Social Council requested UNODC to implement General Assembly resolution 59/160; to facilitate the sharing of experience and expertise in the eradication of illicit crops and in the design and implementation of alternative development programmes with Member States seeking to develop and implement such programmes with a view to reducing the cultivation of cannabis plants, especially in Africa; to conduct, when requested by States reporting the large-scale cultivation of cannabis plants, a study with development partners, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, on the

feasibility of implementing alternative development programmes in those countries; and to consider the possibility of developing a global, integrated and balanced strategy for alternative development in consultation with Member States, in coordination with ongoing efforts to establish an overarching strategy. The activities of UNODC undertaken pursuant to Council resolution 2006/31 are outlined in section III of the present report.

II. Action by Governments

5. Twenty-eight Member States replied to a note verbale dated 30 May 2007, in which they were invited to submit information on their efforts to implement Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/31.

A. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/160

6. A number of States reported that they had complied with the requests regarding the international drug control treaties and international cooperation, including with regard to illicit cannabis production and trafficking, through agreements with other States and international organizations dealing with drug control-related issues. One State reported on joint actions it had undertaken with the competent services of other States against illicit drug trafficking, including trafficking in cannabis.

7. Some States reported on the extent of cannabis plant cultivation on their territory, the relevant legislation prohibiting such cultivation, the ensuing penalties and the results of illicit crop eradication efforts in recent years. A number of States also reported on the countries of origin of imported cannabis and on trafficking routes.

8. One State reported on the content of tetrahydrocannabinol per weight permitted by its national laws and on the consequences of cultivating, importing or exporting cannabis plants and seeds whose tetrahydrocannabinol content exceeded the permitted level. One State reported on the total area allocated to licit cultivation of cannabis plants for the production of fibre, which is utilized in the paper industry.

9. Cambodia reported on a five-year national plan that had been developed to prevent cannabis plant cultivation and on the efforts made by local authorities, with the support of several international organizations, to raise awareness about laws regulating cannabis and the dangers posed by the drug and to encourage villagers to grow licit crops instead of cannabis plants.

10. Côte d'Ivoire reported that years of political and military crises had prevented the country from reaping the benefits of the different projects against illicit drugs offered by UNODC and other international organizations. The drug situation had worsened since 2002, prompting the Government to start implementing an emergency programme for which it welcomed the support of international organizations.

11. Egypt reported on the efforts of law enforcement agencies to uncover, eliminate and prevent the spread of illicit drug crop cultivation through joint raids by agencies of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence; efforts to

strengthen border controls and road controls in areas of cultivation, as well as to strengthen the role of civil society organizations in raising public awareness. Egypt also reported on efforts to improve the living conditions of Bedouins living in the North and South Sinai areas, where illicit drug crop cultivation was spreading.

12. Morocco reported that illicit drug trafficking in the country generated an annual revenue of 300 million United States dollars for drug traffickers. The Government of Morocco had increased its efforts to limit the flow of illicit drugs and had implemented programmes to raise social awareness about the negative consequences of becoming involved with illicit drugs. Morocco also reported on its cannabis plant eradication efforts, which had resulted in a reduction of 46 per cent in the total area under cannabis plant cultivation between 2003 and 2005 (from 134,000 to 72,500 hectares (ha)) and in a reduction of 62 per cent in cannabis resin production between 2004 and 2005.

13. The Philippines reported that the Dangerous Drug Board had approved a national plan of action on the eradication of marijuana in 2006. The plan had been elaborated by the alternative development subcommittee of the Board, composed of the representatives of various agencies, including the Department of Health, the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

14. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reported that it was contemplating the promotion of alternative crops in areas where eradication had taken place, as well as preventive alternative development programmes for at-risk communities.

15. Zimbabwe reported that an estimated 80 per cent of the cannabis found within its borders was smuggled into the country from neighbouring countries. In Zimbabwe, cannabis was grown by poor communities as a cash crop because it brought better returns than most licit crops and required less land, capital and labour. The bulk of the locally cultivated cannabis was sold for use in the country.

B. International cooperation and the sharing of experience and expertise on illicit crop eradication and alternative development

16. The Czech Republic reported that it had provided alternative development assistance to Afghanistan, Angola, Mongolia and Yemen. Egypt reported that it had implemented alternative development programmes within the scope afforded by available funds but it also noted that the country faced a number of challenges, the most significant being inadequate and intermittent international support.

17. Finland reported that through bilateral agreements for development cooperation, it had implemented integrated development programmes with a rural and agricultural development focus in Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia. In conjunction with the Drylands Development Centre of the United Nations Development Programme, Finland had also implemented in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia a regional programme entitled "Promotion of Sustainable Livelihoods in the Drylands of the Middle East and North Africa in the context of the Millennium Declaration and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification".

18. Jamaica reported that it embarked on an alternative development programme in the 1980s, when cannabis farmers were displaced by eradication activities, that

encouraged cultivation of legal cash crops and poultry farming. Jamaica also noted that the pilot project that had been funded by the European Commission could not be sustained in the long term because of limited cooperation from farmers and technical difficulties associated with marketing the products of alternative development. The Government of Jamaica was contemplating entering into bilateral technical assistance arrangements, during the reporting period, for promotion of alternative development, in particular with a view to improving capacity to market the produce of farmers.

19. Latvia reported that it was unable to contribute to alternative development programmes owing to a lack of practical expertise in the planning and implementation of such programmes. However, the State would consider allocating funds in support of alternative development programmes in the future.

20. Mexico reported that it had implemented social and rural sustainable development programmes and that it had not collaborated with other States on alternative development projects. However, Mexico had established cooperation schemes with other States, in particular with States in the southern hemisphere, that focused on the exchange of information and experiences regarding the production of and trafficking in cannabis.

21. Morocco reported on its eradication efforts and on measures to promote development in the areas affected by the illicit cultivation of cannabis plant. Morocco indicated that it needed assistance from the international community and requested the European Union, where demand for cannabis continued to increase, to provide such assistance. Furthermore, Morocco indicated that the absence of a common policy on cannabis in the European Union, exacerbated by ambiguous drug laws in some States, undermined the efforts of Morocco in that regard.

22. Myanmar reported that it had endorsed proposals for draft resolutions on alternative development programmes in countries affected by cannabis cultivation at sessions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Myanmar had also participated in alternative development programmes for cannabis-cultivating countries in the region, in line with the activities of Task Force IV on Alternative Development in the framework of the ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs.

C. Large-scale cannabis cultivation: assessments and strategies

23. A number of States reported that small-scale illicit cultivation of cannabis plants was addressed through regular eradication operations. Some States provided information on the number of cannabis plants destroyed and the number of hectares of cannabis eradicated in recent years. Some States reported that small-scale cultivation of cannabis plants tended to occur in remote, forested areas.

24. Egypt reported that cannabis plants were cultivated in small areas scattered on the Sinai peninsula. In addition to law enforcement measures, Egypt was also implementing alternative development projects in the areas affected by illicit cannabis cultivation. The projects included the payment of subsidies for the cultivation of alternative crops, the facilitation of market access for alternative crops

and the provision of assistance in the fields of health, education and awareness-raising.

25. India reported that there were small patches of Government and forested land in one or two states where the cultivation of cannabis plants had been detected. The competent authorities, in coordination with state law enforcement authorities, had destroyed the cannabis plants. India also reported that, in some parts of the country that were forested and inaccessible, there were substantial areas where cannabis was growing wild. The competent national authorities had taken steps, in concert with the local law enforcement authorities concerned, to identify and destroy the wild cannabis. In addition, preventive measures were regularly taken to prevent the cannabis from growing wild; those measures mainly included uprooting the plant before it flowered. It was also reported that no chemicals had been used in the eradication operations.

26. Jamaica reported that, between the late 1990s and 2003, it had explored the possibility of facilitating the cultivation of hemp for commercial purposes as part of the State's alternative development programme. A document had been produced to guide the process and ensure adherence to the licit conditions of hemp production. The Government of Jamaica remained committed to that project and reported that it would continue to explore ways of successfully implementing it.

27. Mexico reported that, since 1994, it had carried out assessments of the extent of illicit drug crop cultivation and eradication. In addition, verification flights were conducted to assess the impact of eradication operations. Mexico had also started using satellite imagery to complement the aerial verification process.

28. Morocco reported that cannabis plants were mainly being cultivated in the northern part of the country in five provinces: Taounate, Larache, Al Hoceima, Tétouan and Chefchaouen. The area under such cultivation, totalling approximately 20,000 km², was densely populated. In some areas of traditional cultivation in the central Rif region, cannabis plants had been cultivated since the fifteenth century, causing significant environmental degradation. The Government of Morocco and UNODC had conducted annual surveys of the extent of cannabis cultivation in the country between 2003 and 2005. The eradication measures, which followed the results of the surveys, translated into a decline of 46 per cent in the total area under cultivation between 2003 and 2005. Morocco indicated that such eradication activities, while costly, had been financed entirely through national resources. Morocco also reported on its efforts to promote productive rural development in the areas affected by cannabis plant cultivation and provided the details of a number of development projects and programmes being implemented in the provinces in question.

29. The Philippines reported that it had recently conducted a rapid assessment of cannabis plant cultivation sites and identified areas for the implementation of alternative development pilot projects. Moreover, studies and research had been conducted on the possibility of using yakon (a root vegetable) and jathropha (a plant, the seeds of which contain an oil that can be used for making biodiesel) as substitute crops.

30. The Russian Federation reported that alternative development programmes were not implemented on its territory because of strict controls imposed by the competent authorities. According to experts, cannabis plants were growing wild on

approximately 1 million ha of land in the Russian Federation, especially in the southern part of the country, in Siberia and in the easternmost regions. The Russian Aviation and Space Agency had developed a plan that included aerial and satellite surveying methods for the identification and mapping of the affected areas in order to inform law enforcement agencies. An operation under the national programme on complex measures against the usage of drugs and their illicit trafficking covering the period 2005-2009 had as its main objective the identification and destruction of naturally growing illicit crops, thus preventing plant-based drugs from entering the illicit drug market. The vast majority of the drug plants destroyed in that operation were cannabis plants.

D. Integration of alternative development into other drug control measures

31. A number of States reported that although alternative development programmes were not implemented on their territories because cannabis plants were not cultivated there on a large scale, they did have policies and strategies to address the problem of illicit drug supply and demand, and that those policies and strategies were multisectoral and multidisciplinary.

32. Morocco reported that it had implemented a number of activities in support of efforts to eradicate illicit crops and promote economic and alternative development in areas affected by the cultivation of cannabis plants. Those activities included efforts to improve social services and develop informational campaigns to sensitize the population about the importance of respecting a culture of legality. The informational activities were implemented by non-governmental organizations and religious leaders, among others.

33. The Philippines reported that its national plan of action on the eradication of cannabis also included awareness-raising and advocacy programmes to complement livelihood activities. In 2006, the alternative development subcommittee of the Dangerous Drugs Board had also provided financial support for the livelihood project of the Sunshine Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Center.

34. Trinidad and Tobago reported that, together with other Caribbean countries, it had created a number of organizations offering programmes aimed at redirecting vulnerable segments of the population and at creating alternative ways of generating income. The involvement of youth in criminal and violent activities reinforced the view that they were the segment of the population most at risk of becoming involved in drug-related offences, both as traffickers and users. It was recognized that it was necessary to develop appropriate impact assessment tools to evaluate the overall effectiveness of those programmes.

III. Action by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

A. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/160

1. Market survey

35. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/160, UNODC implemented a market survey of cannabis and published the results of that survey in the *World Drug Report 2006*.¹

2. Progress made in other areas

36. Data on cannabis seizures reported by Member States are analysed and published each year in the *World Drug Report*.² Data on the latest trends concerning cannabis, including data on production, trafficking and abuse, were published in the *World Drug Report 2007*.³

37. A regional study on the cannabis situation in Africa was published and presented to the African Union at the end of 2007.⁴ UNODC has also produced a forthcoming double issue of the *Bulletin on Narcotics* (vol. LVIII, Nos. 1 and 2, 2006), entitled "Review of the world cannabis situation".⁵

38. Since 2003, UNODC has collaborated with the Government of Morocco within the framework of its illicit crop monitoring programme. Cannabis cultivation and cannabis resin production estimates were calculated for the years from 2003 to 2005 and published in three volumes.⁶ A cannabis survey for 2008 is being discussed with the relevant counterparts.

39. Following a request of the Government of Indonesia, UNODC has prepared a proposal for a cannabis cultivation survey in the Province of Aceh. However, the funds needed to complement the in-kind contribution of the Government of Indonesia have not yet been secured.

40. UNODC has analysed the data made available to the Office by Member States and assessed the possibility of using them for other aspects of the global cannabis survey, such as cultivation and production. Over the period 1993-2003, 86 States provided UNODC with cannabis production estimates through the annual reports questionnaires and official Government reports. However, most figures have not derived from actual surveys and the resulting data have come from different sources using different methodologies, which is why the results cannot be compared. UNODC concluded that a separate data collection effort would be necessary to provide a reliable estimate of global cannabis cultivation and production, and

¹ *World Drug Report 2006* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.06.XI.10).

² All editions of the *World Drug Report* are available at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR.html>.

³ *World Drug Report 2007* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.XI.5).

⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Cannabis in Africa: an Overview* (November 2007). Available at http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Can_Afr_EN_09_11_07.pdf.

⁵ Available at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/index.html>.

⁶ UNODC published a *Cannabis Survey* for 2003, 2004 and 2005. The three volumes are available at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crop-monitoring/index.html>.

presented a proposal for such a survey to the forty-ninth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2006.

3. Requirements for conducting a global survey of cannabis plant cultivation

41. Estimating cannabis plant cultivation and cannabis production globally poses unique challenges due to the high number of countries to be covered and the diverse cultivation techniques used by cannabis plant growers.

42. Cannabis plant grows well in virtually every inhabited region of the world and can be cultivated with little effort in small plots or even indoors. Moreover, it does not have to be processed much before it is consumed, thus allowing users to cultivate their own supply. Consequently, production is highly decentralized. Based on analytical work carried out in recent years, UNODC estimates that approximately 163 Member States are potential cannabis producers; that figure includes both States in which cannabis is produced mainly for the national and other illicit market, within their own borders, and States in which cannabis is produced mainly to supply illicit markets in other States.

43. The proposal for a survey of global cannabis plant cultivation and cannabis production includes an implementation strategy and outlines the methodology of the survey. The survey would build on the experiences and technical expertise gained through existing UNODC surveys on illicit crops. The strategy envisages two years of preparatory work and one year of survey implementation to produce a global estimate, for a budget of US\$ 9.1 million.⁷ So far, UNODC has not received any expression of interest from Member States to contribute to this activity.

B. Knowledge sharing and feasibility studies

44. At the request of the Government of Indonesia, UNODC has facilitated the provision of advisory services for the design of a programme aimed at reducing illicit cannabis plant cultivation in the Province of Aceh.

45. Since 2003, UNODC has supported the Government of Morocco in carrying out annual cannabis plant cultivation surveys. The results of the 2005 survey, which were published in 2007, showed a decline of 40 per cent in the total area under cannabis plant cultivation, from 120,500 ha in 2004 to 72,500 ha in 2005.⁸ More than 95 per cent of the total area under cannabis plant cultivation in Morocco was dedicated to cannabis resin production. In 2005, potential cannabis resin production stood at 1,070 tons, compared with 2,760 tons in 2004. The survey indicated that 89,900 households were involved in cannabis plant cultivation in 2005. The Government of Morocco has requested UNODC to assist it with strategic and programmatic advisory services for alternative development. The Office is currently in the process of developing a plan of action in that respect, one that is focused on the provinces of Larache and Taounate.

⁷ The proposal for a global survey on cannabis cultivation and production is available from the Policy Analysis and Research Branch of UNODC upon request.

⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Morocco: Cannabis Survey 2005, Executive Summary* (January 2007).

C. Global strategy for alternative development

46. The strategy for the period 2008-2011 for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/12, annex) was prepared in response to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 48/14, in which the Commission urged the Office to continue to develop an overarching strategy, in consultation with Member States. In the strategy for the period 2008-2011, alternative development is referred to as an important component of a balanced and comprehensive drug control strategy, intended to create a supportive environment for the implementation of that strategy by contributing in an integrated way to the eradication of poverty, thus contributing to the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (A/56/326, annex). The strategy for the period 2008-2011 establishes the main objective and the expected results of the work of UNODC in the area of alternative development.

47. The main objective of the Strategy for the period 2008-2011 is to foster and strengthen international cooperation based on the principle of shared responsibility in sustainable alternative development, including, where appropriate, preventive alternative development.

48. The expected results of the Strategy for the period 2008-2011 are:

(a) Enhanced capacity of Member States, upon request, to design and implement sustainable alternative development programmes, including, where appropriate, preventive alternative development programmes, within their broader development context, aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating the illicit cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis;

(b) Raising awareness of and mainstreaming the issue of alternative development, including, where appropriate, preventive alternative development programmes, among international organizations, international financial institutions and development networks;

(c) Increased partnerships between UNODC and relevant civil society entities and the private sector that promote Member States' capacity for collaborative activities in alternative development, including, where appropriate, preventive alternative development.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

49. Only a few Member States provided information on efforts made to implement Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/31 and only four countries in Africa responded to a note verbale sent in May 2007, in which States were invited to provide such information.

50. The efforts reported by responding States with respect to the implementation of the resolution are commendable. In particular, the efforts of the Government of Morocco, a country affected by the large-scale cultivation of cannabis plants, deserve the support of the international community.

51. It must be noted that, prior to formulating or designing alternative development interventions in any geographical area, a thorough analysis of the

situation and a technical assessment of the extent of the cannabis plant cultivation are required.

52. The international community is urged to consider providing technical and financial support to those States engaged in alternative development for areas affected by cannabis plant cultivation. Donor States are encouraged to enable UNODC to assist the affected States carrying out in technical assessments of the situation and in carrying out proactive development interventions to prevent the expansion of illicit crops, the migration of labour to illicit crop cultivation zones and prevent new cultivation.

53. Member States should review ambiguous drug laws and recognize that such laws impede efforts by other Member States to properly address the elimination of illicit cannabis plant cultivation, as well as fuel crime and violence in countries where cannabis plants are cultivated.

54. Member States in which cannabis plants are cultivated on a large scale should seek to incorporate development-oriented illicit crop reduction programmes within a wider framework of traditional development programmes and include such programmes in poverty reduction strategy papers, as well as country assistance strategies, in their negotiations with international financial institutions.

55. As the 10-year period for the implementation of the Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development is coming to an end in 2008, alternative development must be seen in a different context, and progress should be measured through development indicators and not solely in terms of illicit crop production figures. Any future international action plans should include baseline indicators and well-targeted questionnaires related to development.