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Open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development

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Results attained by Member States in achieving the goals and targets set at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, the limitations and problems encountered and the way forward: international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note was prepared pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 51/4, in which the Commission decided, inter alia, to establish open-ended intergovernmental expert working groups to work in a coordinated manner on the following topics, which correspond to the subjects of the action plans, declarations and measures adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session: (a) drug demand reduction; (b) supply reduction (manufacture and trafficking); (c) countering money-laundering and promoting judicial cooperation; (d) international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development; and (e) control of precursors and of amphetamine-type stimulants.

The open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development will discuss results attained by Member States in achieving the goals and targets set at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, limitations and problems encountered and the way forward in the area of international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development. The conclusions and recommendations of the working group will be transmitted to intersessional meetings of the Commission to provide material on which to base the drafting of the outcome for the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission.



I. Introduction

1. At the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, Member States adopted the Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development (Assembly resolution S-20/4 E), which identified five areas that Member States should consider when addressing illicit drug crop cultivation:

- (a) The need for a balanced approach to confront high levels of illicit cultivation;
- (b) Strengthening of international cooperation for alternative development;
- (c) Improved and innovative approaches to alternative development;
- (d) Enhancing monitoring, evaluation and information-sharing;
- (e) The need for law enforcement in controlling illicit crops.

II. Significant and measurable results in international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development

2. In the 10-year period since the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, the trend with respect to the illicit cultivation of opium poppy and coca bush has been relatively stable. Total opium poppy cultivation in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand decreased from an estimated 157,900 hectares in 1998 to 29,400 hectares in 2007, a reduction of 81 per cent in nine years. That decrease was clearly offset by the increased cultivation in Afghanistan but, there too, there were signs of stabilization or even a slight decline in 2008.

3. Between 1998 and 2006, the total area under illicit coca bush cultivation in the Andean countries of Bolivia, Colombia and Peru declined by 18 per cent, from 190,800 to 156,900 hectares.

4. The latest estimates indicate that approximately 42,000 tons of cannabis herb were produced in 2005, suggesting stabilization or even possibly a small downward trend in the cultivation of cannabis plants.

5. In the period since the baseline year of 1998, Member States have developed and improved national plans and strategies to address illicit drug crop cultivation, including alternative development, eradication and other drug law enforcement activities.

6. An analysis of the past 10 years suggests that progress has also been achieved in terms of plans and programmes including key issues, such as gender considerations, participatory approaches and environmental protection.

7. An analysis of country programmes in Latin America suggests that alternative development interventions have become much more comprehensive and that emphasis is now being placed on value added, marketing and the provision of other services. Alternative development interventions are also much more

environmentally friendly, are geared towards organic production and are focused on agroforestry within a framework of renewable resource management.

8. Some progress has been achieved in raising awareness of the cross-cutting nature of alternative development interventions and illicit drug crop cultivation in the broader development agenda. The World Bank, for example, has formally addressed the issue of illicit opium poppy cultivation and has recognized the negative effects that such cultivation has had on small farmers and on national development in Afghanistan.

9. Some Member States have moved from dependence on international cooperation and outside resources to utilizing national resources to fund alternative development. Although this is not the general rule, it is viewed as a positive development.

10. Ground-based and aerial-based monitoring techniques have improved and now provide useful information with which to design, implement and monitor alternative development and illicit drug crop reduction activities. Coordination between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Governments in this area has proved to be successful.

III. Limitations and problems

11. Estimated global cocaine manufacture stood at 984 tons in 2006, a 19 per cent increase compared with 1998. That trend can be attributed to improved coca bush cultivation techniques, such as the introduction of high-yield varieties and an increase in the number of plants per hectare.

12. Although monitoring of illicit drug crops in some Member States has been a success, there continues to be a lack of efficient monitoring techniques to gauge cannabis cultivation and a lack of resources to carry out that work.

13. With respect to the importance of a balanced approach, some interventions continue to be improperly sequenced and to focus efforts and resources on eradication without due regard for livelihoods.

14. Financial constraints continue to pose difficulties for the sustainability of alternative development programmes, with only a few States able to provide national budget resources or secure long-term support from donors and the international financial community. Clearly, the political and financial commitment to alternative development has been insufficient at both the national and international levels.

15. The fact that poverty reduction strategy papers and country assistance strategies do not take into account illicit drug crop cultivation and its impact on national development is a major problem and it hinders the allocation of resources to alternative development and the broadening of its coverage.

16. The extent of alternative development assistance has been limited, with coverage reaching only about 23 per cent of farmers in the Andean subregion and 5 per cent of farmers in Asia.

17. Vague or ambiguous drug control legislation in some Member States poses difficulties in designing, marketing and implementing alternative development and illicit drug crop reduction activities.

18. Obstacles to trade, such as high tariffs, national subsidies and protectionist policies, have hindered the success of alternative development programmes and the marketing of and trade in products derived from those programmes.

19. Donor policies and programmes with little flexibility have increased the difficulties encountered by Member States trying to implement coordination mechanisms or to address urgent issues proactively.

20. In the Andean countries, coca growers have identified the lack of viable, stable markets as a major obstacle to achieving alternative development, together with poor roads, shortage of credit and the absence of agro-industry. In South-East Asia, in addition to many of the same difficulties, ethnic heritage is consistently a pivotal issue, with the focus on gaining entrance to national society and access to its services.

21. Illicit drug crop cultivation and drug production continue to have negative effects on the environment as the result of such activities as the clearing of forests through slash-and-burn cultivation, the indiscriminate use of herbicides and pesticides, overexploitation of forest resources and the discharge of waste products (precursor chemicals) into rivers. The damage caused not only threatens flora and fauna but also exacerbates difficulties in implementing future productive projects.

IV. The way forward: international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development

A. Recommendations to Member States

22. The open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development may wish to consider the following proposed recommendations for action by Member States:

(a) Facilitate public- and private-sector funding to ensure systematic and continuous implementation of rural development interventions in areas in which illicit drug crops are cultivated;

(b) Ensure that cannabis is included in any future action plan or declaration;

(c) Research and understand thoroughly the links between development and security and acknowledge that the one cannot succeed without the other;

(d) Set a target of 50 per cent coverage of alternative development programmes for farmers engaged in illicit drug crop cultivation;

(e) Ensure a comprehensive approach to the identification of market demand, production assistance and secure, stable markets with fair prices for goods; national markets should be assessed prior to seeking out international markets;

- (f) Monitor progress through an array of indicators, not only illicit drug crop production estimates but also human development indicators evaluating the social and economic impact of interventions on primary stakeholders;
- (g) Ensure the consistency of policies and methodologies and the sustained flow of resources among all stakeholders involved in programme development and implementation, including ministries, local governments and civil society organizations;
- (h) Adopt an integrated approach that supports social, economic and private-sector development in areas in which illicit drug crops are grown;
- (i) Ensure that the values, traditions and customs of local communities and civil society are reflected in national policies and laws;
- (j) Include support for efforts aimed at reducing dependency on illicit drug crop cultivation within the strategic objectives of national development policies (i.e. poverty reduction strategy papers, country assistance strategies);
- (k) Set a target of allocating 10 per cent of the national agricultural development budget to alternative development in countries where illicit drug crops are widely grown.

B. Recommendations to international agencies

23. The working group may wish to consider the following proposed recommendations for action by international agencies:

- (a) Recognize that development assistance is a long-term undertaking and that programmes must be fully financed and given ample time to make an impact;
- (b) Mainstream counter-narcotics and alternative development approaches into the broader development agenda. The development community, in particular the international financial institutions, must incorporate counter-narcotics approaches into their wider development agendas; and the counter-narcotics community must include development approaches in its plans and strategies;
- (c) Consider proactive development measures or preventive alternative development measures, recognizing that the balloon effect is a natural reaction to a short-term and limited vision of development;
- (d) Agree on a common approach and the coordination of sector programmes within a national territory in order to implement effective programmes;
- (e) Ensure that eradication is not undertaken until small-farmer households have adopted viable and sustainable livelihoods and that interventions are properly sequenced;
- (f) Do not make development assistance conditional on reductions in illicit drug crop cultivation;
- (g) Provide long-term, flexible funding with a solid sectoral approach;
- (h) Be innovative in identifying new sources of funding for interventions aimed at reducing dependency on opium poppy and coca bush (for example, climate

change funding mechanisms, Millennium Challenge Account, debt swap arrangements).

C. Recommendations to civil society

24. The working group may wish to consider the following recommendations for action by civil society:

(a) Engage at all stages of the project/investment cycle and seek encouragement and empowerment to contribute actively to policy development;

(b) Pursue national and international alliances to help with the exchange of information, to develop capacity and to boost opportunities for financial sustainability;

(c) Promote the exchange of experiences (including in development and counter-narcotics activities) among many different stakeholders and support the empowerment of social organizations.
