

## **Statement of the Transnational Institute**

Commission on Narcotic Drugs 52<sup>nd</sup> Session, High-level Segment  
Round Table D - 12 March 2009, 2.30-5.30 pm

*Countering illicit drug traffic and supply, and alternative development.*



### **1. Supply reduction?**

This contribution will focus on lessons learned in the area of Alternative Development and refer to two recent international civil society initiatives where these issues were addressed. But first a general comment on the achievements with regard to supply reduction in the past decade. In spite of all efforts undertaken the trend over the 10 years since the UNGASS in terms of hectares of illicit cultivation of opium poppy and coca has been relatively stable, but global production of opium roughly doubled and cocaine production increased with some 20%. In Southeast Asia poppy cultivation definitely decreased but this has clearly been offset by the increase in production in Afghanistan, where poppy cultivation tripled over the last decade.<sup>1</sup> As for cannabis cultivation there are simply no reliable estimates and the only trend that can be mentioned is that more is home-grown close to the consumption markets.

Meanwhile, in those areas where alternative livelihoods were not in place, forced eradication measures or the enforcement of opium bans have led to dramatic consequences for the local population. In Northern Burma/Myanmar for example the WFP is now involved in emergency relief for what is in fact a man-made disaster that could have been prevented by taking a more long-term approach.

At a global scale, the 1998 UNGASS target of eliminating or significantly reducing cultivation by 2008 has simply not been achieved. Repeating exactly the same target again now in the Political Declaration for the next ten years is repeating the same illusion and risks to perpetuate the same human disasters without any significant impact on the overall scale of the market.

### **2. Lessons learned**

The good news is that over the last decade there has been considerable progress in developing a greater understanding of the impact of rural development in opium poppy and coca growing areas. Reports such as 'Alternative Development: A Global Thematic Evaluation' (2005) prepared pursuant to CND resolution 45/14, the Thematic Evaluation of UNODC Alternative Development Initiatives (2006), as well as the consultative process undertaken under the auspices of the European Commission, GTZ, the FAO and UNODC, have identified important lessons learned especially about the proper sequencing of development interventions and eradication measures.

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<sup>1</sup> According to UNODC estimates poppy cultivation in Southeast Asia decreased from 157,900 ha in 1998 to 29,400 ha in 2007, a reduction of 80% in nine years. For Afghanistan UNODC figures over the same period show an increase from 64,000 ha in 1998 to 193,000 in 2007. UNODC estimated that global illicit opium production doubled from 4,346 tons in 1998 to 8,800 tons in 2007. UNODC has estimated that the total area under illicit cultivation of coca in the Andean countries declined slightly from 190,800 in 1998 to 181,600 ha in 2007, but global cocaine production increased with 20% from 825 tons in 1998 to 994 tons in 2007 due to higher yields per hectare.

Let me highlight some key conclusions from those evaluations and policy conferences because from this improved body of knowledge evidence-based conclusions for the future can be drawn.<sup>2</sup>

The UNGASS Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development (A/RES/S-20/4, 8 September 1998, paragraph 31) had already warned that: *“In areas where alternative development programmes have not yet created viable alternative income opportunities, the application of forced eradication might endanger the success of alternative development programmes.”*

The Global Thematic Evaluation undertaken in 2005 concluded in very clear terms: *“Illicit crops should be eradicated only when viable alternatives exist for households participating in alternative development. Successful alternative development requires proper sequencing.”*

Similarly, the Thematic Evaluation of UNODC Alternative Development Initiatives, carried out in 2005 by the UNODC Independent Evaluation Unit, observed that Alternative Development *“should begin long before coercive measures are started so as to prevent and mitigate economic hardship during the process of economic realignment toward a stable licit economy. .. Ideally, the mechanisms to ensure sustainable economic and social development would have been in place long before coercive eradication measures were initiated.”*

CND Resolution 48/9 (2005) on Strengthening alternative development as an important drug control strategy and establishing alternative development as a cross-cutting issue, captured some of those lessons stating that: *“Member States and United Nations entities should ensure that measures of law enforcement, interdiction, eradication and alternative development are applied in a coherent and balanced manner and in the appropriate sequence and that there is optimal coordination between the various institutions involved;”*

Also the World Bank concluded in 2004 for Afghanistan, that *“there is a moral, political and economic case for having alternative livelihoods programs in place before commencing eradication.”*<sup>3</sup>

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2. Alternative Development: a Global Thematic Evaluation; Final Synthesis Report (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XI.13); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Thematic Evaluation of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Alternative Development Initiatives (November 2005), Independent Evaluation Unit; E/CN.7/2008/2/Add.2, The world drug problem, Fifth report of the Executive Director, Addendum, Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 51<sup>st</sup> session, Vienna, March 10 - 14, 2008; E/CN.7/2008/CRP.11, Developing a Strategic Approach to Alternative Development, Complementary drug-related data and expertise to support the global assessment by Member States of the implementation of the declarations and measures adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session, Report by the European Commission (EC), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the German Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 27 February 2008.

3. World Bank, Afghanistan: State Building, Sustaining Growth, and Reducing Poverty. A Country Economic Report, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Unit South Asia Region, World Bank, Report No. 29551-AF, 2004

These lessons learned over past decade were also reflected in clear terms in the UNODC Secretariat Note for the Expert Working Group established for the period of global reflection on the UNGASS review last year:<sup>4</sup>

*"Ensure that eradication is not undertaken until small-farmer households have adopted viable and sustainable livelihoods and that interventions are properly sequenced". And "Do not make development assistance conditional on reductions in illicit drug crop cultivation;"*

The Expert Working Group concluded a weaker text, reading:

*"When considering taking eradication measures, Member States should ensure that small-farmer households have adopted viable and sustainable livelihoods, so that measures may be properly sequenced in a sustainable fashion and appropriately coordinated".<sup>5</sup>*

Almost the same phrase (without 'considering') is agreed as paragraph 47(g) in the Action Plan annexed to the Political Declaration. We are disappointed that no clearer text could be agreed upon for the annex that is closer to the outcomes of the evaluations and that the Political Declaration itself contains even more ambiguous language in its paragraph 24 saying that Member States recognize that crop control strategies should be *"appropriately coordinated and phased in accordance with national policies in order to achieve the sustainable eradication of illicit crops"*. We are even more disappointed that no consensus could be reached at all on the issue of drug control conditionality in development assistance, which is now fully absent in the draft texts.

### **3. Civil society**

Two important civil society initiatives have reached clearer consensus texts on these issues and their final declarations include several policy recommendations:

Firstly, the Beyond 2008 NGO Declaration in July 2008 highlights the need to:

- a. develop further long-term, sustainable, ecologically-sensitive, and fully inclusive alternative development programs in cooperation with civil society organizations including indigenous, peasant and farmer organizations and non-governmental organizations and to take into account traditional licit use, in line with Article 14 of the 1988 Convention,*
- b. ensure, before considering eradication measures, that peasants have access to viable and sustainable livelihoods so that interventions will be properly sequenced and coordinated.*

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4. UNODC/CND/2008/WG.3/2. Note by the Secretariat on the 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.

5. UNODC/CND/2008/WG.3/3. Report on the meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development, held in Vienna from 2 to 4 July 2008.

Secondly, in Barcelona end of January 2009, the first World Forum of farmers of coca, cannabis and opium poppy from Latin America, Africa and Asia was held, bringing together about sixty representatives of farmers' and indigenous groups.

The final declaration of the Barcelona forum<sup>6</sup>, also includes a direct reference to article 14.2 of the 1988 Convention where it says in: *“The measures adopted shall respect fundamental human rights and shall take due account of traditional licit uses, where there is historic evidence of such use, as well as the protection of the environment”*. The Declaration specifies that ‘in many countries where such plants are cultivated, there are traditional and cultural uses. We demand respect for a community’s right to cultivate plants to satisfy these uses’.

In this context TNI and many other NGOs also welcome and will actively support the initiative announced yesterday by Bolivian President Evo Morales to correct the historical error of including the coca leaf in List 1 of the 1961 Convention and to amend the convention accordingly.

The Barcelona farmers declaration further states that *“forced eradication often results in the militarisation of producer regions and leads to severe human rights violations of civilian populations.” “We reject the use of aerial fumigations as well as the criminalisation of small-scale producers, whether for traditional use or other purposes. Crop substitution can only be implemented based on results obtained in rural development and in consultation with the producers.” “Alternative Development projects should not be imposed, nor should they be conditioned on prior eradication of crops declared illicit or on any other factor which would result in the abuse of the human rights of growers.” And finally that “Producers’ organizations should be recognized, should take part in debates and decision making at all levels, with their own governments, donors and the UN.”*

#### **4. In conclusion**

We need to be more realistic in setting our targets for the next decade and take into account that somehow a balance is maintained between supply and demand in the various drug markets. At best we can achieve a gradual reduction in illicit cultivation over the longer term if that is accompanied by a similar reduction in demand.

The reality of a continued existence of the cultivation of plants used for the production of controlled substances, allows us to take a more pragmatic and longer-term approach to rural development in these areas without enforcing reductions in illicit cultivation where alternatives are not sufficiently in place. A more humane, development-oriented and rights-based approach that will ultimately also prove to be more effective and sustainable.

Only then can we avoid human rights violations, prevent humanitarian crises, end the criminalisation of small farmers, and include them as legitimate partners in our joint efforts to reduce drug-related problems worldwide.

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6. FMPCDI, Foro Mundial de Productores de Cultivos Declarados Ilícitos, Political Declaration, 31 January 2009.

*Transnational Institute – TNI - 12 March 2009*

*Delivered by Martin Jelsma, coordinator TNI Drugs & Democracy Programme*

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