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

Vienna, 2-4 July 2008

Key points identified by EU experts to be included in the conclusion of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug and on alternative development

EU Presidency Paper

In this sense, this document complements the European Union CORDROGUE 44 of 18th May 2006 presenting the EU approach on Alternative Development.

Illicit drug crop cultivation is concentrated in areas where conflict, insecurity and vulnerability prevail. Poor health, illiteracy and limited social and physical infrastructure reflect the low level of human development experienced by the population in these areas. These conditions constrain the implementation of programmes designed to reduce illicit drug crop cultivation and improve the lives and livelihoods of farmers.

Over the last decade there has been considerable progress in developing a greater understanding of the impact and lessons learned of undertaking rural development in opium poppy and coca growing areas¹. From this improved body of knowledge evidence-based conclusions for the future have been drawn and outlined in the Discussion Note of the Secretariat for the 'Open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international

¹ Reports such as 'Alternative Development: A Global Thematic Evaluation' (2005) prepared pursuant to CND resolution 45/14 as well as the Thematic Evaluation of UNODC's Alternative Development Initiatives (2006), as well as the consultative process undertaken under the auspices of the EC/FAO/GTZ Project 'Development in A Drugs Environment: A Strategic Approach to Alternative Development' have been key. From this improved body of knowledge evidence-based conclusions for the future have been drawn and outlined in the Discussion Note of the Secretariat for the 'Open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crop and on alternative development' (E/CN.7/2009/EWG.3/2).

cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crop and on alternative development' (UNODC/CND/2008/WG.3/2).

However, it is also recognised that Alternative Development is at a crossroads. AD has been too often seen as a short term rural development projects focusing on alternative crops. There is a broad agreement that AD can meet the needs of targeted communities growing opium poppy and coca leaves in parts of Asia and Latin America, as well as contribute to reduction in level of illicit drug crop production within project areas.

It is recognised that the scale of illicit drug production in Asia and Latin America and the shift in the nature of donor funding towards budget and sector strategies means that Alternative Development projects are not – and cannot be – of sufficient scale to address the extent of illicit crop cultivation. Unfortunately, National Development Strategies, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) in illicit drug production countries often do not take into account illicit drug production and its impact on national development. This hinders the integration of drug production reduction efforts into national development programmes.

This will require Member States to:

- Integrate drug control into the broader development agenda by encouraging
 - (i) national governments to include the causes of drug crop cultivation into their development agendas and
 - (ii) the international development community – in particular regional organisations and international financial institutions – to address the drugs problem in their wider development agendas;
- Provide technical support for the development of PRSP, CRSP and CAS aimed at maximizing both development and drug control outcomes;
- Ensure that progress is monitored through qualitative and quantitative indicators, not only for illicit crop production reduction, but also human development reflecting the MDGs.
- Evaluate the social and economic impact of the intervention reflecting at the primary stakeholder level;
- Recognise that no single project or programme can address the multiple factors that drive illicit drug production and that more concerted efforts are required. Evidence points to the fact that it is a combination of improved governance, security and economic growth that will deliver the development impact required to improve the life and livelihood of primary stakeholders and reduce illicit drug cultivation.
- Recognize that development assistance in illicit drug crop producing areas should be undertaken in full compliance with the overall aims of human rights protection, poverty alleviation, conflict prevention and resolution, peace building and human security. The issue of ownership at State and civil society levels is essential in this respect.
- Acknowledge that it is particularly essential to ensure that eradication is not undertaken until small farmer households have viable and sustainable livelihoods and interventions are properly sequenced;

- Do not make development assistance conditional on reductions in illicit drug crop cultivation.

The EU approach on alternative development

I. Alternative development vs. general rural development

Taking into account the internationally agreed definition of alternative development set out in the 1998 UNGASS Action Plan on international co-operation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development, these two concepts are, to a great extent, not different from each other except that there is a twin link with illicit drug crop cultivation in the first case:

A. Alternative development efforts are undertaken in areas:

- (a) in which illicit cultivation exists, or
- (b) in which illicit cultivation has existed and could come back, or
- (c) in which illicit cultivation could exist if no action is taken, or
- (d) from which people could migrate towards drug cultivation activities and areas.

B. In these efforts, a stronger emphasis than in “regular” rural development co-operation initiatives is placed on the notion of “alternative”, i.e., alternative to drug cultivation. Yet, for this emphasis on alternatives to drug crops to succeed a way must be found to answer to the need for alternatives to the miserable life caused by poverty and marginalisation. This is why alternative development is placed in a broader context that includes:

- (a) alternative economic activities and sources of income and employment (including non-farm activities, small enterprises promotion, etc.),
- (b) marketing and export enhancement,
- (c) technological and managerial skills transfers,
- (d) transport and communication structures,
- (e) guaranteeing the presence of the State,
- (f) institutional development and empowerment of local communities and governments,
- (g) strengthening of civil justice institutions (and not just law enforcement in a narrow sense),
- (h) social infrastructures and services,
- (i) overall capacity development,
- (j) access to micro credits including, where appropriate, the establishment of rural banks,
- (k) conflict prevention and mitigation,
- (l) migration pressures,
- (m) protection of human rights and constitutional rights (i.e. land titling).

II. Other characteristics of the European approach to alternative development

A. It is part of an approach that covers, in application of the principle of shared responsibility, a number of simultaneous efforts in other areas of counter-narcotics work including:

- First and foremost, demand reduction in consuming countries;
- International cooperation in law enforcement against traffickers, precursors' diversion and illicit drug manufacturing laboratories;
- Commitment of national governments of beneficiary countries to address the drug challenge in all its dimensions, particularly law enforcement actions against the gangs involved in the drug trade but also demand reduction and, more fundamentally, poverty alleviation and conflict prevention, including bringing alternative development into their national development strategies;
- Commitment of the local communities, in which alternative development initiatives are undertaken, to voluntary eradication – or better, non-planting – as soon as legitimate and viable alternatives are in place.

B. From these postulates, there emerge:

1. A strong European reluctance to making coca, poppy and cannabis farmers the key culprits in the drug chain, bearing in mind that drugs are also cultivated by organised criminals - as a rule, peasants that grow illicit drugs do not have a vocation for criminal behaviour.
2. The European view that, while it might seem harder than going after farmers, the greater efforts must be taken against illicit drug manufacturers and traffickers and the gangs organising cultivation, and against abuse – the benefits per unit of cost are higher here as well.
3. The acknowledgement on the part of the EU that efforts must also be placed, nonetheless, on voluntary eradication, including via social pressure within the local communities.
4. The European perception that forced eradication should remain an option but should only be pursued when ground conditions ensure that small-scale farmers have had access to alternative livelihoods for a sufficient time period.
5. The European view of the need to systematically combine supply reduction and demand reduction measures.
6. The clear understanding by the EU that alternative development initiatives do not exist to provide short term solace to illicit crop farmers or to compensate them euro for euro for their losses when they stop their illicit cultivation. On the contrary, alternative development is a long-term strategy, based on a comprehensive approach to rural development, that seeks to place the foundations for sustainable development and independence from illicit drug cultivation in the long term.
7. An EU recognition that alternative development initiatives require adequate market access for products that are being produced as alternatives to illicit crops; and that they

need to generate sufficient revenue to allow farmers to maintain a decent standard of living and deter them from producing illicit crops.

8. The European view that affected countries have to take a strong and broad ownership of sustainable drug control and should integrate illicit drug cultivation objectives in their national development programmes and policies.

9. The European conviction that fundamental notions such as respect for human rights, empowerment, accountability, participation and non-discrimination of vulnerable groups should be integral parts of any approach to alternative development.

III. The question of forced eradication

A. The EU concerns against forced eradication are not ideological, but rather pragmatic and evidence-based.

- There is every reason to believe that drug growing farmers are aware of the illegality of their activities.
- However, the EU also realises that it cannot ask many of these farmers, most of them extremely poor, more than what they can deliver. In this respect forced eradication, when alternative livelihoods are not available:
 - o tends to generate social and political violence.
 - o tends to displace cultivation to more inaccessible spots.
 - o is unlikely to succeed in the long term.
 - o finally, the benefit ratio is low.

B. Explicit conditionality as a means of facilitating eradication can appear as a disguised form of forced eradication. Where it does, it is unlikely to bear fruit because it:

1. might suggest a mistrust of donors as regards the actions of beneficiary farmers (and can thus harm the relationship between local communities and development cooperation providers) and thus negate the notion of local ownership of development;
 2. is difficult to enforce in practical terms;
 3. has a moral hazard component, as it could give perverse incentives (neighbouring communities might start growing poppy to attract assistance);
 4. unless alternative livelihoods are available, it could undermine sustainable solutions and thus fail in achieving its goals.
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