



European Union

Statement on the occasion of the

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Commission on Narcotic Drugs 61st session

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Chapter 7: Operational recommendations on alternative development; regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented balanced drug control policy; addressing socioeconomic issues.

Madam Chair,

The European Union and its Member States wish to thank you for organising this intersessional meeting in which we can share our best practices on the EU approach to alternative development in addressing the world drug problem.

Since last July, the EU is working on Council Conclusions on Alternative Development, called: "*Towards a new Understanding of Alternative Development and Related Development- centered Drug Policy Interventions – Contributing to the Implementation of UNGASS 2016 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals*". The EU and its Member States consider alternative development as an important strategy to address the underlying root causes of illicit drug economies through an integrated approach, combining efforts of rural development, alleviation of poverty, promoting access to land and land rights, protection of the environment and climate change, promotion of rule of law, security and good governance in full respect of international human rights obligations and commitment to gender equality.

For the last decades, alternative development has brought new livelihood options to many individuals and communities. Our experience demonstrates that alternative development is a necessary element of a comprehensive approach to rural development in drug crop cultivation areas. Without the creation of alternative sources of income, any intervention to address illicit drug crop cultivation is condemned to fail. Therefore, the EU and its Member States have placed alternative development firmly on their drug policy agenda and would like to reiterate the importance of alternative development as a measure within comprehensive and balanced national and regional policies and programmes.

The EU is delighted that the UNGASS outcome document broadens the scope of alternative development, including for the first time trafficking in drugs and urban drug markets as potential fields of development-oriented drug policy interventions. However, these innovations urgently require further research and debate in order to put those various elements into operation.

This call to incorporate alternative development into the broader agenda of the governments and into their balanced drugs and development strategies is also reflected in the EU Action Plan on Drugs for 2017 to 2020. The Action Plan aims at contributing to initiatives dedicated to reduce poverty, insecurity and vulnerability to the illicit drug economy by supporting sustainable, legal and gender sensitive livelihoods for people.

To achieve these objectives, the EU and its Member States have established an excellent cooperation with Latin American and Caribbean States on alternative development. The partnership was recently confirmed during the High Level Meeting of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs held in June 2018. Namely, parties adopted the Sofia Declaration and reaffirmed the commitment to continue efforts in the context of long-term and sustainable development programmes to address the most pressing drug-related socioeconomic factors, including unemployment and social marginalization as well as environmental aspects. Parties also strongly supported the continuation of the activities under the Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drugs Policies – COPOLAD II.

This EU-funded programme promotes the elaboration of evidence-based policies on alternative development, as well as an effective intra-regional dialogue among CELAC countries working in this field. In order to achieve its goals, COPOLAD has been working continuously with partner governments, promoting the exchange of best practices, the facilitation of relevant instruments and methodologies for implementing alternative development, as well as south-south cooperation and learning. This includes the active participation of representatives of small-scale farmers associations and cooperatives.

Additionally, the EU Member States have funded and implemented bilateral alternative development projects in all relevant source countries for illicit plant-based drugs cultivation. Our efforts are an outstanding example of the principle of shared and common responsibility put into practice.

Last but not least, an important element leading to successful alternative development efforts is to ensure small scale farmers' access to markets for their products. In order to contribute to increasing this access, the EU is applying the so-called "generalized scheme of preferences" (GSP+) since 2005. The GSP allows vulnerable developing countries to pay fewer or no duties on exports to the EU, giving them vital access to the EU market and contributing to their growth. This scheme offers preferential conditions for import of agricultural products into the EU including from countries exposed to the challenge of illicit crops production. It enhances the opportunities for more viable prices of legal agricultural products and may therefore benefit the affected communities immediately.

Taken together, it is necessary to contribute to comprehensive and sustainable alternative development efforts on both a political and a financial level, with research and technical expertise and to provide licit day-to-day livelihood opportunities for the communities affected by illicit drug economies. However, donors should take account of local and regional circumstances, as well as the universal standards of human rights and principles of rule of law to be able to effectively design and implement the programmes that foster the development of peaceful, inclusive and just communities.

Madam Chair,

dear panellists,

Bearing in mind these few examples of promoting dialogue and incorporating alternative development to broader national development strategies, as mentioned above, the EU believes that through our joint efforts we invite relevant international and regional actors and Member States to develop or continue to consistently commit to similar initiatives.

To conclude, the ultimate objective of the EU in the promotion of alternative development is to implement the international recommendations in this field stemming from the UNGASS outcome document and the UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development. Alternative development does not only contribute to the reduction of illicit crops on the long term, but also makes a clear contribution to meet the goals and indicators enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in the field of poverty reduction, food security, climate action, life on land and peace and justice.

Thank you!
