



European Union
Statement on the occasion of the
Intersessional Meeting of the 59th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Vienna,
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Topic: Alternative development; regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented balanced drug control policy; addressing socio-economic issues

Mr. Chairman,

The European Union and its Member States have always promoted alternative development as a long term and holistic approach to tackle the root causes and framework conditions of illicit cultivation of drug crops, such as poverty, poor infrastructure, limited access to sales market for licit products or the weakness of the rule of law. We are happy to see that the importance of alternative development is gaining more recognition across the world. We also appreciate that more countries have recently set up national or international alternative development policies.

We also note with appreciation that a whole chapter in the UNGASS outcome document is dedicated to this important topic, not only reaffirming the relevance of the issue of alternative development, but also for the first time broadening the approach towards other elements of the international drug economy beyond drug crop cultivation and addressing also urban contexts. This broadened approach need to be further discussed between UN Member States and properly operationalized. We especially welcome the recommendations to address the root causes of illicit cultivation and to encourage the development of viable economic alternatives.

Already back in 2006 the EU and its Member States endorsed a common EU Approach on Alternative Development, calling for the principles of proper sequencing and non-conditionality, the need to systematically combine supply reduction and demand reduction measures and the necessity to ensure adequate market access for alternative development products.

The EU support to alternative development is based on a development oriented approach with ultimate aim of poverty eradication and promoting long-term alternative development as part of a broader integrated rural development.

Alternative development remains a key component of the current EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020, which outlines that alternative development programmes should be:

- non-conditional, non-discriminating and, if eradication is scheduled, properly sequenced,
- set realistic rural development-related objectives and indicators for success, ensuring ownership among target communities and
- support local development, while considering interactions with factors such as human security, governance, violence, human rights, development and food security.

On a global scale, the European Union and several of its Members States are some of the most important donors in the field of alternative development with massive bilateral and regional assistance programmes.

To mention a few examples from the Andean region - since 2000 the EU financed over 2,700 projects in alternative development in Bolivia, benefitting some 1,267 communities and 359,000 people, and improving access to basic services, food security and income opportunities and strengthening local governance and social organisations. A sophisticated system based on self-community surveillance to control the extension of coca production was developed and implemented to reduce coca production in the country. UNODC monitoring reports show that the coca cultivation surface in Bolivia dropped by 39% between 2010 and 2015 (from 31.000 hectares in 2010 to 20.200 hectares in 2015).

The EU also supports the Government of Peru in the implementation of its National Strategy to Fight against Drugs, one of its major goals being fostering alternative development, based on legal economic activities. In addition, the EU finances an alternative development project in the country, which includes support to local economic development initiatives and strengthening local governments' role in promoting inclusive development. Also, following the EU's strategy to put alternative development in a larger context, the Union is providing to Peru bilateral support of €66 million for the period of 2014-2017 with the aim to foster local development in the regions, focusing on areas that can help the country reach a more inclusive growth.

A flagship EU-Latin America, Caribbean cooperation programme, COPOLAD II, also continues to address alternative development. A number of events were organised and studies were completed under the first phase of the programme (2011-2015), focusing on specific alternative development aspects, like certification schemes for alternative development products. Needless to say, these are only few examples of all EU alternative development-related action in the region.

Furthermore, the EU has addressed the issue of trade imbalances by signing trade agreement to favour goods coming from drug producing areas. This has been in place since 2005 and has boosted exports from Colombia, Bolivia and Peru, by providing access to the European market under preferential conditions.

The EU and its Member States are long-standing and in fact the biggest donors to UNODC projects and programmes. The EU finances several projects and programmes, some of them related with alternative development, including Assistance Programme to the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Strategy for the Fight against Drug Trafficking and Reduction of Surplus Coca Cultivation and Regional Programme for promoting counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me note that despite the more broad endorsement of alternative development, we feel that efforts and funds designated to alternative development since 2009 have been insufficient and therefore we would like to call upon relevant international actors and Member States to increase their financial support for alternative development.

We are convinced that alternative development efforts make a strong contribution to and are fully in line with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore projects and programmes of Alternative Development must be carried out accordingly.

Finally, we would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the Secretariat for organizing these thematic discussions that so effectively illustrate to us the progress already made with regard to the UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document implementation, and the areas where work still needs to be done.

We would also like to thank the civil society for their active participation in these intersessional meetings and the Vienna NGO Committee for their contribution.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.