China and Mekong officials commit to counter rising drug threats

Beijing (China) 29 May 2014 – Faced with a rapid expansion of illicit drug markets and seizures in China and Southeast Asia, regional drug control officials from the Mekong states – Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam – and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime called today for more coordinated anti-drug operations and strategies to fight the region’s rapidly growing rise in production, trafficking and use of methamphetamine and opiates.

Speaking today at a Beijing media briefing, a senior official of the Ministry of Public Security called for more operational regional cooperation, and pledged significant Chinese support for regional cooperation.

“Illicit drugs undermine development and pose a growing and significant threat to China and our Greater Mekong Sub-region neighbours,” said Mr. Liu Yuejin, Deputy Permanent Secretary General of the National Narcotics Control Commission, the Ministry of Public Security. “Greater regional cooperation is important as our countries face enormous pressures from drug trafficking.”

“Methamphetamine production is now the major drug threat in the region while at the same time opium poppy cultivation in the Golden Triangle has rebounded significantly over recent years, and rising drug seizures suggest the market is expanding,” said Mr. Jeremy Douglas, UNODC Regional Representative for Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

“The drug problem could deteriorate as regional integration and transportation plans in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and Southeast Asia are implemented,” said Mr. Douglas. “States throughout the region are deeply concerned about illicit drug production, the diversion of chemicals needed to make methamphetamines and opiates, organized crime syndicates, and vulnerable borders.

“China, Thailand and other markets for illicit drugs in the region have rising disposable incomes and are targeted by organised crime,” noted Mr. Douglas. “Meanwhile Mekong Sub-region countries are more easily accessed than ever before. Traffickers are able to rapidly adapt smuggling routes in and out of the Golden Triangle in response to market demand and law enforcement patterns.

“Methamphetamine, opiates and other illicit drugs significantly impact law enforcement, criminal justice and health care systems in the region” said Mr Douglas. “Drug-related arrests are the overwhelming majority of arrests for states across the region.”

Mr. Liu and Mr. Douglas made their comments today at a Mekong Senior Officials medias briefing of the six countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region and UNODC. The six countries have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UNODC and meet annually at a senior officials level to share information on Mekong challenges, reach agreement on strategies to counter drug threats, and agree on measures to strengthen cooperation.
This year, China is the Chair of the 2014 MOU Senior Officials Meeting, which brought together senior drug control officials from China, the other Mekong countries and UNODC.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Beijing and Bangkok:
Mr Jeremy Douglas
UNODC Regional Representative Southeast Asia and the Pacific
jeremy.douglas@unodc.org

Mr Tun Nay Soe
Programme Coordinator, Global SMART Programme (East Asia)
UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific
tun.nay.soe@unodc.org