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**Commission on Narcotic Drugs****Fifty-ninth session**

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**Implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem: follow-up to the high-level review by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in view of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016****Paper submitted jointly by Germany and UNODC entitled  
“Towards development-oriented drug policies: alternative  
development in the UNGASS 2016 process”***Summary*

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH, on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, jointly held a series of expert group meetings on alternative development in 2013, 2014 and 2015. This paper summarizes the outcomes of the meetings and places alternative development in the broader context of security and development, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It aims to inform the discussions at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the United Nations special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016.

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## **Towards development-oriented drug policies: alternative development in the UNGASS 2016 process**

### **Introduction**

In recent years, Member States have increasingly recognized the importance of a development-oriented approach to address the world drug problem, including alternative development, to reduce the cultivation of illicit crops, notably opium poppy and coca bush, used for the production of narcotic drugs. There is also growing consensus on how to define and understand alternative development, namely as a long-term holistic approach that is integrated into national development strategies. Alternative development primarily addresses poverty, which in most cases is the root cause of illicit crop cultivation. The adoption of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development by the General Assembly in December 2013 contributed to the promotion of alternative development. The Guiding Principles and global acknowledgement of illicit drug cultivation as a development issue were further recognized at the second International Workshop and Conference on Alternative Development hosted by the Royal Thai Government, in collaboration with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in November 2015.

A growing number of Member States have become involved in the implementation of alternative development programmes and strategies. The United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016 (UNGASS 2016), provides an opportunity to firmly place alternative development on the global drug control agenda, to rally support for increased political commitment and additional resources, to link alternative development to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to advance a United Nations system-wide coherent view on the connection between drugs, drug control, development and security.

In preparation for UNGASS 2016, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in close collaboration with the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage and the Transnational Institute, hosted a number of meetings on alternative development. These included the joint BMZ-GIZ-UNODC expert group meeting “Outreach to new stakeholders in the field of alternative development” held 10-12 November 2013 in Berlin, Germany, the joint BMZ-GIZ-UNODC expert group meeting “Alternative development in the framework of the UNGASS 2016 preparation and the Post-MDG debate” held 19-20 November 2014 in Berlin and the Joint BMZ-GIZ-UNODC-Mae Fah Luang Foundation expert group meeting “Taking development seriously: alternative development in the UNGASS 2016 process” held 25-27 November 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand. A further policy meeting included the G7 Roma-Lyon group outreach expert meeting “Alternative development in the framework of the security-development nexus” hosted by the German Federal Foreign Office on 25 June 2015 in Berlin.

Representatives from 21 Member States participated in one or several of the meetings, including: Afghanistan, Canada, People's Republic of China, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Guatemala, India, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nigeria, Peru, Russian Federation, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America. The meetings also brought together representatives from regional and international organisations, civil society and academia. Participants discussed key issues and developed recommendations which form the basis for this paper. The objectives of the paper are to identify relevant policy priorities at UNGASS 2016 and within the post-UNGASS 2016 framework and to increase awareness of and advocacy for alternative development among Member States.

## **Key issues and recommendations: priorities for UNGASS 2016**

### **1. The causal link between development and illicit crop cultivation**

Illicit drug crop cultivation, whether in Africa, Asia or Latin America, is usually driven by one or more of the following factors:

- Poverty;
- Poor food security;
- Geographically marginalized communities and poor infrastructure;
- Lack of access to markets for alternative development products;
- Lack of access to formal economic systems and to credit, including microcredits;
- Ongoing armed conflict, lack of security and deficient rule of law;
- Lack of technical capacity and means for legal agricultural production;
- Lack of access to land and land tenure rights.

While some participants mentioned that in certain areas people grow illicit crops for commercial reasons, others stressed that illicit cultivation is often the only livelihood choice for communities. Isolated and marginalized communities that lack any alternative livelihood opportunities consider illicit cultivation a solution to poverty. Revenue is used for food, basic household goods, health access and education. Poverty is not exclusively defined as a function of income but is a multi-faceted phenomenon that includes a wide range of indicators that collectively define the ability of people to lead a dignified life.

Some participants explained that unfair international trade policies led to price falls in licit crops, leading communities to cultivate illicit crops.

### **2. The consequence: development first**

General agreement on the push factors of illicit crop cultivation allowed a consensus to develop among Member States on how to best design alternative development interventions. Many participants stressed that illicit crop cultivation is a development issue that requires a people-centred approach.

Government participants from several countries pointed out policy shifts away from drug control approaches that focus primarily on eradication and law enforcement. These approaches have not led to sustainable reductions in illicit crop cultivation, but drove communities further into poverty (thus perpetuating a vicious cycle where poverty and illicit crop cultivation reinforce each other) and broke trust between communities and governments and the international community. Furthermore, the State loses legitimacy when eradication is the principal interaction with a rural community.

Some participants also pointed out that making development aid conditional on prior eradication of illicit crops constitutes a form of forced eradication and therefore can lead to the same negative consequences.

Overall, there was broad agreement that drug control needs to be implemented in full compliance with human rights obligations and that root causes and push factors of illicit crop cultivation have to be addressed. Policies to address illicit crop cultivation must be development-centred.

### **3. Long-term and comprehensive approach**

Participants highlighted on many occasions that successful alternative development requires a comprehensive, long-term approach. Previously defined as a crop-substitution strategy, alternative development is now broadly considered a holistic and programmatic approach to tackle the push factors of illicit crop cultivation. Alternative development programmes must be integrated into broader national development strategies and involve all relevant stakeholders, including communities, civil society organisations, development organisations, donors and governments.

Several participants stated that alternative development should not target individual cultivators, but address rural populations as a whole, taking into account that people besides farmers are also involved in illicit crop cultivation such as day labourers for harvesting or processing. Other participants reiterated that the definition of alternative development also includes the concept of preventive alternative development, i.e. interventions in areas with vulnerable populations adjacent to areas of illicit crop cultivation.

It was also recognized that local and national reductions in illicit cultivation of coca bush or opium poppy are often short-lived and unsustainable when development interventions are not given sufficient time and long-term funding. Therefore, at the global level, cultivation has often resumed or was displaced to other areas. Alternative development has been very successful in reducing illicit drug crop cultivation locally and regionally, but adverse context factors on the global level have made these successes less visible. For this reason, it is crucial that interventions look beyond short-term crop substitution projects and put greater emphasis on broader and long-term rural development programmes and strategies that go beyond locally concentrated interventions. This requires long-term and sustained financial support from the international community for development interventions in areas where many people depend on the illicit drug economy for basic subsistence.

#### 4. Measuring impact and success

In order to make any meaningful conclusions and recommendations on the impact and success of alternative development interventions, there is an urgent need to increase and improve data collection and standardise methodologies. Compared to other supply-side drug policies, there is little comparative impact research on alternative development. Participants recognized the lack of research limits funding from donors and complicates efforts to link their contributions to alternative development's impact.

Several participants noted the challenge of directly attributing reductions in illicit crop cultivation to alternative development. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that different countries conduct illicit crop cultivation surveys differently, while some countries do not conduct them at all. Currently, efforts to assess alternative development's impact tend to look only at crop reductions in a limited area. These crop reductions are then juxtaposed with national or global crop reduction trends, leading to misrepresentations of alternative development's potential impact.

It is therefore important to better define how to assess the impact of alternative development initiatives and to manage expectations with regard to its potential contribution to reduce global cultivation levels. As is the case with all drug supply reduction efforts, the outcome also depends on global market dynamics.

Participants stressed on many occasions that human development indicators should form the basis of any alternative development impact assessment. The indicators that measure implementation of the SDGs could also be used to measure alternative development's impact.

Participants further stressed the need for evidence-based policies. These require a better understanding of shifts in cultivation levels and patterns, drivers of illicit cultivation and impact of alternative development interventions.

It was suggested that increased engagement of the academic and the research community could prove beneficial. Better data sets and subsequent analysis of alternative development's impact could help to increase funding. Further suggestions included the creation of a database on alternative development in an effort to more efficiently use resources, and an increase in South-South cooperation.

#### 5. Funding

Global funding for alternative development is low. Since 2009, there has been a decline in funding for alternative development by OECD countries relative to their overall development assistance. Participants noted the discrepancy between the momentum of increasing political support for a development approach in drug control and the lack of funding for alternative development. Alternative development was referred to as the "poor cousin" of official development assistance. This is a major obstacle to achieving sustained reductions. Alternative development currently only targets a small percentage of households involved in illicit crop cultivation.

There is a gulf between the development and drug control communities. Currently, donor support for "classical" rural development rarely takes illicit crop cultivation into account. Comprehensive data on funding levels of all development projects taking place in areas with illicit crop cultivation does not exist. Rural development

interventions in areas with illicit crop cultivation are thus not considered to be alternative development interventions.

In this context, participants felt the need to increase awareness of alternative development among governments, in order to attract further funding and gain political support. Alternative development should be mainstreamed into broader development strategies. Participants also expressed strong interest in seizing the opportunity to mobilise additional funding at UNGASS 2016. Some participants mentioned the role of non-traditional funding sources and recommended forming, at UNGASS 2016, an alternative development funding working group. Highlighting the links between alternative development and the SDGs was also mentioned as a way of mobilising funds.

## **6. Involvement of local communities**

Participants noted repeatedly that affected communities have not been sufficiently involved in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of alternative development programmes. A people-centred approach when designing and implementing alternative development programmes, in order to reduce social vulnerabilities and strengthen local communities, is required.

Participants also highlighted the importance of promoting gender equality. In illicit crop cultivating areas, women often take the lead in tending the fields and carry responsibility for household food security and family development. Given a chance, they are likely to turn to alternative livelihoods in order to reduce vulnerabilities arising from illicit crop cultivation, such as the risk of eradication, threats from armed groups and criminal networks and price shocks. It is crucial to involve women when designing and implementing alternative development.

## **7. Access to markets**

Lack of access to agricultural markets under favourable terms is one of the main drivers of illicit crop cultivation. Participants thus stressed the importance of access to legal local, regional and eventually international markets for alternative development products. Obstacles include lack of infrastructure, lack of electricity access, lack of storage facilities, insecurity, negative impact from international trade and investment agreements and transport costs. In addition to promoting large-scale, export-oriented agricultural exports, the needs of smallholder farmers must also be addressed.

Alternative development programmes should take local conditions into account when identifying alternative, licit crops. Participants stressed the danger of monoculture, not only because of its negative environmental impact but also because it increases communities' vulnerability to price shocks and sudden shifts in demand.

Participants recognized that the international community should provide local communities and small-holder farmers with adequate public services, infrastructure, public transport and links to markets. International trade and investment treaties should also avoid negatively impacting the livelihoods of these communities.

## **8. Land tenure rights**

Participants mentioned a strong correlation between lack of access to land and illicit crop cultivation. Securing land tenure rights and access to land was seen as crucial for the success of alternative development strategies and programmes. Interventions should aim to increase fair and equitable access to natural resources including arable land and water.

Most cash crops are permanent or perennial and would require long-term investments. However, lack of land tenure rights is not conducive to long-term investments and many farmers will prefer to grow annual illicit crops which require little investment and promise quick returns.

Landless farmers benefit the least from alternative development. Furthermore, some participants noted that land grabbing and irresponsible agricultural investments have deprived communities of livelihood options other than engaging in illicit crop cultivation.

Some participants pointed out that promoting private land ownership can ensure access to land, while others stressed that clear ownership can actually facilitate land grabbing and lead to a loss of access for farmers. Therefore, it was agreed that a broad range of “legitimate land tenure rights” should be promoted. A range of legitimate land tenure rights, including traditional, customary and communal systems and practices were identified. Not all countries with illicit crop cultivation currently have legal systems that recognize traditional land tenure rights. Some participants further expressed a need to protect forests and nature reserves, in consultation with local communities.

The FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security were mentioned as policy options to improve land tenure security including customary land practices.

## **9. Drugs, violence and peace**

The relationship between drugs, violence and security was continuously recognized. In many cases, illicit crop cultivation takes place in areas where various actors are involved in conflict. It was suggested that some actors have little interest in peace building and conflict resolution, since instability allows them to engage in illicit crop cultivation.

Communities involved in illicit cultivation often bear the brunt of the violence in conflict affected areas, as well as from repressive drug control policies. Forced eradication measures without a development approach or proper sequencing have often created strong anti-government sentiment among the rural population.

Participants noted that the lack of security and ongoing armed conflict constitutes a considerable obstacle to the implementation of alternative development programmes. Alternative development was identified as a tool to reduce violence, and promote peace and reconciliation, especially in countries with ongoing peace processes.

**10. Good governance and the rule of law**

Illicit crop cultivation often takes place in areas with little or no government presence and suffering from conflict and internal displacement. The areas are often isolated and marginalized, with a lack of infrastructure and basic services. Increasing the presence of the State alone does not automatically lead to better conditions and outcomes for local communities. The nature and quality of the State's presence is crucial for successful alternative development.

Participants stressed the importance of establishing good governance and the rule of law. This includes addressing corruption, and introducing basic services such as infrastructure, education, health care and access to justice. Participants underscored the mutually reinforcing relationships between development, good governance and the rule of law.

**11. Traditional and medicinal uses**

Some participants noted that some communities, including communities with little access to health care and essential medicine, have a longstanding history of opium, coca and cannabis use. There are increasing calls by rural communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America to respect, protect and promote the traditional, cultural, religious and medicinal use of illicit crops.

**12. Cannabis and alternative development**

Some participants called for international recognition of the need for alternative development interventions to address cannabis. They also mentioned the need for governments from countries with cannabis cultivation to demonstrate more political will and allocate further resources to alternative development programmes.

Currently there are few alternative development programmes for cannabis growing regions. Global support for alternative development is relatively small compared to overall rural development support, and donors have prioritised alternative development funding for areas with illicit opium poppy and coca bush cultivation.

**13. Alternative development and other drug-related problems**

Participants suggested broadening the discussion on alternative development to other drug-related problems. One suggestion was to develop social programmes that provide alternative livelihoods to people, especially youths, living in low-income marginalized urban areas, where joining drug-dealing criminal gangs often provides the only livelihood opportunity. However, other participants expressed reluctance to further expand the definition of alternative development, given the already low levels of funding for existing programmes.

**14. UNGASS 2016 and the SDGs**

Participants stressed the importance of integrating alternative development strategies and interventions into larger national and global development agendas. Links to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are crucial.

Participants noted that many SDGs are directly relevant for and linked to alternative development interventions, especially goal 1 on ending poverty, goal 2 on food

security and sustainable agriculture, goal 10 on inclusive societies, goal 16 on promoting peaceful societies and goal 17 on global partnerships for sustainable development. More specifically, goal 1.4 calls for equal rights and access for all men and women, in particular the poor and vulnerable, to ownership and control over land; goal 16.1 for significant reductions in all forms of violence; and goal 17.4 for additional financial resources for developing countries.

Linking alternative development with the SDGs also provides an opportunity to engage the broader development community and draw attention to drug-related development issues. Some participants also reiterated the need to focus on human development indicators when measuring the impact of alternative development. Participants also agreed on the importance of placing alternative development more broadly in the context of drugs, development and security at UNGASS 2016.

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