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Follow-up to the implementation at the national, regional and international levels of all commitments, as reflected in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, to address and counter the world drug problem**Conference Room Paper submitted jointly by Germany, Peru, Thailand and UNODC titled, “Advancing Alternative Development and Development-oriented Drug Policies”****

Disclaimer: This report summarizes the discussions and conclusions of the Expert Group Meeting but does not necessarily reflect the positions of all participants.

Summary

Based on CND Resolution 62/3 from 2019, an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Alternative Development was convened to continue to share lessons learned, best practices and expertise as well as to promote dialogue on development-oriented drug control policies and programmes and on the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development.

The meeting and field visit took place from 15 to 17 December 2019 in Chiang Rai, Thailand, and was co-hosted by the Office of Narcotics Control Board, the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Office of the Drug Commissioner of the Federal Government of Germany, the Government of Peru, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It provided a platform to continue discussions on advancing development-oriented drug policies by focusing on cross-cutting issues such as the involvement of the private sector, rule of law and the possibilities and challenges of applying alternative development approaches in urban settings.

The Expert Group Meeting brought together 58 participants, comprising representatives from 14 countries, representatives from regional and international organizations, civil society, academia, the private sector and affected communities. Key discussions of the two-day meeting form the basis for this conference room paper.

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** This document has not been edited.



I. Following an evidence-based approach

1. Measuring illicit drug crop cultivation, production and the impact of alternative development interventions remains a challenge and there is agreement that measuring impact and success of alternative development programmes needs to include human-development indicators in addition to illicit crop-related indicators. Building on the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly in 2016, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem” and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development (2013), addressing the lack of reliable and up-to-date data on illicit drug crop cultivation, including its drivers and root causes, and increasing research focus on the effective utilization of data on human development and socioeconomic aspects remains a vital component of measuring success. To fully understand the broad impact on overall development, indicators should include the number of households cultivating illicit crops to indicate socioeconomic conditions and measure responses based on the number of projects, actual beneficiaries and budgets of such projects, while focusing on how projects impact socioeconomic conditions and illicit crop cultivation. By focusing on all aspects of well-being, including social, environmental and cultural components, human-centric metrics in combination with traditional illicit crop-related indicators can result in a more complete impact assessment.

2. Over the past years, increased efforts have been put into the collection and systematization of information and data collected on the status of alternative development interventions around the globe. This vast amount of data allows the international community to draw useful conclusions and lessons learned from interventions of the past. However, challenges remain, including the non-systematic collection and analysis of data, the lack of capacity to collect data by Member States and the lack of access to data on actual beneficiaries instead of only target beneficiaries. Improving data sets including through the revised UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) should lead to improvements of evidence-based analysis.

II. Engaging with the private sector

3. Gaining access to markets and being able to promote products stemming from alternative development holds an important role in ensuring inclusive economic growth of affected communities and, consequently, in improving the chances of success of alternative development programmes. The involvement of the private sector supports communities to move beyond basic livelihood development levels, and to build their capacity, organizational and management skills, leading to increased profitability, sustainability and scalability of alternative development projects. The private sector can hold valuable expertise to help communities identify and develop market-driven products, while focusing on value-added production chains and ultimately to link communities with end consumers while ensuring that local expertise and entrepreneurship are used most effectively. Past experiences show that increased funding, technical know-how and improved access to markets and technological support can become available to affected communities upon engaging with the private sector.

4. The field visit showcased how Thailand moved beyond livelihood development in the agricultural sector to empowering the communities to pursue diverse licit occupations including in the off-farm sectors such as handicraft, tourism, and agro-processing and value addition. The field visit allowed delegates to understand the continuous process of elevating product and livelihood quality through capacity-building of locals, extensive collaboration with domestic and international experts and partners to improve quality, design, innovation and market opportunities, adherence to international standards, and ensuring a sustainable value chain through the promotion of a circular economy.

5. It is important to understand that the relationship between affected communities and private sector stakeholders is a mutually beneficial arrangement. To ensure that such cooperation takes place on equal terms, a shared vision, aligned expectations and a commitment to quality control, integrity and transparency are vital components of such cooperation. Mutual trust should be supported by a regulatory framework that enables beneficial private sector support while ensuring that human rights and exploitation laws are being respected. Commitment on ensuring quality is a crucial component to achieve success along with highlighting a clear social impact. Utilizing technology to share knowledge and successful models among communities will further increase the global exchange of lessons learned.

III. Understanding the linkages between alternative development and the rule of law

6. The consideration of the rule of law in an alternative development context is vital to understand the impact of illicit drug crop production and of alternative development interventions as a whole. Several topics can be considered when examining the linkages between alternative development and the rule of law, including public participation as well as equitable access to justice and services. The rule of law and good governance can be mutually reinforcing and the absence of either or both of those components weakens affected communities as well as drug control interventions. Political participation, decentralization, fighting corruption and establishing access to services can contribute to alleviating a sense of insecurity for affected communities.

7. Promoting a “culture of lawfulness” contributes to strengthening rule of law through alternative development programmes. When communities are involved in a bottom-up, participatory process together with the State in establishing rules, they are more likely to accept and abide by the rule of law. Trust is a key aspect in supporting a culture of lawfulness and creating a system in which the rule of law is naturally practised. In this respect, alternative development can help build trust in state agencies in order to foster cooperation between State agencies and communities and to integrate communities into all aspects of public policies.

8. Future discussions on the rule of law need to address how a human-centric approach can be followed in drug-control strategies that target a culture of lawfulness and link with human rights considerations as outlined by the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy (2019).

IV. Broadening the discussion to implement/apply a development-oriented approach in urban or drug trafficking-related settings

9. Discussions also addressed whether lessons learned and best practices accumulated over 50 years of alternative development interventions could be applied in an urban context. The issue is linked to Chapter 7 of the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document. The Chapter through its paragraphs *h*, *j* and *k* asks Member States to consider comprehensive development-oriented approaches and the creation of alternative sources of income for communities affected by or at risk of illicit cultivation of drug crops and other illicit drug-related activities in rural as well as urban settings. Such initiatives should aim to foster public participation, community cohesion, protection and safety and should stimulate innovation, entrepreneurship and employment.

10. Addressing risk factors for affected communities, such as poverty, lack of services, lack of access to land and capital, unemployment, lack of licit value chains, weak or inexistent infrastructure, drug-related violence, exclusion, marginalization and social disintegration should lie at the heart of alternative development

interventions, in order to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. There is agreement that those risk factors are valid in rural as well as urban areas, in drug crop cultivation as well as drug trafficking settings, and that following a people-centric approach, addressing vulnerabilities and providing opportunities is crucial to implement sustainable and balanced drug control policies and programmes. Drug trafficking frequently happens in rural settings and is often linked to some of the same root causes as drug crop cultivation. Therefore, the lessons learned from alternative development could also be applied to another context. A similar logic may apply to urban drug markets, driven by poverty, marginalization, lack of opportunity and insecurity.

11. However, further discussions on how lessons learned from alternative development could be applied in urban settings is required to identify possible linkages between drugs and violence in urban areas and alternative development interventions in rural settings. In addition, linking the drugs and crime pillar of UNODC and developing a more integrated approach across sectors and commissions was raised on several occasions. Although participants held a diverse set of views on the issue, there was consensus that the concept of alternative development should be understood as being strictly related to illicit drug crop cultivation in rural settings. Furthermore, there was agreement that the term alternative development does not require amending to suit activities of development in an urban crime context.

V. Conclusion

12. The Expert Group Meeting provided a platform to share best practices and lessons learned and to highlight the successes and failures of the past. It also allowed for discussion about current and future challenges and how development-oriented drug control policies and interventions can be further improved to better meet the needs of affected communities regardless of the social or geographic context.

13. The clear need for proper and coordinated sequencing of interventions, taking into account social, cultural, economic, political, educational and environmental aspects, the inclusion of human rights instruments and the continuous promotion of gender equality as well as participatory approaches were topics that impacted all discussions. Discussions regarding private sector involvement, rule of law as well as applying a development-oriented approach in an urban setting clearly showed the need to broaden the conversation to better link and align development-oriented drug control with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
