Drug abuse and illicit trafficking continue to have a profoundly negative impact on development and stability across the world.

The billions of dollars generated from illicit drugs fuel terrorist activities and abet other crimes such as human trafficking and the smuggling of arms and people.

Illicit drugs and related criminal networks undermine the rule of law. And the impunity with which they go about their business causes tremendous fear and sows disillusion with governance at all levels.

Central America, for example, faces rising levels of violence fuelled by transnational organized crime and drug trafficking. The region is now home to the highest homicide rates in the world.

Development in Afghanistan is being hindered by the highest rates of opiate prevalence in the world. In parts of Myanmar, farmers are trapped by food insecurity compelling them to grow poppies as a cash crop.

The challenge is also greatly testing West and Central Africa, which lies along one of the main drug trafficking routes to Europe. With often weak legal and financial institutions, countries in the region are highly vulnerable.

Moreover, transit countries are no longer simply links in the chain of supply; they have become points of arrival. About half of the cocaine trafficked through West and Central Africa now remains in the region. Such changing patterns of drug consumption jeopardize hard won gains in sustainable development and good governance.

The drug, crime and corruption conventions of the United Nations form a solid basis for global solutions to these challenges. Together, these instruments offer a balanced approach to halt trafficking, promote viable alternatives to the farmers of cash crops, and offer drug users their health and human rights.

Our efforts to promote development and fight drugs and crime will be more effective if they are rooted in partnerships with the young, civil society, governments and the international community. Working together, we can alleviate the suffering of millions and break the hold of drugs and crime on countries, communities and families.