



# UNGASS – ten years on

## Progress in opium and coca control but goals remain elusive; demand reduction rises higher on global agenda

*"Drugs destroy lives and communities, undermine sustainable human development and generate crime. Drugs affect all sectors of society in all countries; in particular, drug abuse affects the freedom and development of young people, the world's most valuable asset."*

Opening statement of the Political Declaration adopted in 1998.



Celebration of World Drug Day 2007, Canada.

At the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on drugs (UNGASS) in 1998, Member States committed themselves to "eliminating or significantly reducing the illicit cultivation of the coca bush, the cannabis plant and the opium poppy by the year 2008" and to "achieving significant and measurable results in the field of demand reduction."

However, global trends indicate that the world has fallen short on these goals and there is a need to 'finish the job' on heroin and cocaine begun by the international community a century ago.

There has, nevertheless, been progress in containing the problem since 1998, at least with coca and opium. Some 92 per cent of the world's illicit opium production is concentrated in a



Special Session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, New York 1998.

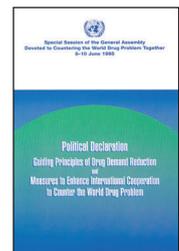
single country, Afghanistan, and most of the drug production is confined to the five provinces that are rocked by insurgency. Still, although the increase in Afghan opium production is worrying, the first signs of stabilization, or even small decline, may come in 2008.

### Shared responsibility

At UNGASS, Member States adopted a *Political Declaration* linked to the *Guiding Principles on Drug Demand Reduction*.

The Political Declaration has enabled States to look at the bigger picture of the drug problem. It recognized that

- countries have a shared responsibility for its solution
- there is a need for a balanced approach
- human rights need to be recognized.





A drug treatment centre in Myanmar.

Putting health first, it called for "the necessary resources for treatment and rehabilitation and to enable social reintegration to restore dignity and hope to children, youth, women and men who have become drug abusers."

The main innovation of the Guiding Principles was to recognize that demand reduction policies should not only aim to prevent the use of drugs, but also reduce "the adverse consequences of drug abuse."

The Special Session approved a number of measures and action plans to enhance international cooperation in this area. Some of the highlights include:

- Measures to control precursors, the chemicals needed to manufacture drugs

- Action plan against manufacture, trafficking and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants
- Measures to counter money-laundering
- Action plan on international cooperation to eradicate of illicit drug crops and on alternative development.

Among its many landmarks, the 1998 Political Declaration was also the first legal document linking drug production/trafficking and terrorism

The Political Declaration has been a valuable tool to spur national efforts and strengthen international cooperation. Major successes were registered in reducing the area under coca cultivation, for instance, in Peru and Bolivia in the 1990s, and in Colombia

after 2000. Morocco reduced its cannabis resin production significantly from 2003-2005. Major successes were also achieved in South-East Asia, notably by Myanmar and the Lao PDR, in reducing opium production, following the achievements made by Thailand over the previous three decades, although these successes were dwarfed by opium production in Afghanistan.

In 2009, Member States will take stock of progress in international drug control, 100 years after the Shanghai Commission, at a ministerial-level gathering of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, UNODC's governing body in drug-control matters.



Growing cocoa as an alternative to coca cultivation in Peru.