



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited  
15 March 2006

Original: English

---

### Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Forty-ninth session  
Vienna, 13-17 March 2006

#### Draft report

*Rapporteur:* Ali Hajigholam **Saryazdi** (Islamic Republic of Iran)

#### Addendum

### Thematic debate on alternative development as an important drug control strategy and establishing alternative development as a cross-cutting issue

1. At its 1265th and 1266th meetings, on 14 March, the Commission considered agenda item 3, “Thematic debate: alternative development as an important drug control strategy and establishing alternative development as a cross-cutting issue”.
2. The Chairperson of the Commission opened the thematic debate, which was moderated by the Chief of the Partnership in Development Branch of the Division of Operations, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), who made an introductory statement. As agreed by the Commission, the discussion was led by three panellists: Victoria Eugenia Restrepo Uribe (Colombia), David Johnston (United States of America) and Christoph Berg (Germany). Ms. Restrepo Uribe made an audio-visual presentation on the subtheme “Scope and challenges”. Mr. Johnston and Mr. Berg made audio-visual presentations on the subthemes “Integrated approach to alternative development” and “The role of UNODC in alternative development”, respectively. A representative of the Secretariat also made audio-visual presentations on the work of UNODC in alternative development.
3. Statements were made by the representatives of Bolivia, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Canada, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sweden, Hungary, Guatemala, Nigeria, Australia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Argentina, Japan, the United States, the Republic of Korea and Norway.
4. Statements were also made by the observers for Pakistan, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Ghana, Viet Nam, China, Tunisia, Pakistan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Morocco, Slovenia, Ecuador and Burkina Faso.



5. Statements were also made by the observers for the Andean Community, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organization of American States, the Cooperation Council of Arab States of the Gulf and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The observer for the Institute for Policy Studies made a statement on behalf of the Vienna NGO Committee.

## **Deliberations**

6. In their presentations and in the discussion, the panellists and other speakers addressed, inter alia, conceptualizing alternative development in the context of drug control and the wider framework of development efforts, the main challenges being faced by different regions of the world with regard to illicit crop cultivation, the funding of alternative development and its evaluation. The mix and sequencing of activities, the mainstreaming into overall development efforts, preventive alternative development and the problem of illicit cultivation of cannabis plants, were also debated. The thematic debate also considered the results of UNODC activities in the field of alternative development and future directions.

### **1. Scope and challenges**

7. The thematic debate focused on the different conceptual and programmatic aspects of alternative development. The problems and challenges facing alternative development in the different drug crop cultivation areas and how to evaluate the impact of alternative development programmes were also addressed.

8. There was general agreement that alternative development should be seen as a fundamental component in a comprehensive counter-narcotics strategy to combat the world drug problem. There was also general agreement that, in order to be successful, alternative development required a comprehensive mix of activities, including demand reduction, health and education and sustainable development efforts aimed, inter alia, at improving living conditions among beneficiary communities to break their dependency on illicit drugs, as well as complementary eradication and law enforcement measures. Political commitment and long-term focus were identified as essential ingredients for success. Some speakers noted that alternative development programmes were needed to address the problem of illicit cultivation of cannabis plants in view of the global increase in cannabis production and demand. It was emphasized that alternative development programmes should be framed in the context of the international drug control treaties.

9. It was noted that alternative development programmes should be part of sustainable development efforts and be integrated into national and international economies as well as national socio-economic development processes. It was also noted that, since resources for alternative development might in some cases be limited, another approach would be to mainstream alternative development activities into existing national and international development activities.

10. A number of major challenges facing alternative development were identified, including poverty, security conditions, weak legal framework, geographical isolation of affected communities, limited presence of the State, poor infrastructure,

environmental concerns, market access and the need to engage the private sector in the marketing of products of alternative development.

11. A discussion also took place on best practices regarding the implementation of alternative development programmes. For example, there was consensus that participatory approaches and empowerment of the affected communities were requirements for the design, execution and evaluation of alternative development programmes. Several speakers acknowledged that funding for alternative development was insufficient to meet the challenges ahead. Some speakers indicated that financial support mechanisms needed to be enhanced, which would require the establishment of cooperation arrangements with international financial institutions, regional development banks and other relevant international organizations. The role of community-based and non-governmental organizations was acknowledged as a factor in promoting community participation and sustainability. One of the approaches that needed to be further developed and included among best practices was the establishment of micro-finance mechanisms that provided affected communities with access to credit to finance their alternative development initiatives.

12. One speaker noted that only a few countries promoted preferential access to their markets for alternative development products and that other countries should open up their markets to products from regions affected by illicit crop cultivation and engaged in alternative development, bearing in mind the principles of fair competition. In that context, it was indicated that some form of preferential treatment for alternative development products could be considered in the broader context of the negotiations taking place in the World Trade Organization. In addition, new marketing approaches could be explored to clearly identify alternative development products as contributing to the elimination of illicit drug production and drug abuse, thus encouraging consumers to purchase such products.

13. As regards the evaluation of the impact of alternative development programmes, there was consensus that a mix of indicators was required that went beyond measuring reduction of the area under illicit crop cultivation. Such indicators included measuring improvements in the lives and livelihoods of the communities participating in alternative development programmes, such as improved access to education, health and other services as well as generation of employment. Some speakers indicated that, in evaluating the success of alternative development programmes, assessment of the impact of institution-building activities, improvement of governmental capacity and environmental considerations, among other things, should be borne in mind. The inclusion of gender mainstreaming was also seen as relevant for alternative development programmes. It was also noted that a wealth of knowledge existed in the field of alternative development and greater efforts needed to be made to identify and share best practices and lessons learned.

## **2. Integrated approach to alternative development**

14. The thematic debate also focused on the proper mixture and sequencing of the elements of alternative development, how to promote alternative development as a cross-cutting issue and have it included and mainstreamed in development plans and programmes, how to harmonize the activities of all stakeholders and which players

would be best placed to implement alternative development and preventive alternative development programmes.

15. A number of speakers mentioned that an integrated approach to alternative development would require a balanced approach between alternative development efforts and the rule of law. It was noted that the sustainable elimination of illicit crop cultivation and illicit drug production required an integrated approach involving alternative development, demand reduction, interdiction and law enforcement measures, in compliance with human rights obligations. Those measures would need to be well balanced and applied in the appropriate sequence and must be well coordinated with other development measures. It was noted that alternative development programmes needed to be adjusted to the particular conditions existing in each region. Given this, the sequencing of activities might change according to those conditions. One speaker noted that international cooperation partners providing technical and economic assistance to Afghanistan should continue to provide support and expertise to promote the economic development of the country. An integrated approach needed to be followed in Afghanistan, with a range of activities, including alternative development, that would make it possible for farmers to secure decent livelihoods and abandon illicit crop cultivation.

16. There was general agreement that it would be desirable to have alternative development integrated into wider development programmes. With respect to how best to mainstream alternative development into the international development agenda, it was stated that UNODC should continue to use its advocacy role to encourage multilateral development agencies to take alternative development into consideration when developing their programmes. It was noted that the success of alternative development would also depend on local agencies' capabilities and the commitment of Governments. In that respect, some important elements to be considered were to support the generation of all forms of legitimate employment, training for entrepreneurs and the involvement of the private sector and civil society, as well as capacity-building for producer associations at the grass-roots level. One speaker indicated that the question of how to harmonize action by all players could be addressed through consultation mechanisms that identified common goals and indicators with a view to meeting the needs of the beneficiaries.

17. Speakers also mentioned the need to broaden the concept of alternative development to include preventive alternative development. In addition, they referred to preventive alternative development as an efficient strategy, because of its direct association with socio-economic development and environmental conservation, as a means to prevent the displacement of illicit crops to other areas and reduce the increase in illicit drug production. Other speakers indicated that it was important to understand the context and objectives of preventive alternative development.

### **3. The role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in alternative development**

18. The thematic debate focused on the results and regional focus of UNODC activities in alternative development and the future direction of the regional and global focus of its programmes in that area.

19. Several speakers acknowledged the work of UNODC in alternative development. It was recognized that the Office had played a major role in several areas of alternative development over the previous 30 years. Speakers mentioned that the Office had provided advisory services and technical assistance, implemented projects, pioneered participatory approaches and elicited strong governmental support. Many speakers recognized the expertise of UNODC in the thematic area and indicated that its knowledge base should be fully utilized. Some speakers mentioned that, while the regional focus of the Office had previously been in the Andean countries and South-East Asia, it should be broadened to assist countries in other regions. In that context, some speakers noted that alternative development programmes should be made available and applied to the problem of illicit cultivation of cannabis plants, in particular in Africa.

20. The focus of UNODC work on alternative development was addressed by several speakers, who indicated that the Office should continue to work on capacity-building, promoting synergy and collaborating with other entities in the United Nations system and other international agencies. Some speakers also mentioned that UNODC should continue to implement projects and mainstream alternative development into broader development objectives. Other speakers emphasized that the Office was uniquely positioned to serve as the interface between different players, to generate and manage knowledge and to function as a catalyst and coordinator of alternative development responses. In that context, several speakers noted that resources should be made available to enable preventive alternative development initiatives and to respond to the problem of illicit cultivation of cannabis plants.

21. At the end of the thematic debate, the Chairperson of the Commission summarized the salient points made during the discussion:

(a) All speakers expressed the view that alternative development was a fundamental component of the counter-narcotics strategy to combat the world drug problem;

(b) The discussion demonstrated that most countries agreed that alternative development should follow an integrated approach that required a mixture of comprehensive activities, including demand reduction, health and education and sustainable development efforts, as well as complementary eradication and law enforcement activities;

(c) Concern was expressed at the decreased funding available to undertake alternative development activities on a global scale, including the impact that could have on existing programmes and on broadening the coverage of alternative development programmes;

(d) The majority of speakers referred to the need to evaluate the impact of alternative development activities against social, economic and human development indicators, and not solely in relation to illicit crop reduction figures;

(e) A number of speakers referred to the importance of strengthening and supporting the UNODC alternative development programme. In that context, they recognized the knowledge and expertise of the Office and requested that it continue its action in that field and strengthen its role as a catalyst to raise awareness and to

encourage the broader international community, in particular the international financial institutions, to work collaboratively on alternative development.

---