

ECOSOC Resolution 2008/26

Promoting sustainability and integrality in alternative development as an important part of drug control strategy in States where illicit crops are grown to produce drugs

The Economic and Social Council,

Bearing in mind the provisions of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1953,¹ that Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol,² the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971³ and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988,⁴

Recalling the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session,⁵ in which Member States recognized that action against the world drug problem was a common and shared responsibility,⁶

Reaffirming the United Nations Millennium Declaration,⁷ in particular the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and ensuring environmental sustainability,⁸

Reaffirming also its resolutions 2003/37 of 22 July 2003 and 2006/33 of 27 July 2006 and Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 45/14 of 15 March 2002⁹ and 48/9 of 11 March 2005,¹⁰

Taking into consideration the report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2005¹¹ and the report entitled *Alternative Development: a Global Thematic Evaluation: Final Synthesis Report*,¹² prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,

Convinced that, in the review of the progress achieved in meeting the goals and targets set in the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session,⁵ there is a genuine need for the international community to assess the way alternative development has been practised in the past and ensure that, overall, the approaches to alternative development are fully implemented,

¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 520, No. 7515.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 976, No. 14152.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1019, No. 14956.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1582, No. 27627.

⁵ General Assembly resolution S-20/2, annex.

⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 2.

⁷ See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

⁸ See, inter alia, A/56/326, annex, and A/58/323, annex.

⁹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 8* and corrigenda (E/2002/28 and Corr.1 and 2), chap. I, sect. C.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2005, Supplement No. 8 (E/2005/28/Rev.1), part one, chap. I, sect. D.

¹¹ *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.06.XI.2).

¹² United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XI.13.

Recognizing the significant achievements and efforts of countries in South-East Asia in recent decades towards eliminating illicit cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis and recognizing also the commitment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to making South-East Asia free of illicit drugs by 2015,

Recognizing also the significant achievements of the Andean countries in the implementation of alternative development and preventive alternative development programmes, as presented in the fifth report of the Executive Director on the world drug problem,¹³ and noting that those achievements were attained in accordance with national specificities, with significant national resources and with the support of international cooperation,

Recognizing further the success of the long-term, holistic and integrated approach to solving the problem of opium poppy cultivation, including its correlation with poverty, that has been applied for forty years in national and international programmes in Thailand, which led the United Nations Development Programme in May 2006 to present the first Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award to King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand as the initiator of that approach,

Acknowledging that the success of alternative development and preventive alternative development, as appropriate, may be dependent upon, inter alia, the following essential elements:

- (a) Long-term investments by Governments and international donors;
- (b) The efficiency of national institutions responsible for drug control policies and of institutions related to the promotion of alternative development;
- (c) Synergy and trust among the Government, local administrations and communities in building local ownership;
- (d) An adequate response to human needs and dignity in the context of sustainable rural development and community self-reliance;
- (e) The creation of a value chain by utilizing local wisdom, capacity-building, marketing and entrepreneurship;
- (f) Broader market access for alternative development products consistent with national and international obligations and consideration of measures to facilitate access and positioning in markets for alternative development products, taking into account applicable multilateral trade rules,

1. *Recalls* the Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development,¹⁴ which continues to have practical relevance and in which it is stated that alternative development is an important component of a balanced and comprehensive illicit crop eradication strategy and is intended to promote lawful and sustainable socio-economic options for those communities and population groups that have resorted to illicit

¹³ E/CN.7/2008/2 and Add.1-6.

¹⁴ General Assembly resolution S-20/4E.

cultivation as their only viable means of obtaining a livelihood, contributing in an integrated way to the eradication of poverty;¹⁵

2. *Emphasizes* that the problem of illicit production of narcotic drugs is often related to development problems, in particular poverty, poor health conditions and illiteracy, and that it must be tackled in a larger development context through a holistic and integrated approach;

3. *Agrees* on the relevance of enhancing alternative development and preventive alternative development, as appropriate, in a manner focusing on the sustainability and integrality of uplifting people's livelihood, and recommends that such elements be considered by relevant bodies in the United Nations system;

4. *Recognizes* the significant role played by developing countries with extensive expertise in alternative development and preventive alternative development and the importance of outreach activities aimed at promoting a set of best practices and lessons learned in that area and sharing those best practices and lessons learned with States affected by illicit crop cultivation, including those emerging from conflict, with a view to using them, where appropriate, in accordance with national specificities of each State;

5. *Urges* donor Governments, as well as multilateral, international and regional financial institutions, in conformity with the principle of shared responsibility and as a sign of their commitment to fighting illicit drugs in a comprehensive and balanced manner, to redouble their efforts to enhance international cooperation, especially trilateral cooperation aimed at utilizing the expertise of developing countries and the financial support of developed countries in assisting other developing countries in reducing illicit drug crops through alternative development and preventive alternative development, as appropriate, and to consider increasing their financial and material support and technical assistance and providing a flexible and sufficiently long-term commitment to States affected by illicit crop cultivation;

6. *Commends* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its continued and progressive work on alternative development, described in its report entitled *Alternative Development: A Global Thematic Evaluation: Final Synthesis Report*,¹² especially the lessons learned and the recommendations contained therein, and acknowledges the need to consider providing the Office with additional funding in that area;

7. *Calls upon* Member States, consistent with their national and international obligations, and relevant international organizations to consider measures to enable products of alternative development to have easier access to markets, taking into account applicable multilateral trade rules;

8. *Encourages* Member States, in the context of the review of the progress achieved in meeting the goals and targets set in the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth

¹⁵ Ibid., para. 17.

special session,⁵ to consider developing a set of international guiding principles on alternative development, based on the sharing of best practices and lessons learned in different countries and regions, and acknowledging the best practices and lessons learned in sustainable alternative livelihood development of Thailand, annexed to the present resolution;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to transmit the text of the present resolution to multilateral, international and regional financial institutions and to all Governments for consideration and implementation;

10. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to report to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its fifty-second session on the implementation of the present resolution.

Annex

Best practices and lessons learned in sustainable alternative livelihood development of Thailand

1. First and foremost, alternative development, which in the context of the Thai experience is referred to as “sustainable alternative livelihood development”, must be people-centred. The Doi Tung development project in Thailand served as the model for the present set of best practices and lessons learned. The outlook, design and implementation were developed taking into account a fundamental question: how will people benefit from this project? That became the key performance indicator for the project.

2. The main objective of sustainable alternative livelihood development is to transform poor and vulnerable communities, especially in rural areas, from social and economic dependency or sub-sufficiency to full socio-economic sufficiency, in a participatory manner and at a pace appropriate to each stage, to allow the changes to be accepted and introduced by the communities. Keeping in mind the goal of sustainability, development practitioners should see their role as facilitators of progress and should plan their exit strategy to enable the communities to continue the activities without external intervention.

3. Sustainability in this context means that the communities have sufficient economic capacity in their factors of production and marketing and are able to maintain equitable social and cultural integrity and live in harmony with their natural environment (coexist with nature). With this definition in mind, sufficient health care must be made available because sick people cannot be economically productive. Ideally, an income-generating mechanism should be employed that allows people and a healthy natural environment to benefit greatly from one another. Continuous education will ensure that future generations will be able to pursue legitimate livelihoods, cope with the pressures of globalization and create for themselves opportunities for growth.

4. When applying sustainable alternative livelihood development in the context of drug control, the eradication of illicit crops should not be the only immediate goal. The progressive introduction of viable

alternative livelihoods in the broader context of rural development is needed to tackle the root cause of illicit crop cultivation — poverty — without severely curtailing the only available means of survival of the people involved.

5. Activities that provide people with alternative cash income and/or produce immediate health or social benefits within the first few months or days (so-called quick hits) are vital to building trust and enabling an immediate transition from illegitimate to legitimate sources of income, which can begin to transform the economic prospects of a community. Successful quick hits build confidence and strengthen cooperation among stakeholders at all levels, from people at the grass-roots level and local authorities to leaders at the national level.

6. Medium-term and long-term activities are introduced simultaneously in order to ensure that the economic and social benefits are long-lasting and that the areas concerned remain free of illicit drug cultivation for a long time. Development activities must be based on continuity: each activity should lead into another, build on the success of previous initiatives and, over time, increase the hope and capabilities of the persons involved.

7. It is necessary to achieve a balance between a bottom-up and a top-down approach. Strong and committed leadership is required to ensure that development policies and activities are based on a true understanding of the needs and concerns of the target communities at the grass-roots level. Clear and constant communication is critical, especially at the beginning, for knowledge and experiences to be transferred not only from development practitioners but also to them.

8. Viable livelihoods should be available to all members of the community: the young and the elderly; the fit and the infirm; and men and women alike. Having a variety of income-generating activities may serve as a safeguard against weakened interests in an individual product or activity. Livelihood diversification is in fact a major success factor in sustainable alternative livelihood development (single-crop solutions are rarely sustainable).

9. Combining local wisdom and available resources with a market-driven product development approach and effective management will lead to the creation of a viable value chain at the local level. Revenue from value-added goods locally manufactured by such an enterprise must contribute to the social benefits of the target communities and society in general. Such social entrepreneurship — the practice of using business profits to generate social goods — can lead to real socio-economic sustainability.

10. To ensure that development objectives are realized as expected, mechanisms must be in place to allow frequent assessments and necessary adjustments, starting with comprehensive census baseline data captured through both qualitative and quantitative development indicators. Project monitoring and evaluation hold development practitioners accountable for their action, and that is crucial, as people's lives depend on the performance of those practitioners and imprudent and uncaring development often has adverse effects.

11. Ultimately, the key to sustainable alternative livelihood development is community ownership, where capacities and economic activities have been developed to such an extent that the communities can become owners in their ventures instead of serving only as contract farmers or employees. Community ownership means not only physical ownership of the enterprises but also emotional ownership, on the part of the community, of its own development and future, from the very start.

12. Since the issue of sustainability envisages the long-term commitment of all parties involved, it also calls for longer-term and sufficiently flexible funding from a variety of sources, including Governments, international organizations, multilateral financial institutions and other donors and development partners.

*42nd plenary meeting
24 July 2008*