

## I. Alternative development and legitimate livelihoods

1. Alternative development<sup>1</sup> is a drug control strategy to reduce or eliminate the illicit supply of drugs derived from illicitly cultivated plants. It is a concept related to integrated development that has been applied in rural areas of developing countries where such plants, mainly opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) and coca bush (*Erythroxylum coca*), are grown. The decision to cultivate illicit drug crops is the product of many complex interacting factors at various levels, ranging from the household level to the international level, and encompassing both the supply of and demand for illicit drugs worldwide. The most successful approach to getting growers of illicit drug crops to discontinue that activity involves a combination of disincentives and incentives. Thus, law enforcement and the threat of penalties and/or forced eradication, combined with the prospect of legitimate alternative livelihood and broad sustainable economic assistance, including in the areas of education, health care and the development of infrastructure, may be the solution.

2. The international drug control treaties have provisions relating to the eradication of illicitly cultivated drug crops. Article 14 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988<sup>2</sup> states that parties to the Convention may cooperate to increase the effectiveness of eradication efforts and that such cooperation may include support, when appropriate, for integrated rural development leading to economically viable alternatives to illicit cultivation. Those alternatives will be bolstered if the authorities make clear that illicit drug crop cultivation will not be tolerated.

3. In the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session (Assembly resolution S-20/2, annex), the Assembly reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive approach to the elimination of narcotic drugs in line with the Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development (Assembly resolution S-20/4 E) and stressed the special importance of cooperation in alternative development.

4. Since the adoption of the Political Declaration and the Action Plan in 1998, the importance of

alternative development has been emphasized in numerous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly (resolutions 53/115, 54/132, 55/65, 56/124, 57/174 and 58/141) and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (resolutions 43/6, 45/14 and 48/9). In its resolution 45/14, for example, the Commission called on Member States to exploit more fully the potential of alternative development as an appropriate means of drug control. More recently, in its resolution 48/9, the Commission considered that alternative development should be regarded by the international community not only as a means of reducing illicit drug supply, but also as a means of consolidating sustainable development in those communities and territories affected by illicit crops and as a part of the strategy against poverty undertaken by States to fulfil the commitments of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (Assembly resolution 55/2). Alternative development programmes are implemented by Governments of affected countries, sometimes with funding and technical support from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other members of the international community. The goal of those programmes is to reduce and eventually eliminate the cultivation of illicit drug crops.

5. The present chapter contains a review of experiences in implementing alternative development programmes and highlights best practices, models for increasing the effectiveness of such programmes. At the same time, it takes into account challenges and concerns. The chapter also presents an examination of whether the concept of alternative development requires rethinking and repositioning in order to maintain or enhance its relevance as an international drug control strategy, in rural as well as urban areas.

### A. Background

6. Alternative development plays an important part in efforts to achieve the global objective of reducing and eliminating the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for illicit, non-medical purposes. In part, alternative development is based on a simple model of supply and demand in which reducing the cultivation of plants such as opium poppy and coca bush, which are used to produce narcotic drugs, should

lead to a reduction in the availability and subsequent abuse of those illicit drugs. However, the existence of such a simple interaction between the supply of and demand for illicit drugs is increasingly being questioned, including by the International Narcotics Control Board, most recently in its report for 2004.<sup>3</sup>

7. Alternative development has been implemented for over 30 years in countries in Asia, in particular in Thailand, since 1969, in Turkey since the early 1970s and in the Andean countries, in particular Peru, since 1981. The earliest alternative development efforts were initially conceived as crop substitution projects for areas where opium poppy was cultivated. In the late 1980s, the substitution approach to controlling illicit crop cultivation became broader, promoting rural development in general and providing sustainable legitimate livelihoods for those who had been growing illicit drug crops. The fulfilment of defined drug control objectives remains a priority objective, and alternative development has generally been considered in conjunction with different law enforcement measures, including eradication of illicit drug crops.

8. The main premise of crop substitution was that illicit drug crops could be substituted by legal cash crops, which would provide the crop growers with a similar or even higher income. It was only in 1994 that projects with a less narrow focus began to be planned and implemented in coca bush cultivation areas, as well as, to a very limited extent, in the cannabis plant cultivation areas of the Bekaa valley in Lebanon, where eradication efforts had previously taken place. Over the years, the previous narrow and mechanical approach proved to be less effective than expected.

9. A truly comprehensive concept of alternative development would include not only the cultivation of alternative crops, but also the development of infrastructure, the provision of a viable means of transporting legal products to markets and the provision of assistance in the areas of education and health care. In addition, alternative development programmes are only possible where adequate security and stability can be ensured. Unless Governments are able to establish their authority and provide a safe environment, alternative development has no chance of being effective. The international community should provide assistance to Governments in their efforts to maintain security in areas where alternative development is to be introduced.

10. Alternative development has been implemented in countries with very different characteristics, both in Asia (for example, in Afghanistan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand and Viet Nam) and in Latin America (in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru). Most of those countries have experienced declines in illicit drug crop cultivation.<sup>4</sup> Those declines may be attributed partly to alternative development efforts and partly to other factors. In several of the countries (Bolivia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, Peru and Thailand, as well as, to a lesser extent, Colombia), growers of illicit crops have improved livelihoods with less or no illicit crop production. In 2004, the total area under opium poppy cultivation in all countries except Afghanistan amounted to only 32 per cent of the total in 1994; and only 43 per cent of the total area under coca bush cultivation in 1995 remained under such cultivation in 2003.<sup>5</sup>

11. Alternative development has generally been implemented in areas affected by the cultivation of opium poppy and coca bush rather than in areas affected by the cultivation of the cannabis plant:<sup>6</sup> only two donor-supported alternative development projects have been implemented in areas affected by cannabis plant cultivation—one in the Rif valley in Morocco and the other in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon (where opium poppy was also being cultivated). Thus, there is limited experience with donor-supported alternative development programmes in cannabis plant cultivation areas.<sup>7</sup> There is also limited experience with preventive alternative development.

12. Countries in which opium poppy and coca bush are illicitly cultivated have taken action with respect to alternative development using their own limited resources. For example, they have incorporated alternative development in national drug control master plans and tried to create a better investment climate in areas where drug crops are cultivated. Some countries have made significant investments in infrastructure to reduce the isolation of illicit drug crop cultivation areas from the mainstream of national socio-economic development. Some countries, such as Colombia, are working to create favourable market conditions for products and produce from alternative development areas. Overall, however, countries affected by illicit drug cultivation on a larger scale must consolidate general policy and structural changes in order to reduce the size and impact of the illicit drug economy. They

cannot do that without the active support of the international community. The strategy for alternative development in the Andean subregion may constitute a framework for ensuring such international support.

## **B. The difficult context of alternative development**

13. Although occasionally there is “impatience” within the international community regarding the length of time required to achieve results through alternative development programmes, it must be stressed that such programmes are implemented under the most difficult conditions. A longer time frame is required to achieve both drug control and sustainable development objectives.<sup>8</sup> Difficult conditions are present in all of the above-mentioned countries that are conducting alternative development programmes. Indeed, some of them are post-conflict societies or societies that continue to be marred by conflict. The conditions or factors that hinder the implementation of alternative development are discussed below, together with the issue of why a longer time frame is needed for alternative development to achieve both sustainable development and drug control goals.

### **Socio-economic conditions**

14. The income derived from illicit drug crop cultivation is not always secure. In addition, narcotic crop growers are frequently marginalized in terms of their relationship to government structures, and women and children in particular are often in a vulnerable position. Some crop growers do not own the land they farm, nor do they have effective civil society organizations through which they can negotiate with organizations and institutions in the private or public sector. They have a low level of empowerment, and traditional community-based institutions may be weak; thus, the crop growers are more likely to fall under the influence of criminal networks. The fact that women in that segment of society are often socioculturally and economically disadvantaged makes it more difficult to mobilize them for alternative development. In South-East Asia, for example, it is mostly ethnic minority groups in the highland areas that have been involved in illicit drug crop cultivation. Often, the lack of socio-economic investment in these communities exacerbates their isolation from the mainstream.

### **Geographical and ecological factors**

15. In countries in South-East Asia, many of the illicit opium poppy cultivation areas are found in remote mountainous border areas. That is partly true for Afghanistan as well. In Pakistan, areas used for opium poppy cultivation are also largely situated in remote border areas. Some of the coca bush cultivation areas in Latin America are also scattered in remote areas and lack adequate infrastructure.

16. Because of the remoteness of many opium poppy and coca bush cultivation areas in hilly or mountainous terrain, improvements in infrastructure are expensive and private investors are reluctant to make any investments in such areas. Moreover, such cultivation often takes place in the most ecologically fragile forested areas of the countries concerned and/or have major importance as watersheds. A considerable proportion of them are located in and around national parks. That is also true of areas used for the illicit cultivation of cannabis plants. Surveys conducted by UNODC show that the fragile ecosystem of the Rif valley area in Morocco, an important centre for cannabis production, is threatened by deforestation and soil erosion, caused by continued illicit cultivation of cannabis plants.

17. In the absence of secure land use rights, patterns of sustainable land use are unable to develop, thus further endangering the tropical and semi-tropical ecosystems. The severely degraded soil and the ecological fragility of those areas limit the agro-economic options available to growers of illicit crops.

### **Investment and marketing**

18. It is difficult to secure investment and to market produce in geographical areas that are remote and difficult to access; in such areas, farmers are unable to sell their products easily, including products intended to be “substitutes” for illicit drug crops, such as coffee, cacao, rubber, vegetables, fruit, wood, flowers and handicrafts. The terms of trade may be unfavourable to them, as market prices are determined far from the alternative development areas. Market price instability (for example, the world prices for coffee and cocoa) causes uncertainty among farmers, as it means that their livelihood will continue to be vulnerable. At the same time, farmers may perceive that marketing conditions are better for illicit crops. In many countries where illicit crop cultivation takes place, the illicit

drug crop markets are better developed and more firmly entrenched than the licit crop markets. That leaves crop growers even more vulnerable to becoming economically dependent on drug traffickers.

#### **Lack of services**

19. There is often an absence of government services, especially health, education and agricultural extension services, in areas where illicit drug crop cultivation flourishes, in particular when those areas are located in remote, border and/or conflict-ridden areas of the country. Other necessary services, such as banking, communication or transport facilities, may also be absent.

#### **Law and order**

20. Some illicit crop cultivation areas are characterized by various types of conflict and/or lack of law and order. In the main coca bush cultivation areas in Colombia, for example, despite its many efforts, the Government has been unable to maintain a level of peace and security that allows people to pursue their livelihood without fear. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, money obtained from the sale of illicit drugs has been used to purchase weapons and to support war and rebellion. People living in such areas may have little direct experience with the State except for the military or law enforcement authorities. That may result in a lack of trust between the people and the local government, making it even more difficult to develop the necessary partnerships between civil society organizations and government and to provide services and/or encourage investment in such areas.

21. As a result of the above-mentioned factors, growers of illicit crops may fall under the influence of armed groups who use the proceeds of drug trafficking to support their activities against the State. Illicit crop growers may also have closer ties to armed groups, drug traffickers and other criminal organizations than to government organizations and may even perceive those ties as being beneficial. Moreover, many developing, transitional and post-conflict societies lack a well-functioning legal system, which is fundamental to drug control efforts.<sup>9</sup>

### **C. Principles of alternative development**

22. Best practices in socio-economic development normally refer to practices followed in the course of a project or programme that have led to a successful outcome, to solutions to certain problems and to a positive impact that is sustainable. Best practices in alternative development are closely related to sound principles of development. They explicitly include gender and poverty considerations.<sup>10</sup> However, the conditions required for best practices to develop and flourish are often not available in alternative development projects, particularly if the projects are being implemented under the difficult conditions outlined above. If sustainable drug control is to be successful at the community or farm level, it will need the proper conditions, including political stability, security and good governance.

23. The principles described below relate to alternative development in the context of households that would be included as target groups under national poverty reduction strategies; the proceeds from cultivation of illicit drug crops account for a significant part of the income of such households. The principles do not refer to smaller groups of “opportunistic” growers of illicit drug crops, who have not previously been dependent on such crops for their livelihood, or to “plantation” growers. Given the specificities of each area, there is no manual or definitive guidelines for alternative development. However, concrete measures for building capacity and awareness on the part of government and civil society institutions (including non-governmental organizations) are urgently required to implement the principles. The principles are as follows:

(a) Political will, funding and long-term commitment are required of all stakeholders, including national and local governments, the local population and the international community;

(b) Alternative development should be consistent with sustainable development policies, strategies and practice in the affected communities;

(c) The design of alternative development programmes must take into account both the complexity of livelihoods based on the cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis plant and the role that those crops play in growers’ lives. Thus, the

issues of governance, the environment, human and social capital and sustainable development must be used as the basis for a comprehensive, sustainable approach to alternative development;

(d) The full participation of the crop growers, their families and the community is necessary in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating alternative development strategies. That participatory approach must be complemented by collective and collaborative initiatives, allowing large-scale projects to be implemented;

(e) Law enforcement must accompany alternative development programmes. Law enforcement efforts should be sensitive to the crop growers' living conditions and should involve a variety of measures, including measures that create disincentives to discourage growers from cultivating illicit crops. Trust in law enforcement must be increased, including through vigorous efforts to fight corruption;<sup>11</sup>

(f) Law enforcement measures in illicit crop cultivation areas should focus on the drug trafficking and criminal organizations and their armed networks, which are often the impetus behind growers' decisions to cultivate illicit crops. Disrupting the operations of drug trafficking organizations cuts the supply chain and excludes the buyers of the illicit crops; as a result, illicit drug crops cease to be a source of income for growers and, consequently, eradication can be more easily implemented;

(g) Measures for drug abuse prevention, education and treatment should be integrated into alternative development programmes, as the higher exposure of families to drugs in illicit crop cultivation areas, combined with other factors such as vulnerability, hopelessness and disempowerment, may put them at higher risk of drug abuse and addiction;

(h) Alternative development must be integrated into all general development and investment efforts at the local, national and international levels to optimize efforts to diminish the illicit drug economy and thus becomes a cross-cutting issue.<sup>12</sup>

24. When implementing alternative development projects and programmes, both Governments and international donors are understandably eager to achieve the maximum possible reduction in the area under illicit drug crop cultivation within the shortest

possible time frame. Too little recognition, however, has been given to the conditions supporting alternative development, which are required for best practices to lead to "best results". If those conditions, which arise from the policy and funding, the marketing or the law and order/security contexts, are absent, alternative development programmes are bound to have limited results. When the expectations of Governments and donors are unrealistic, it can be counterproductive and lead to unintended results, such as a sudden lack of alternative sources of income for the people concerned. Parallel efforts, involving law enforcement and eradication on the one hand and the provision of legitimate alternative livelihood on the other, are necessary.

## **D. The alternative development balance sheet**

### **Achievements**

25. Alternative development has contributed to a reduction in areas cultivated with illicit drug crops. A development-oriented approach has improved the livelihood of crop growers while leading, in some cases, to sustained reductions in illicit drug crop cultivation. A consistent development-oriented approach, such as that which has been practised in Thailand, can achieve good results in terms of significant illicit drug crop reductions. In Thailand, the total area under opium poppy cultivation amounted to 17,900 hectares in the crop year 1965/66, whereas in 2000 it had been reduced to only 330 hectares—a reduction of 98 per cent.<sup>13</sup> There is also evidence in other countries that a consistent development-oriented approach can have good results. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for example, the total area under opium poppy cultivation dropped by 75 per cent, from about 26,000 hectares in 1998 to only 6,600 hectares in 2004.<sup>14</sup> In Colombia, the total area under illicit coca bush cultivation decreased by one half, from 163,000 hectares in 2000 to 80,000 in 2004; and in Peru, the total area under such cultivation declined from about 115,000 hectares in 1995 to 44,200 in 2003—a reduction of 62 per cent.<sup>15</sup> While not all of the above-mentioned declines may be attributed to alternative development, it has made a significant contribution.

26. Experiences with alternative development also indicate that long-term commitments are required and that the conditions supporting socio-economic development must be firmly in place.

### **Challenges and concerns**

27. Although alternative development programmes provide initial assistance to crop growers, the problem of long-term sustainability of secure livelihoods may remain. The licit crops that growers may choose to cultivate for the market (for example, coffee) are subject to the price fluctuations or other market uncertainties associated with many agricultural products. Alternative development programmes have also been faulted for promoting products that had no viable markets to begin with. Owing to changes in the structure of international tariffs and trade, markets for products from alternative development areas may not remain open or may become subject to insurmountable competition. Despite repeated calls by the international community, including by the General Assembly, for improved market access for the products of alternative development programmes, difficulties in strengthening the licit economy via legitimate marketing channels remain.<sup>16</sup>

28. One issue often overlooked is the need for providing adequate facilities for providing credit—perhaps microcredit as part of alternative development programmes—for illicit crop growers. Currently, legitimate credit facilities are often not available to illicit crop growers. As a result, growers who have given up cultivating illicit crops but whose livelihood is not secure are more likely to return to cultivating such crops.

29. One related issue is that of creating a balance between development efforts and law enforcement measures in illicit crop cultivation areas. How should that balance be achieved so that a majority of crop growers do not end up being worse off, as that would increase the possibility of them being lured back to cultivating illicit crops? Through what mechanisms can, for example, development and law enforcement officials cooperate with crop growers' representatives in peace and security? Law enforcement officers in alternative development areas require special training to ensure that they are involved with the communities in a positive manner, so that they are not seen as acting

against the well being of the people in those communities.

30. To date, alternative development has been implemented largely in the context of individual rural development projects and/or programmes in isolated areas. This predominance of project-by-project implementation does not provide adequate opportunities for alternative development to have an impact on drug control on a larger scale or on conditions related to drug control. The vast majority of illicit crop growers, particularly the large number of cannabis plant growers in developing countries, have unfortunately never received direct alternative development assistance.<sup>17</sup> It is also unrealistic to believe that this majority could ever be reached through individual projects. The "project-by-project" approach has made it more difficult to bring alternative development into the mainstream of general development policies and programmes because the attention of both governments and donors has been focused on individual or pilot projects rather than on the need for change in overall policies and programmes. Moreover, such geographically limited projects rarely provide adequate scope for the integration of development and law enforcement measures.

31. Although the Commission on Narcotic Drugs has made numerous calls for preventive alternative development, no country has yet implemented such programmes, despite the fact that, in areas where there is a high level of poverty, there is often a high risk of illicit crop cultivation. Preventive alternative development will provide valuable lessons in understanding the mechanisms and dynamics involved in preventing an illicit drug economy from being established.

32. Another concern, one that has become virtually inseparable from illicit crop cultivation, is the environment, which is an especially serious problem in coca producing areas. It is estimated that more than 88,000 hectares of coca bush were cultivated in the Amazon in 2004, affecting important rainforest and natural ecosystems and having serious implications for the global environment. In addition, the initial processes for cocaine manufacture may also be taking place close to where the coca itself is harvested, resulting in dangerous chemical waste. It has been estimated that hundreds of thousands of tons of

chemicals are used annually for cocaine manufacture in the Andean subregion.<sup>18</sup> Chemical residues tend to be dumped into the rivers and streams of already fragile ecosystems.

33. Regrettably, there are virtually no alternative development projects or programmes in Africa, despite the large amount of cannabis produced in that region. Likewise, cannabis production and drug abuse do not receive sufficient attention in poverty reduction strategies prepared by African countries. While most countries in Africa produce cannabis, there are some 17 countries that produce it in significant quantities. In its report for 2003, the Board noted that food shortages in sub-Saharan Africa were being exacerbated by the increasing cultivation of cannabis plant.<sup>19</sup> In some member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), for example, maize cultivation has been given up in favour of cannabis plant cultivation. African women are particularly disadvantaged in that, while they are primarily responsible for food grain production, it is their fields that are being taken over by men for the cultivation of illicit crops as cash crops.

34. The gender issue must be given higher prominence in alternative development programmes—and in drug control in general—than it has been given to date. In more traditional agricultural communities throughout the world, women are responsible for many farming operations. In other words, without women's active involvement in different parts of the farming process, illicit crop cultivation in some areas might not be possible. Though women may also be against illicit crop cultivation because it increases the risk of their own family members becoming drug abusers or addicts, women are often not in a position to influence decisions concerning their families.

### **E. Complex and changing drug scenarios: the need to reduce illicit drug demand**

35. The structure of drug problems has changed markedly over the centuries; in the past 50 years, there have been significant changes in terms of the drugs abused, the methods of abuse, the age of drug abusers, the location of the drug abuse, the size and sophistication of drug trafficking networks etc. Distinctions that were once made between developed consumer countries and developing producer countries

are no longer relevant. In addition, at the microlevel, there is a certain inelasticity of demand among established addicts, which means that the view that "reduced illicit drug production equals higher drug prices, which equal lower drug demand" may not hold true. Although addicts may be more likely to seek treatment when drug prices rise, appropriate treatment facilities may be lacking, particularly in developing countries. Therefore, pursuing alternative development to reduce illicit drug supply without introducing prevention and treatment programmes for drug abusers is counterproductive. As the Board pointed out in its report for 2004,<sup>20</sup> there must be a thorough integration of supply and demand strategies, analyses and programmes.

36. Drug demand and supply change all the time. Those changes include the pricing and marketing of plant-derived drugs such as heroin and cocaine, synthetic opioids, and synthetic drugs, including various amphetamine-type stimulants. Some of those drugs have legitimate uses as pharmaceuticals, creating complex interactions between the licit and illicit drug markets. There are many factors that interact to result in different drug abuse scenarios with different outcomes. For example, reductions in illicit drug supply have at times resulted in increases in street-level prices and the desired reduction in illicit drug demand. At other times, however, drug traffickers have been able to adjust the purity of drugs at the street level to keep prices constant and retain their "market share". In both cases, the outcomes may not last long, which further indicates the necessity of making a long-term commitment to the provision of legitimate alternative livelihoods.

37. Although reduced drug crop production assists in weakening illicit drug availability in certain areas, the overall demand for illicit drugs remains.<sup>21</sup> This demand may be met from the illicit supply of synthetic drugs. In Thailand, which has successfully reduced opium production, there has been an upsurge of amphetamine-type stimulants: people who had previously been involved in opium trafficking networks are now trafficking in amphetamine-type stimulants. More preventive alternative development efforts, in both urban and rural areas, would have made a difference.

38. The case of Thailand shows clearly that society should not reduce its commitment to drug abuse

prevention, education or treatment programmes merely because there have been reductions in the supply of certain drugs such as opium and heroin. Throughout East and South-East Asia, with the changing illicit drug market patterns, many drug abusers have switched from smoking opium to injecting heroin, thereby significantly increasing the risk of blood-borne infection. While reduction of the supply of any illicit drug is a highly desirable goal, adequate prevention, education and treatment programmes are also necessary to ensure an overall and long-lasting reduction of drug abuse.

39. The necessity of ensuring that alternative development programmes—and programmes aimed at sustainable development in general—take adequate account of HIV/AIDS issues is often overlooked. That is partially because drug abuse, which has, in some cases, contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS, is often perceived only as an urban phenomenon. However, given the fact that there is usually an increase in drug abuse along major drug trafficking routes and near major drug-producing areas, drug demand reduction and HIV/AIDS prevention programmes should be integrated into alternative development programmes whenever possible.

## **F. Future direction of alternative development**

40. Given the complexities of the global drug situation, the time has come to ask whether the current perception of alternative development is adequate to meet new challenges. Perhaps the first issue that needs to be addressed is the lines of distinction that continue to be drawn between drug supply and demand. In its report for 2004, the Board examined the relationship and interaction between the supply of and demand for illicit drugs and the synergistic impact of complementary efforts; it also emphasized the need to utilize balanced, combined and integrated approaches to drug control at all levels for maximum effectiveness.<sup>22</sup> It is questionable whether alternative development should continue to be seen almost solely in terms of supply reduction, as defined in 1998 by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session (Assembly resolution S-20/4 E). If a more comprehensive definition is to be considered, it would also be important to take a closer look at rural, peri-

urban and urban communities in terms of their development-oriented drug control needs. Like the challenges facing those involved in reducing illicit drug supply and demand, the challenges facing those communities should be seen as a continuum whose different parts are strongly interlinked. Poverty, despair and lack of prospects are some of the reasons why people have become involved in drug abuse and other drug-related activity. Most importantly, the geographical scope of development-oriented drug control would be much broader than that of alternative development, which is currently limited to only part of the world's illicit crop cultivation areas.

41. The alternative development projects that have been implemented to date do not have links at the micro- or macrolevel and at the regional and global levels, which would increase their effectiveness. To rectify this, alternative development should be taken out of the confines of the “project-by-project” approach and be seen as a cross-cutting issue, involving a multitude of players at the local, national and international levels. What is needed in areas more seriously affected by drug problems and in countries dominated by the illicit drug economy are overall development approaches that take such problems more fully into account. In other words, there is a need to follow overall development approaches that fully integrate into the mainstream the principles and practices of alternative development, including coordination with law enforcement agencies, whether in a rural or an urban context.

42. Alternative development programmes are more effective as an integrated part of a comprehensive and sustained national development programme, aimed at raising the economic and social well-being of the entire population. The issue of illicit drug crops has been mentioned in the poverty reduction strategy papers for Bolivia, as well as for the Lao People's Democratic Republic (which has made efforts to address problems related to addiction to opium and amphetamine-type stimulants).<sup>23</sup>

43. With the integration of drug supply and demand, the boundaries of alternative development need to be redefined in terms of “alternative livelihoods”. In more recently planned programmes, the focus has been on alternative livelihoods as, with the inherent understanding of the interactions from household to policy levels, this concept is broader than alternative



development and lends itself better to mainstreaming. The newly adopted drug control strategy of Afghanistan, for example, includes alternative livelihoods as one of the main areas for intervention. Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), have recently adopted a plan for sustainable alternative livelihoods as part of a regional approach to combating illicit crop cultivation.

44. Legitimate alternative livelihoods should be considered not only in rural areas where illicit drug crops are cultivated, but also in areas, both rural and urban, where illicit drugs are abused. In many cases, producers and local communities no longer have the traditional structure for assisting producers and abusers of illicit drugs in coping with socio-economic problems. In particular, illicit drug users are often marginalized, living under difficult circumstances such as in the slums of large cities, and may require special development efforts to overcome their problems. Members of marginalized communities in urban areas may also be forced by violent gangs into drug dealing at the street level. The street-level dealers themselves are often addicts, requiring access to prevention, education and treatment programmes. In such situations, there may be almost no opportunities for earning legitimate income. In such cases, well-defined policies—including input from the affected groups—are needed to help reduce drug problems, including drug-related crime.

45. In today's globalized society, donor countries can no longer afford to pay attention only to drug abusers on their own territory. If demand does indeed influence supply, then local demand (in countries where illicit drugs are produced) as well as international demand, may also influence drug production. The implication for the international community is that it is not enough for alternative development or development-oriented drug control to be seen in the framework of only limited circles of supply and demand within a single country or region.

46. Bearing in mind the goals set in the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session, it is doubtful that alternative development can be effective if it is conceived as only being relevant mainly at the individual and community levels. As mentioned above, there are many national and international factors that play a role in local economies, including illicit drug economies. It is

necessary to look at international terms of trade, for example. Are adequate concessions made to the growers of alternative crops to ensure that their produce receives a fair price? Are international markets open enough to allow unhindered access of alternative development crops and products? The Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in its resolution 45/14, reiterated the necessity to encourage access to international markets for products and produce from alternative development areas. In its resolution 2003/37 of 22 July 2003, the Economic and Social Council called upon the international community and Member States to promote an economic environment favourable to products from alternative development and facilitating the access of such products to international markets as an effective and efficient means of eliminating the illicit economy. Are domestic markets established in a such a way as to give advantages to produce and products from alternative development areas? Given the strength of illicit market mechanisms, it is of crucial importance to ensure that licit market mechanisms are made as favourable as possible to produce and products from alternative development areas. The private sector has an important role to play in this regard, through opening markets to products made as part of the implementation of alternative development programmes.

## **G. Conclusion and recommendations**

47. Alternative development as conceived and practised over the past 15-20 years has, in some case, played a role in achieving a reduction of illicit cultivation of opium poppy, and, to a lesser extent, coca bush, while at the same time bearing in mind humanitarian considerations vis-à-vis the crop growers.

48. In addition, there is increasing recognition that the focus of alternative development, as it has generally been practised, needs to be broadened, paying greater attention to the needs of marginalized and neglected populations in both rural and urban areas. Governments, international organizations and the other parties concerned need to ensure that the relevant communities—not just communities growing illicit drug crops but all communities affected by the illicit drug economy—are provided with legitimate livelihoods that are both viable and sustainable in the long term. This includes programmes of economic and

social policy that will generate and promote lawful, sustainable socio-economic options for the communities and populations that have engaged in illicit drug activities, as well as measures of security created by effective, community-oriented law enforcement.

49. In order to assist Governments in meeting the goals set for 2008 in the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session, the Board recommends the following:

(a) Governments and regional bodies should make more comprehensive analyses of the dynamics of the illicit drug economy in both individual countries and regions, in order to understand the impact it has on different aspects of the local economy and to ensure that each alternative livelihood strategy is suited to the area concerned. Governments should enhance joint strategies to strengthen alternative development programmes, including by providing training, education and technical assistance, with the aim of eliminating illicit crop cultivation and fostering economic and social development;

(b) Governments, the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, should integrate alternative development into their broader development programmes. The current "project-by-project" approach to alternative development should be changed, with commitment being made towards long-term strategies for the provision of legitimate alternative livelihoods. For example, cannabis-producing countries in sub-Saharan Africa should include the issue of cannabis plant cultivation in future revisions of their poverty reduction strategies;

(c) Governments should formulate their domestic and international trade policies, in particular policies regarding access to markets for products and services from alternative development areas, with a view to helping to reduce the illicit drug economy, wherever it exists;

(d) Governments and civic bodies should increase their alertness and anticipate changes in drug abuse and drug trafficking patterns, in order to maintain a proactive stance on strategies for providing legitimate livelihoods;

(e) Governments should ensure that law enforcement activities in illicit crop cultivation areas contribute to the building of trust between the local communities and the authorities and should promote the greater involvement of communities in the formulation of policies to deal with the various aspects of the drug problem. In order to be effective, law enforcement should be considered a supportive factor in the context of overall socio-economic development. Governments should be called upon to ensure that law enforcement officials who work with communities affected by the illicit drug economy are sufficiently trained in the principles of alternative development. Illicit crop eradication programmes and programmes for the provision of legitimate alternative livelihoods must be conducted simultaneously to ensure synergy;

(f) As part of alternative development strategies, Governments should ensure that adequate public services, such as schooling, health care and basic infrastructure, are provided to local communities. In rural areas, the farming population should be assisted and protected in the areas of land security and sustainable land development;

(g) Governments should promote the greater involvement of local women and men, as well as non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society, in developing and proposing solutions to the different aspects of the drug problem affecting their daily lives;

(h) Governments and other members of the international community should consider more supportive national and/or international policy changes to help reduce the illicit drug economy wherever it may exist. This especially includes domestic and international trade policy and openness of markets to products and services from alternative development areas;

(i) Governments and other members of the international community should consider the fact that, since illicit crop production areas generally represent marginalized areas, more efforts are required to develop them. That development may be under a programme for providing alternative livelihoods or under a programme for promoting socio-economic development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals;

(j) Governments should identify population groups that are vulnerable to drug abuse wherever they may be and determine which policy and development measures would be most beneficial to them in providing legitimate livelihoods;

(k) Governments and other relevant institutions, including intergovernmental organizations, should share and disseminate their experiences with alternative development, ensuring the involvement of both local communities and academic and research institutions in that process, with a view to expanding the knowledge base of alternative development programmes;

(l) In keeping with the Board's recommendations of 2004, Governments and other members of the international community should move away from the traditional separation of "supply and demand" in terms of defining drug problems and their solutions and ensure their integration at all levels, including in the context of alternative development.