

Asian Development Bank
Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Cooperation Programme:
Workshop on Drug Eradication in the GMS

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New challenges and possible improvements in the drug eradication in the GMS have been well summarized by the introductory speech of Mr. Myo Thant. I fully subscribe to what he said. Drug production, trafficking and abuse and its connection with the HIV/AIDS socio-economic scourge, are possibly the greatest challenge faced by the GMS region in its process of peaceful and sustainable development.

The overall human security of the region is at stake. It is important to keep in mind that the leaders of the Region and the drug control managers are not alone. The international community and the United Nations system are willing to facilitate a better cooperation in sharing best practices and a coordinated well funded response to the illicit drugs threat.

In the past 30 years of presence in the GMS the UNDCP Regional Centre has gained a significant experience and has the most relevant inter-institutional memory of national and multilateral lesson learned in drug control. This is the double or the triple quantitative and qualitative know-how than in other parts of the world.

The recent ACCORD Plan of Action clearly demonstrates that with no doubt 40 governments of the Region and their friends and 15 international organizations including ADB, ASEAN, ESCAP, UNDP, Colombo Plan and many others, do know what should be done, what can be done, how the established and clearly spelled targets might be achieved on the agreed timeliness and who should do that.

The challenge is now just to do it. The substantive consensus required is not about words, what, when, how, or who. It is rather about action. The missing link is just who is going to pay for what we have already agreed to do.

At UNDCP we have two over-arching political priorities in the GMS region in order to keep the drug control system together and well focussed.

1. Building a stronger institutional capacity of governments in the drug control field.
2. Enhance multilateral cooperation partnerships and overall coordination and monitoring capacity.

We then have two operational priorities in the field of interest of this workshop.

1. Keep two major alternative development programmes running in Laos and Myanmar. There the "glass" mentioned by the ADB report is half empty in Laos and completely dry in Myanmar.
2. Boost the programmes of demand reduction building upon our excellent collection of best practices. In this area controlling the ATS epidemic and reducing HIV/AIDS vulnerability will be

major challenges. The community based dry control methodology works and we have all evidence in our latest book on best practices in Demand Reduction among highland people.

We are also very active in the field of Law Enforcement. But that area is comprised in the another branch of ADB operations and it is not on our agenda in this workshop.

I wish to add two more comments.

First, I wish to sincerely congratulate ADB for the Interim Report prepared by Dr. Mak Khan. In my twenty years experience with the UN system this is the first time that I read something on drug control written by or for a non-specialized agency or a Financial Institution which is comprehensive, technically sound, political wise, no-nonsense and output oriented. It gave me the very good news that now also International Financial Institutions can understand and focus on real people we should serve. My suggestion is that a great deal of good advice (including some criticism to the UN bodies) in the report should be followed up and not put on a shelf on a drawer.

Second, if ADB really wants to learn from the 10 years experience of IADB (the only other financial Institution successfully engaged in drug control), serious consideration should be given to embrace fully the comprehensive and intersectoral plans of the ACCORD consensus and its four pillars including also to jointly sponsor the cooperative mechanism to monitor the execution of the ACCORD Plan of Action. Special provisions for appropriate partnership between ADB and the UN system can be envisaged and/or a chance should be given to UNDCP to participate in ADB competitive biddings like other international agencies have already done.

In conclusion

ADB has been for decades the most relevant financial facilitator of the Asian Action towards "Freedom from want". You are now historically entering the new path of "Freedom from Fear" recognizing that human security, freedom from drugs, AIDS, armed violence in isolated communities is an essential condition of an enabling environment for sustainable and peaceful development. After unemployment there is nothing else more important to people and youth than to put the drugs threat under control.

It can be done, we should join our forces to do it.