

*Thinking out of the box
in our search for freedom from drugs*

**Speech by Dr Sandro Calvani
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at
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of the Memorandum of Understanding
On Drug Control
in the Greater Mekong Subregion
Beijing, China
20 – 22 May 2002**



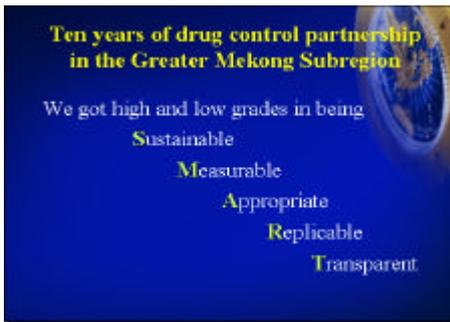


Drugs are seen as freedom boosters but they are chains for entrapment.

Amazing changes are happening in Asian life styles. Youth and younger generation of adults are unanimously and willingly participating in massive search for more freedom. No civil liberty experienced in other parts of the world appears unattainable to the new Asian generations.

Drugs are aggressively marketed as a license to personal freedom, as a bold statement of autonomy from authority.

But they are instead the worst fraud and the heaviest chain ever to entrap new slaves to the new fashion of feeling good and feeling “high” through cheap, fast and poisonous chemical fixes.



10 Years of shared vision

The vision of an enhanced subregional co-operation for drug control was first presented, discussed and initiated in 1993. We close today the ninth year of our co-operative partnership and enter our tenth year of work together.

We accomplished many results together. The rest of the world has observed and given us high grades, - sometimes lower ones-, on how much our partnership has been Sustainable, Measurable, Appropriate, Replicable and Transparent (SMART).

Delegates of the sixth partners of the Memorandum of Understanding have highlighted *some relevant features of our coming 10th birthday profile*. Our childhood, *our past story has been great*. It has been marked by the joining of all Greater Mekong Countries, the expansion of our co-operation from technical drug control agencies to some other government agencies with responsibility in drug control, from occasional co-operation in a few sectors to a regular, comprehensive and extensive co-operation in all fields of drug control.



Most importantly, before the beginning of our tenth year of partnership, we have already initiated our adulthood by moving from planning, executing and monitoring projects fully funded from outside the Region, to a new paradigm of co-operation where financial resources will also be raised from local sources. The addendum of partnership we have agreed in this meeting initiates such process.

Uncertainties caused by non-traditional security problems are more pronounced...

We have in front of us one of the most difficult challenges of the international community. The definition given by the President of the People's Republic of China is clear and inspirational :

“In today's world, the international situation has been undergoing deep changes. Peace and development remain overriding themes of our times. It has become the popular will of all countries to desire peace and stability rather than war and turmoil, and to achieve prosperity and progress rather than poverty and underdevelopment. With continued surge of world multipolarization and economic globalization, modern sciences spearheaded by IT and life science are making rapid advances. The fervent hope for lasting peace and universal prosperity of the people around the world is a powerful driving force behind our progress. Mankind's lofty cause of peace and development has held out bright prospects.

However, the unfair and inequitable old international political and economic order has not been fundamentally changed. Local wars, tensions and turbulences crop up one after another and terrorism and other non-traditional security problems have become all the more pronounced. Economic development around the world remains highly uneven. Quite a number of developing countries, in particular, are experiencing severe difficulties and the gap between the South and the North is further widening. Uncertainties in the international situation are on the rise. The lofty cause of peace and development is faced with challenges which must not be overlooked.”¹

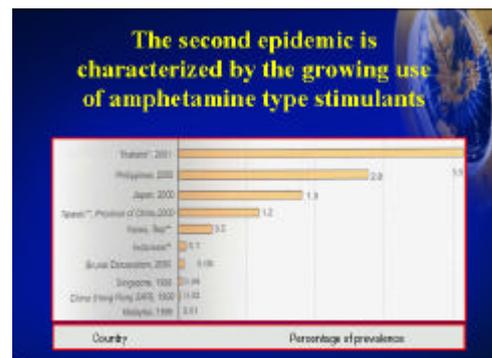
Some of these uncertainties can be easily recognized:

Two major epidemic are our most urgent concern



1. The Aids epidemic in Asia is continuing to spread. In 2001 about 2 people in Asia/Pacific became infected every minute. The growth of HIV prevalence in China and Vietnam suggest that even the worst scenario of growth of the epidemic as observed in Africa might be seen soon in our region. Common obstacles to an early response against HIV/AIDS in the Mekong Region are sense of security, stigma and denial, medical paradigm, competing priorities and limited resources.

The enormous increase of community vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection caused by injecting drug use, calls for an urgent review of national policies and for accelerated preventive action.



2. The second epidemic is characterized by the growing use of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS). ATS seizures in the GMS in 2001 have been far higher than other parts of the world. While politicians and free trade advocates

1. From President Jiang Zemin of the People's Republic of China : *Unity and Cooperation in Asia for Peace and Development in the World* at the 35th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank, Shanghai 10 May 2002.

discuss ways to better integrate all the peoples and the markets of the region in one borderless space, ATS has already reached all corners of our different societies.



To respond to these two big challenges, our common strategy is well informed by the resolution of the international community such as the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, the UNGASS Plan of Action, the ACCORD Plan of Action, as well as many well targeted strategies established jointly by UNDCP, UNAIDS, and national authorities.

However we face significant challenges at the programme level to meet the expectations inferred by the agreed strategies.

A new approach that has proved to be successful wherever it has been applied is the process of reducing the stigma attached to personal use of drugs to facilitate the access to voluntary treatment. Such approach is an essential prerequisite and component of the people participation and people empowerment in drug control policies.

My colleagues will give you later a more detailed briefing on the status of new projects which have been proposed in the area of demand reduction.

Less illicit crops are neither less dangerous nor less difficult to confront

In the recent years we have witnessed some decline of opium production both in our region as well as in Afghanistan.

The obvious challenge is now on how to continue tackling the remaining production, as well as sustaining the eradication already accomplished.

All indicators suggest that reducing the isolation of hilltribes communities, provision of credit, technical rural advice and access to markets, strengthened food security, public health and education are effective incentives of an alternative economy and life style free of illicit drugs.

In this regard, we have strived to obtain the support of the international community and of international financial institutions. We shall continue to do so with determination and without being stopped by difficulties that might become even stronger than in the past.

Predatory behaviour of organized crime is being put on check

The international press continues to present the Golden Triangle too often as a cradle of evil characters; drug producers, arms smugglers, human traffickers, unruly minorities and corrupted law enforcement.

However facts suggest that organized crime can no longer enjoy any impunity in this region, at least not more than what it may expect in other parts of the world.

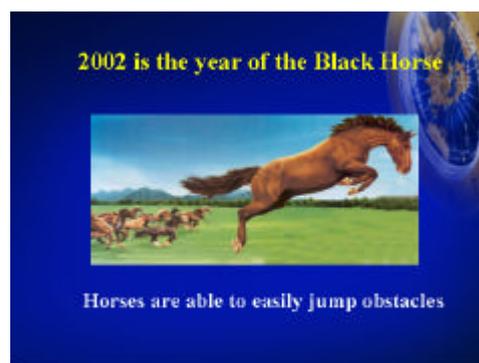
Evidence of my appraisal - of which we should be proud - has come from an independent evaluation recently

conducted on the MOU law enforcement programme. The results achieved were so impressive that the report abounds with positive comments and lesson learned. Another separate evaluation of the Computer Based Training (CBT) project, that was finalized last week, recommends the expansion of CBT to other countries of the Region and the development of a global project for the implementation of CBT in other parts of the world. “ *This is an excellent project and CBT is an ideal method of training large numbers of law enforcement officers in a variety of projects .. It has such potential that the UN should continue to develop and utilize it to the maximum*” (Assessment of Law Enforcement Projects, annex IV, pg.6).

New challenges come from the maritime trade of drugs and the use of fresh water routes. Since the Mekong River has increasingly been used for the transportation of precursors and drugs, more efforts should be devoted to control its waters and shores. In this regard, the MOU partners might consider to further activities initiated by our project on “Development of Cross Border Law Enforcement Cooperation in East Asia (D91)” and explore ways of creating effective mechanisms to combat “the dark side of free trade” in the GMS.

Law enforcement will not be ultimately successful if the other control measures such as precursor control, legislation and judicial response are not equally upgraded and adapted to the new challenges.

In this regard, the MOU partners might consider the needs in the field of Mutual Legal Assistance, training of judiciary and prosecutorial capacity, upgrading or creation of Financial Investigation Units to respond to the growing threats of Money Laundering.



2002 is the Year of the black horse.

“Horse years are notorious historical turning points. Turbulent, untamed, and a bit chaotic. Every 12 years the Horse comes around asking its pinching question : Are you awake? The Yang force is at its peak during Horse years, requiring action and change.”

The horse is traditionally seen in China as a symbol of power, strength and success. However, when I think of a horse I cannot see it as a comfort animal like a pet, or a talking one like a parrot.

The first image that comes to mind is one of a running animal, a tool to move people faster than people can do alone. More often than not, a horse is an animal capable to easily jump obstacles. The obstacles to jump in our partnership are a few and well evident to all of us.



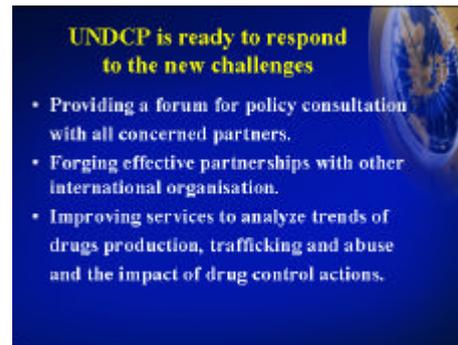
We need more mainstreaming of drug control activities. Mainstreaming means drug control outputs to be accomplished by non-drug control agencies at

international level as well as at national level. Development agencies, public health agencies, youth agencies, public information, and education agencies should become protagonists of drug control policies. Public-private collaborations in particular are essential to resolve the drug control divide between those who know and can access good practices (in primary and secondary prevention, alternative crops, effective control measures) and those who cannot.

We need a significantly more transparent kind of fabric put on the garment of our partnership. This might be made of a more comprehensive network for information sharing as is being initiated in the ACCORD framework. We should be able to motivate drug control operators and decision makers to regularly share information and good practices. Our outputs could be more measurable and more often measured and evaluated, in order to monitor the quality and the speed of our partnership. Our transparency should then be able to inform more boldly the policy making agenda of our governments and our parliaments.

In some of the partners of the MOU, available resources for drug control do not match the magnitude of the tasks and they are not even close. In this regard it is difficult to say that the situation is significantly better than ten years ago. Too little has been done to exploit our collective strength in international bodies such as the Mekong River Commission, the Asian Development Bank, the European Commission in Brussels and other International Bodies.

UNDCP is ready to respond to the new challenges of drug control



Drugs in the GMS are increasingly associated with other threats to national security such as smuggling of arms, of people and money laundering. The contribution of illicit drugs to social and economic vulnerability of affected communities is also undesirable. We are now entering a critical phase of growth of our collective effort to contain and reduce the harms caused by drug culture and drug dependent economies.

This is a critical time for

- a) accepting and implementing new paradigms that focus on primary prevention of drugs abuse where communities are protagonist of their own liberation from the entrapment of illicit drugs.
- b) recognizing that financial investments are required to avoid devastating effects on national economy and public health.

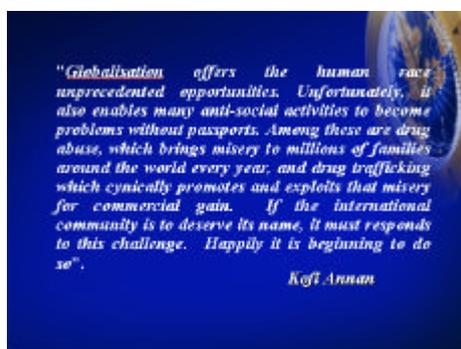
UNDCP is committed to facilitate this process of adaptive change by continuing to provide a forum for policy consultations more and more open to the civil society and the private sector.

We offer the prestige and the neutrality of the United Nations to forge effective partnerships with other international institutions including foundations, regional bodies and new socially responsible actors and stakeholders.

We shall improve our services to analyze the trends of drug production, trafficking and abuse as well as the impact of drug control actions. In doing so we shall offer a neutral and excellent information base for drug control policy makers to decide appropriate strategies.

Such analytical studies and reports will make drug control policy more transparent and credible to all interested parties.

Horses arrive, success comes.



I would like to conclude by quoting the Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan,

“Globalisation offers the human race unprecedented opportunities. Unfortunately, it also enables many anti-social activities to become problems without passports. Among these are drug abuse, which brings misery to millions of families around the world every year, and drug trafficking which cynically promotes and exploits that misery for commercial gain. If the international community is to deserve its name, it must respond to this challenge. Happily it is beginning to do so”.



In Beijing we wish to add that “horses arrive, success comes”. This is our own challenge in 2002.