
Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria
Telephone: +43-1-26060, Telefax: +43-1-26060-5867 / 5868
E-Mail: secretariat@incb.org Internet Address: <http://www.incb.org/>

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**Statement by Prof. Francisco Thoumi
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

Special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem

**21 April 2016, 14.00 – 17.00 hrs.
CR 4**

Round table 5: Alternative development; regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented balanced drug control policy; addressing socioeconomic issues.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you on behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board, at this roundtable on alternative development organized in the context of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem.

Over the years, the Board has drawn the attention of Governments to the need to integrate alternative development into national drug control master plans and national development plans within a framework of sustainable development. This refers to programmes of economic and social policy that 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. In [2005, the thematic chapter of our Annual Report¹](#) was dedicated specifically to alternative development and legitimate livelihoods.

Alternative development efforts should be seen both in the context of drug control and also as contribution to humanity's wellbeing towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development goals.

Alternative development serves the dual objective of enabling rural farmers to move into activities generating a licit income reducing their dependence on income from illicit cultivation while at the same time providing communities with services related to health, education, infrastructure, community development and food security. The attainment of these goals provides individuals and their families with the opportunity to escape from what is often a vicious cycle of poverty and illicit drug cultivation, which in many cases also entails oppression, violence and lack of access to a comprehensive range of social, health, educational and other programmes.

Alternative development and alternative livelihood measures are not simple, nor straightforward. They are not "crop substitution" programmes, but complex multidisciplinary programmes, encompassing all aspects of social and community life. They involve the planning and implementation of comprehensive socio-economic activities, the active engagement of farmers, their families, local authorities and other actors, often in remote, inaccessible and underdeveloped regions. Affected populations, often minority groups, have been marginalized. These communities have often not benefited from socio-economic development initiatives and/or the presence and protection of the State.

Successful programmes require much attention, such as: sustained political will, full participation of the beneficiaries, and systemic development efforts. The range of interventions that

¹ [E/INCB/2005/1](#).

need to be planned for includes the provision of basic infrastructure network, access to transport, health care, education and other services.

The international community needs to give alternative development its proper place in the list of priority interventions. Member States need to promote the implementation of alternative development programmes, which are well-designed, well-targeted and well-resourced. These programmes must provide the opportunity for some of the poorest or marginalized members of society to emerge from poverty with dignity and need to be sustained over time.

Let me conclude by drawing attention to some key recommendations in the field of alternative development and legitimate livelihoods.

- o Governments should integrate alternative development into their broader development programmes. It is essential that commitments towards strategies for the provision of legitimate alternative livelihoods are long-term;
- o Governments should ensure that law enforcement activities in illicit crop cultivation areas contribute to the building of trust between the local communities and the State. The authorities should promote the greater involvement of communities in the formulation of policies to deal with the various aspects of alternative development;
- o 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;
- o 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;
- o Finally, Governments should promote the greater involvement of local women and men, as well as nongovernmental organizations and other members of civil society, in developing alternative development programmes.

INCB welcomes the fact that our recommendations made in our Annual Report for 2005 have found echo in the operational recommendations to be adopted at this special session. Governments now need to move from words to decisive action.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, in closing, let me again thank you for the opportunity to contribute to our discussions today.