

# **Memorandum of Understanding**

## **Ministerial Meeting**

11 May 2000

### **OPENING REMARKS**

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**H.E. Khin Nyunt,**  
**H.E. Lt.Gen. Em Sam An,**  
**Mr. Yang Fengrui,**  
**H.E. Mr. Soubanh Srithirath,**  
**H.E. Col. Tin Hlaing,**  
**H.E.Gen. Thammarak Isarangura,**  
**H.E. Pol.Gen. Le The Tiem**

Good morning.

Let me express the most sincere thanks to the Government of Myanmar for hosting the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the MOU in Yangon this year.

We all appreciate very much the arrangements made and the generous hospitality offered to all of us.

We are confident that the meeting will result in important steps forward in our regional cooperation in the fight against drug abuse. We have been also very glad to take this opportunity to enjoy the beautiful city of Yangon and many of us are looking forward to conclude this year's Meeting with the visit to Kokang.

I wish to bring you the support and very best wishes from Mr. Arlacchi, UN Under-Secretary General and UN/ODCCP Executive Director. Mr. Arlacchi would have attended this meeting; unfortunately he has to attend the UN Commission on Crime which is being held in Vienna as we speak. He asked to me to represent him.

We have traveled a long way from Vientiane - where we held the third Ministerial Meeting two years ago - to this year's meeting in Yangon.

The past year has seen an alternation of political, economic and social changes across the region. Some have been anticipated and smooth, some completely unexpected.

From an economic prospective, after sustained and exceptional growth, East Asia is now suffering a lower growth pattern. However, while there has been some back-sliding in some important areas, also due to the impact of a general global economic slowdown, overall the direction of reform has been true: progress is being made across a range of issues. Nevertheless, we must remain careful, as we all know that economic instability combined with political uncertainty can be a powerful fertilizer for the growth of organized crime activities.

In the political arena, we have all seen the election of Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra as the new Prime Minister of Thailand and the election of Mr. Nong Duc Manh as the new party chief in Viet Nam. We are convinced that the new leadership in these two countries will continue to benefit the development and cooperation in the region. We are sure that the new leaders will recognise enhanced regional cooperation to be the key to find solutions and obtain results in the area of drug control and crime prevention. In this regard, we are also very pleased to see a continuous growth of the involvement of civil society in public affairs, which is increasingly playing a valuable role in informing public debate and in delivering of essential services in drug awareness and drug control.

While it is always nice to hear about good news, they often come with some bad news. The problem of illicit drug production, trafficking and abuse continues to represent one of the greatest share of the dark side of globalisation. In particular, the production, trafficking and abuse of ATS in this region is increasing and it represents today one of our greatest common concern. As you may recall, the UNDCP's second World Drug Report was issued at the beginning of this year. The World Drug Report warned that ATS production, trafficking and abuse has grown more strongly than that of any other drug category over the last decade. ATS has proliferated to become the key growth sector in the global drug market. Within this picture, our region is one of the most affected in the world.

To intensify dialogue towards finding common solutions, UNDCP and the Government of Japan jointly organised a Conference on ATS in East and South-East Asia, held in Tokyo in January 2000. At the conference, leaders and policy-makers of the region shared their concern over new synthetic drugs, which seriously affect the mental health of young adults. Asian Governments recognised that ATS increase social instability by causing deterioration of public order and impediment to sound economic development due to the absorption of money into illicit drug market.

ATS remained the key issue also at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held in Bangkok in July 2000. There again, ASEAN Ministers denounced their concerns about the threat posed by drug abuse and trafficking to the security and stability of the region, particularly in relation to organised crime. They identified their priority concern in the newly emerging drugs like methamphetamines and ATS, calling for common action towards common solutions.

The UN promptly responded to the call for improved regional cooperation on drug control and in October 2000 the International Congress "In pursuit of a drug-free ASEAN 2015" was held. At the Congress, ASEAN countries and China affirmed their political will and commitment to join hands against illicit drugs by adopting the ACCORD Plan of Action - ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs. The ACCORD Plan of Action represents a very strong political commitment and a substantially positive result for drug control cooperation in the region. The strategy proposed for the achievements of a drug free ASEAN and China 2015 does in fact represent a pioneer approach.

The key innovations are: regional interactive and cooperative mechanism to facilitate the execution and monitor the ACCORD Plan of Action, identified medium and long-terms objectives and measurable outputs. The ACCORD Plan of Action bears the seeds for potential great regional success in fighting drugs: however, we shall all remember that regional cooperation can work only if all the parties are committed to "make it work".

Regional cooperation is today the key to success. Drug criminals and syndicates move freely across the borders and they target weak countries, where the rule of law can be bought at discount-prices and politics work for the private interests. In this regards, some independent observers have noted that the regional drug control policies work better when "we talk the talk" than when "we walk the

walk". Let us accept some advice from the critics: we need to create a compact, strong and united front if we want to have an ace to play, especially now that the drug world is experiencing serious changes. The latest news from Bolivia and Afghanistan of a complete illicit crops elimination are certainly good news; however, they also bring the obvious risk that the problem will migrate to another angle of the world and it is very very likely that it will be our corner. Are we ready to face it?

Crime travels across borders seeking ways to enhance its illicit business opportunities by any means necessary, legal or illegal. We should not underestimate the power of these forces because they pose a great risk to the integrity and stability of public order at all levels. Every form of transnational crime represents a distinct threat to the security of the peoples: transnational crime can destabilize the political systems, the administration, the economy, the society, the security of a country and of its people.

The link between drugs-related activities and other illicit crimes have been boldly denounced by UNDCP in many different occasions. In the last occasion, we loudly told it to the world from Palermo in Sicily - the historical homeland of the Italian Mafia. From Sicily we launched important instruments to counter such threats. As you may recall, at the UN/ODCCP High-level Political Signing Conference of December 2000 the world subscribed to the new International Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its two supplementing Protocols: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. These new instruments represent ground-breaking steps in fighting organised crime activities but their implementation and their effects will not be automatic. I take this opportunity to encourage all governments here represented to make the necessary steps toward the ratification of these instruments and their national implementation. If you want to benefit from these instruments and have them to "work for you", you have to take the first step to approach them through ratification and national implementation.

While this region is acquiring an increasing important position on the world stage, it is essential to manage such entry in a collaborative and coordinated way. We all believe that the existing MOU and Sub-regional Action Plan structures have provided important political and technical frameworks for coordinating national and regional drug control efforts. However, to allow the cooperative partnerships to reach their full potentials, there is a need for a more active involvement in the management and implementation of both processes. In particular, you should become the leaders and the owners of these processes and take the necessary steps to increase the resources made available for international drug control operations and cooperation. We cannot expect that other countries of the world will continue to support the drug policies of this region indefinitely. Some of you have observed that a great part of the international community is not putting the money where its mouth talks. There is some truth in that observation; however, the international drug control operations in this region is still funded 100% from tax payers' money from outside the region. In this regard, the governments of the Greater Mekong Sub-region may wish to take the lead in shaping and actively contributing to those policies. In this regard, we believe that the Addendum on Partnership that we have presented to you at this meeting will serve the purpose of providing you with the appropriate space for your leadership.

Many events have characterised the time since we met last time. These developments once again serve to remind us that we have entered an era in which changes happen at an enormously fast speed. We need to ride at the top of the wave of change, and accept that sustained change will be an essential component of all future forms of good governance. In front of the current regional developments, we are all jointly committed to be the leaders and pioneers of the change if we want

to stir it. Failing to do so - voluntarily or not - bears the responsibility of accepting the status quo and the accountability for its consequences.

Thank you.