

Statement of the Representative of UNDCP Regional Centre for  
East Asia and the Pacific, Sandro Calvani  
International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking  
26 June 2001

Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Friends and Colleagues,

Let me start by welcoming you all to the celebrations of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The theme of this year is "Sports against Drugs" and it is encouraging to know that while we are here together, hundreds thousands of young and less-young people all around the world are also gathering in other European, American, African and Asian cities to demonstrate their belief that sports and other leisure activities can effectively end the abuse of drugs.

Drug abuse is rampant in many Asian realities. For some disillusioned, deprived, poor and disadvantaged people, using drugs may be a way to cope with pain, isolation, abuse and neglect where there are few alternatives available. For some others, it may be a way to respond to the pressure of our modern global society, which require individuals to be increasingly faster, better, more endurable, more productive. And for some, it may be the confidence that they cannot find in themselves, the ability to socialize and interact with others under the effect of an empathy that is made of plastic.

Drugs, however, cannot solve this uneasiness, this unhappiness, this pressure. Drugs are neither the answer, nor the only alternative; on the contrary, drugs are the option for losers, for those who are unable to take control over their own life and aspirations, for those who lack the guts to prove their difference, their ability to succeed, for those who have already surrendered. Today we have the chance to show that answers exist in other activities, other means, but above all in the belief for self-respect and self-improvement.

Sports can serve as a powerful tool to express and release emotions, installing values and principles, which apply for life. Through sports, team-playing, competition and the experience of victory and defeat, people can develop will-power, acquire self-confidence and respect and learn to face problems with courage and firmness.

We are today happy to present a very special example of an athlete that has learnt to win her life through sports. It is my honor to announce Ms. Tamarine Tanasugarn as the first young lady and first Asian person to have been named UN Young Sports Messenger. We are sure that Tammy's choice will represent an example and a model not only for her numerous fans but for many young people all over the world. She joins other sports stars such as Vlade Divac, Khodadad Azizi, Pedro Martinez, Courtney Walsh, Eduardo Nejera and Franz Klammer; all these athletes have decided to join hand with UNDCP and the civil society to address, prevent and stop young people from burning their lives away by making the wrong choice.

The announcement of our new UN Young Sports Messenger is only one of the highlights of today. I am also very pleased to announce the release of the new report "Global Illicit Drug Trends 2001". Every year, the report presents estimates of illicit drug production, trafficking and consumption in the world. These statistics are supplemented by a section on "analysis", which focuses on different themes every year. Last year, a chapter was devoted on ATS; this year, the broader issue of Clandestine Synthetic Drugs is addressed as a special theme, providing an overview of the synthetic

drug phenomenon, its intrinsic characteristics and some of its likely future developments. The second special theme concentrates on the Main Centres of Illicit Opium Production and tries to explain why production has reached such high levels in Afghanistan and Myanmar. Copies of the report will be available at the UNDCP Regional Centre early in July.

Finally, I am also glad to announce that we will shortly be joined by the participants to the "Traffic against Drugs" bicycle campaign which are returning from their awareness raising campaign around Thailand. This initiative marks a very significant partnership of common intent and belief between the United Nations and the civil society in raising awareness against the scourge of drugs. We have strongly welcomed his initiative and we hope that many more will follow, because it is time for civil society to become protagonist and porte-parole of its concerns and solutions. In this regard, I would also like to thank Siam Discovery Centre as well as participating sport shops at Siam Centre and Siam Discovery Centre which will contribute part of their revenues of today to support the project of the Thai Red Cross Society entitled "The Red Cross Volunteer Student Leaders in Anti-Drug Abuse.

It is now my pleasure to introduce the statement of Ms. Tamarine Tanasugarn. Even if she could not be present today, we know she is supporting our efforts today and will continue to do so in the future. From a distance of 8000 Km., we also wish her every success in her up-coming matches ... and we hope our cheers will reach her beyond the ocean!

Thank you