

**"The ADB Partnerships in Drug Eradication in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) is an effective transmission chain to link economic cooperation to drug control needs at grassroots level."**

-Statement at the Tenth Ministerial Conference on Subregional Economic Cooperation of the ADB Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Programme by Dr Sandro Calvani, UNDCP Representative, Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific, Yangon, Myanmar, 29 November 2001

Mister Chairman,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I am grateful for the opportunity to attend and address this consultation of the decision makers of the GMS economic policy. I wish also to thank the Government and the people of Myanmar of the excellent arrangements made for the conference.

In December 2000, the ADB GMS Economic Cooperation Program has launched its first ever initiative in the field of drug control. The United Nations warmly welcomes such ADB/ GMS initiative. We are happy of witnessing the first steps of such partnership in the HRD sector for three essential reasons:

First, in a globalized world which increasingly is a true global village for human resources, trade, services and finance, also the risk is growing that an invisible but threatening global pillage might plunder the benefits of more open borders on the Mekong mountains and in the Mekong river. Today the GMS region is the first producer and trafficker of opium and amphetamines in the world. It is a clear and present danger for peace, development and human security. To respond to such threat, the attention and commitment of all best institutions of mankind are required.

Second, all governments of the subregion in the Bangkok Political Declaration in October 2000, have stressed the urgent need to address the issue of drugs in a new holistic approach - an approach where economic and social response should take the lead to better prevent and protect the civil society from the scourge of illicit drugs and its devastating effect on stability and development.

Third, we are glad to report that the ADB/ GMS programme has found the right "chain of transmission" to link the big and powerful engine of the ADB finance and professional capabilities, with the tiny and isolated villages, the streets of GMS towns where amphetamines are used and reach out to grassroots needs. In the drug control business nowadays, walking the walk is more important than talking the talk. Now action is urgently needed if we wish to avoid that the Mekong become a river flooding its peoples and the world with drugs.

The UNDCP presence in the GMS is the oldest in the world in fighting drugs at field level. It is three times older than the global UN Drug Control Programme. That means that UNDCP expertise and networks in the region can deliver impressive results in short time.

The Report which has been circulated by the Secretariat on the TA REG 5970 well defines what should be done: to build national institutional capacity to control illicit drugs and to foster multilateral cooperation in drug eradication are overarching priorities.

The Regional computer based monitoring mechanism proposed by ASEAN and China under the ACCORD Plan of Action might soon prove to be a very successful tool to manage our very complex and inter-sectoral endeavors in drug eradication. UNDCP will be very glad to facilitate ADB association with such cooperative and inter-sectoral partnerships.

From the economic viewpoint, the illicit profits generated by the drugs market by production of illicit crops, by trafficking and by consuming drugs are the main bank of the dark side of globalization. Indeed it is an evil bank. It has no governing board. It often kills its customers.

From the social viewpoint freedom from fear and freedom from want are often two sides of the same coin in destitute opium producing villages as well as among high risk drug abusers.

By joining hands with the United Nations in fighting the worse manifestations of the Asian drugs market, ADB can make a big difference in the short and medium term perspectives of GMS human security

Thank you.