



Fifth Plenary Meeting

Bogotá, Colombia, November 19–21, 2006

FINAL REPORT

Working Group No. 3: Fight against Drug Trafficking

The Working Group on the Fight against Drug Trafficking met in the city of Bogotá (Colombia) on November 19 and 20, in the context of the Fifth Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA). Sessions were held at the seat of the Colombian Congress and the Colombian Senate Committee on Foreign Policy and National Defence. Delegates from eight countries of the Americas attended.

Senator Sandra Husbands from Barbados presided over the work group. The rapporteur was Mr. Felipe Ortiz, General Secretary of the Colombian Senate Committee on Foreign Policy and National Defence.

To open the session, the Chairwoman of the Working Group gave a general presentation on the topic and explained the rules to be followed during the meeting. She then turned the floor over to Mr. Sandro Calvani, an expert on the issue and a representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Mr. Calvani spoke about recent developments regarding the illicit drug problem in the Americas and referred to the 2006 world report on drugs, which shows that approximately 200 million people consumed drugs during the past year. This is an increase of 15 million over the previous year.

1. In the case of opium and heroin, planted areas dropped. In Latin America, the reduction was significant, thanks to government action in countries such as Colombia and Mexico. Shipment of these drugs to the United States also fell from 7% to 4%.
2. Areas planted in coca in Colombia have declined, but not in Peru or Bolivia. Cocaine production has remained stable, and the traffic is being combated, particularly by Colombia, which registers the greatest number of seizures.
3. Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), primarily “ecstasy,” are still being produced in Europe. Production has stabilized due to the cooperation laws. Traffic in these stimulants is being combated fiercely, and many tons have been seized. However, nearly 26 million people the world over continue to consume such stimulants.
4. Cannabis or marijuana is the most produced, trafficked and consumed drug worldwide. The global trend is toward increased use and trafficking.

Alternative development is a control strategy intended to reduce or eliminate the supply of drugs derived from illicitly grown plants.

The governments of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia have used their own resources to adopt alternative development measures, improving and creating conditions for investment in areas where illicit crops are grown.

DEBATE

The parliamentarians actively participated in debates held during the work sessions, exchanging different ideas. The following topics were addressed:

I. Legal drugs: tobacco and alcohol

Various countries have implemented restrictions on consumption of these substances, particularly tobacco use in public places and alcohol consumption by minors. It was also noted that consumption of these drugs is severely frowned on by society.

In addition, a correlation is noted between legal and illegal drug use and crime, as well as between drug consumption and HIV/AIDS.

II. Illegal drugs: cannabis, cocaine, heroin and opiates, amphetamine stimulants

At the start of this discussion, several countries indicated that more resources should be devoted to preventing drug use. This makes a great deal of sense, since the hemispheric strategy to combat drugs recognizes that demand encourages drug production and trafficking. This approach requires implementation of education programmes at the school, family, community and penal levels, as well as youth and gender-oriented programmes and for unprotected ethnic groups, among others.

1. Economics

a. Economic development in developing countries

There is a correlation between a country's economic underdevelopment and the potential for proliferation of illicit drugs. Such countries are vulnerable to corruption and to becoming transshipment points.

All of this underscores the need for international rethinking of the current economic model, since it impedes countries' economic growth. International trade must be supported. Trade agreements must be struck that promote economic development, as well as access to markets for the products of developing countries, fair prices, and fair-trade rules or standards that take into account the realities of each country.

It was suggested that the agricultural sectors in some countries have been hit hard by difficulties in exporting their products. It was requested that the model be amended, so as not to affect the agricultural sector in the developing countries of the Americas.

The group expressed a need to reinforce infrastructure in producing countries in order to prevent drug traffickers from using the agricultural sector for production purposes. It was proposed that the developed countries earmark resources to help producing countries.

It was suggested that farm subsidies in consuming countries be directed to peasant farmers in producing countries.

b. Alternative production

Alternative production is presented as a challenge rather than a solution to the total eradication of illicit crops. This means a joint continental initiative is needed to promote alternative crops in areas affected by drug trafficking.

i. Crop-substitution strategy: subsidies

An effort is needed to obtain certification, seals and labels that will facilitate access to international markets.

2. Social action and education

a. Educational programmes for young people to prevent consumption: programme agreed upon internationally in the Americas

A hemispheric commitment is requested to support the educational reforms needed to prevent drug consumption, as was explained in case of the Netherlands.

b. Mass media programmes using resources from seized goods and property

The development of programmes to redistribute seized property is a priority continent-wide as a means of funding anti-drug and social development programmes.

3. Legal and security issues

a. International court against drugs

The working group sees an inter-American court as an effective way to strengthen the inter-American war on drugs.

b. Continental legislation to combat drug trafficking

i. Legislation to combat money laundering

It was stressed that international legislation to control the flow of assets through the financial system needs to be reinforced and that more severe penalties and police action are required in this area.

ii. Legislation on interdiction

Legislative programmes to counter drug trafficking need to be reinforced by the competent bodies in each country, using either OAS instruments or those of a new body.

c. The fight against corruption

There is a strong correlation between drug trafficking and corruption. This is why corruption should be subject to greater control throughout the Americas.

d. International support for interdiction (transshipment)

The countries regarded as transit points for drug traffickers expressed a need for support from more developed countries to carry out interdiction.

- e. Judicial cooperation and information exchange to fight crime.

Conclusions

To be effective, alternative development requires that States guarantee government presence and security conditions in areas where it is implemented.

To reduce the scale of the problem and lessen its impact on the economy, countries with large areas of illicit crops must consolidate their national policies and make the changes needed to facilitate implementation of alternative programmes. These reforms must create a better climate for investment and the sale of agricultural products from regions where alternative development strategies are applied.

Alternative development programmes will not achieve their objectives without active and effective support from local and national authorities, and the international community. Consequently, these bodies must be involved in a coordinated manner to support implementation of social and economic policies that allow products from alternative-development areas to gain access to markets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopted by the FIPA Plenary Assembly on November 21, 2006

ECONOMIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Parliamentarians are urged to work actively in their own countries and on the international scene in the interest of multilateral trade agreements that seek to change the economic status quo.
2. Countries must work internally to obtain the necessary funding and resources to establish crop-substitution and job-promotion programmes. Such programmes will make it possible to reduce social inequalities.
3. To increase the likelihood of success of crop-substitution programmes and prevent recidivism, they should encompass training, food security, transport and access to markets.

SOCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

4. Considering that demand is a powerful stimulant to production, recognized by the anti-drug strategy in the hemisphere, it is recommended that educational programmes be developed at the school, family and community levels, as well as gender and ethnic oriented, and youth programmes to impart new values that prevent drug consumption.
5. It also is recommended that the mass media be careful about using images that create false icons, and that encourage violence and consumption of narcotics. The media's responsibility and active involvement in the fight against drug trafficking and the creation of conditions that prevent violence and hallucinogenic substance abuse are encouraged.

6. It is recommended that an international forum be convened to address the mass media's role in imparting values that aid the war on drugs.
7. It is recommended that parliamentarians try to reform the education system to strengthen the teaching of values and non-use of these harmful substances.
8. Parliamentarians should participate more actively in the discussion on social values and more effectively promote the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking.

LEGAL AND SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Parliamentarians should encourage countries and negotiate with them to update their laws, as well as seek alignment in such standards similar to what Latin America tried to achieve at the end of the last century. In this uniform legislation, activities such as illicit drug trafficking, money laundering, corruption and transshipment of illicit drugs should be regarded as crimes. For consumption cases, we firmly recommend the punishment be gradual.
10. Parliamentarians will promote and attempt to convene a meeting with the OAS and the UN to discuss creating an inter-American or international court against drugs, as well as an agency responsible for interdiction.
11. It is suggested that an effort be made to reinforce and increase international support for countries forced to wage war on drugs and to deal with money laundering, corruption and transshipment.
12. It is recommended that FIPA parliaments promote the United Nations plan for the fight against drugs in their countries.

Mrs. Sandra Husbands
Senator of Barbados
Chair of Working Group No.3

Mr. Felipe Ortiz
Rapporteur