

Committee: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Promoting the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development

Student Officer: Christine Savorgianaki

Position: Deputy President

Dear Delegates,

My name is Christine Savorgianaki and it is an honour to have been chosen as the Deputy President of the Economic and Social Council in the seventh session of Campion School Model United Nations conference. I will be attending the 12th grade at Dionysos High School and this will be my second time serving as a Student Officer (coincidentally on the ECOSOC committee), after having previously participated five times at MUN conferences as a delegate.

ECOSOC serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues and for formulating policy recommendations for member states and the United Nations in general. Given that the economy is one of the fundamental powers that run this world, it is easy to realise that a council such as the ECOSOC has great influence when it comes to global politics. It is important to remember that when it comes to the economy nothing is ever quite certain. Stock markets crash, crises begin and end in years or decades all while none of us actually realises the significance of the situations playing out all around us. This is partly the allure of today's economy. It's so ever-changing that things can alter drastically in the blink of an eye.

The aim of this study guide is to help you with your research and I sincerely hope that you will find this to be a good starting point for your own country-based research. Please do not hesitate to contact me at my email (xrisavor@yahoo.gr) if you feel that something has not been adequately explained or if you need more information on the topic.

At this point I'd like to express my hope that you will all come well prepared at this year's conference and as a result, that we will have a fruitful debate and a diverse yet productive discussion.

Best regards,

Christine Savorgianaki

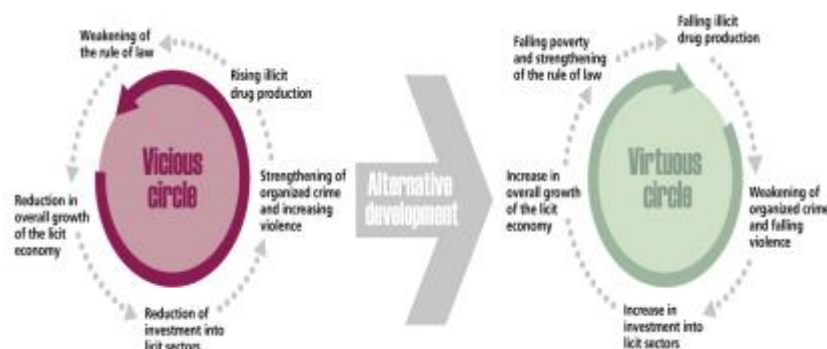
TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The world is facing a social epidemic when it comes to drugs. These substances have severe impacts on the lives of people who use them frequently. Addicts are outcasts of society and even after rehabilitation it is difficult for them to find a job, which often leads to relapses. While efforts to help the people addicted to drugs are well intended and could prove successful long-term, we ought to target the problem directly at its source. This means eliminating drug crops and drug production and it is where alternative development comes into play.

Alternative development is described as “a process to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through specifically designed rural development measures in the context of sustained development effort in countries taking action against drugs; recognizing the particular sociocultural characteristics of the target communities and groups, within the framework of a comprehensive and permanent solution to the problem of illicit drugs”¹. It is considered a form of sustainable development. Most countries utilize it as a program to substitute illicit crops but it can also be applied as a preventive measure to areas that have the potential to sustain the cultivation of illicit plants. Alternative development is mostly applied in South America (60.4% of the total funds committed to agricultural alternative development assistance over the period 1998-2013)² followed by Asia (37.6 % of the total funds committed to agricultural development assistance over the period 1998-2013)².

The aims are to effectively steer the population away from the cultivation of illicit plants and to aid them (financially) by funding other crops or activities (fishing, markets, etc.) and to weaken organized crime (e.g. drug cartels). Another positive side effect is the long-term investment of communities in reducing environmental harm and strengthening the human rights of the local population.

Alternative development is considered by many to be a very delicate and complex method of sustainable development when it comes to actually putting the plan to action. There is great risk at how the host population might react and whether or not they will accept the measures put in place by the organizers of the mission. It is important to remember that while breaking the vicious circle (as presented on the graph below) is desired by many and could prove fruitful for the communities, the farming of drug crops is very profitable and as such, a great number of people opposes the abandoning of those crops and venturing into unknown territories of licit crops and other activities.



Graph 1³: From vicious circle to virtuous circle through alternative development

¹ Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development (General Assembly resolution S-20/4 E)

² OECD, International Development Statistics online data- base (data extracted on 19 December 2014)

³"World Drug Report." *Alternative Development*. UNODC

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Alternative development

A process to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of plants that could be used in drug production through rural development measures in the context of sustained development effort in countries taking action against drugs; while bearing in mind the particular characteristics of the target communities and groups.⁴

Sustainable development

The organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ecosystem upon which the economy and society depends and effectively progressing without harming the environment that will be inherited to the next generation.⁵

Illicit crops

Plantations that are illegal to cultivate, most often because they are used in the production of narcotic drugs. In this Study Guide Illicit crops will refer to opium poppies, coca bushes and cannabis plants.

Illicit drugs

Illicit drug use includes the nonmedical use of a variety of drugs that are prohibited by international law. These drugs include: amphetamine-type stimulants, cannabis, cocaine, heroin and other opioids, and MDMA (ecstasy).⁶

Organized crime

A category of transnational, national, or local groupings of highly centralized enterprises run by criminals who intend to engage in illegal activity, most commonly for money and profit.⁷

Crop substitution

A strategy that does not mean simply destroying crops and replacing them, but also supporting a wide range of development initiatives at the same time (providing basic social services and offering rural credit, re-establishing the rule of law and sound governance) in order to offset income loss and prevent a return to, or shift in, drug production.⁸

⁴ Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development (General Assembly resolution S-20/4 E).

⁵ "Sustainable Development." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web.

⁶ Degenhardt, Louisa, and Wayne Hall. "Illicit Drug Use." *Addictive Substances*

⁷ "Organized Crime." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web.

⁸ "Crop Substitution." Glosbe. N.p., n.d. Web. June 2017.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

European Union (EU)

The European Union has always been more favourable to humanitarian and non-militant approaches and thus in the case of Alternative Development in Colombia they took an eco-friendly, humanitarian approach to counter the drug problem in the country. The EU has certain guidelines in place concerning the technical and financial aid a member state can provide the countries in need. The basis of those guidelines is for the aid to be non-discriminatory and (mostly) localized so as to be more effective in the long run and to ensure that the development of the communities in the human rights and ecological sectors as well.

United States of America

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the American organization mostly involved in Alternative Development programs. They have provided significant aid to Peru by helping them substitute the coca crops with licit crops such as cacao, coffee, banana, etc. It is worth noting that while the aforementioned organization has given a great boost to the AD program in Peru, the American mission in Colombia was immensely unsuccessful mainly due to the militant approach and the non-realistic offers that did not provide viable options for the coca farmers should they abandon the illicit crop cultivation.

China

China has played a major part in the opium crop substitution in Burma and Laos. China has shown great interest in eliminating opium production and so in these cases their strategy was to offer subsidies and tax waivers to Chinese companies who would invest and/or help with the crop substitution in the opium producing countries. The main aim was the integration of the local economy into the regional market through large investments from Chinese companies. Unfortunately, this investment program does not benefit the previously opium poppy producing farmers living in extreme poverty situations.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The UNODC is the center for all UN operations concerning drug control and everything related to that. It acts as a medium between parties interested in providing aid and the receiving states. There are currently various alternative development missions under its supervision such as Afghanistan, Laos, Myanmar, Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. The UNODC generally focuses more on the humanitarian aspect of the missions and is more interested in ensuring sustainable livelihood in the local communities (that includes basic infrastructure, education, gender equality and health)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Successful Case Studies

Peru (San Martin Model)

The San Martin Model is one of the most successful in alternative development history and due to that the UNODC has launched more projects in the state. The story behind how this program started is that after an aerial interdiction strategy in the border areas between Peru and Colombia pushed coca production greatly out of Peru and into Colombia, the Peruvian coca farmers began looking for more licit methods to provide for themselves and their families. Of course there was great need for outside assistance, as the government had neither the funds nor the experience to carry out such a large-scale operation. This assistance was provided by organizations such as the UNODC, USAID and DEVIDA mostly in the San Martin region. The farmers after conversations with the government voluntarily abandoned their illicit crops in exchange for aid in replacing the plantations with licit plants or assistance concerning education, healthcare and general infrastructure. The amount of coca being produced in San Martin fell from 22,000 hectares in 1996 to 1,725 hectares in 2010⁹.

Thailand (Doi Tung Project)

Thailand has been the most successful AD project to date and it is often used as a blueprint for any other similar project. The project started as a Royal initiative in 1969 and had the target of eliminating Opium production entirely. By 2013 the number of hectares used for Opium cultivation had been reduced to 265 hectares from 17,920 hectares in 1968 (UNODC, 2005). There were many reasons behind the success of this particular project. First of all, it was based on a long-term strategy and it was designed to fix the problem permanently. Secondly, the government and the foundation created for this purpose went to great lengths to communicate with the local population and figure out what would be the most beneficial for these people. This ensured the willingness of the people to abandon the illicit crops and move towards their elimination as they felt that their voices were being heard. Plenty of opium farmers did not have the citizenship of the state and missed out on the education and health care benefits of the Thai citizens. There was also a lack of infrastructure in the area so they were completely cut off from the Thai state and had very little choice but to grow Opium in order to survive. One of the first steps taken in this project was providing citizenship and credit in order for those people to be better integrated into the Thai society and market. By 2012, Thai citizenship had been given to 76% of the population in Doi Tung¹⁰.

⁹ UNODC, Peru - Monitoring of Coca Crops 2010, July 2011.

¹⁰ "Mae Fah Luang Foundation." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. July 2017.

Failed Case Studies

Afghanistan

The political situation and the geography of Afghanistan have made it one of the most challenging Alternative Development projects to ever be undertaken. It is important to keep in mind the fact that Afghanistan is a country that has recently come out of conflict and thus greatly relies on opium production, as it is a product that is not going out of demand. Afghanistan is one of the world's most drug exporting countries. When the efforts to eliminate drug crops began, there were limitations to the amount of aerial fumigation that could be done to reduce the crops because of the many mountainous regions of the country. There was greater focus on military victory than on poverty stricken areas and illicit plantations. Furthermore, there wasn't enough financial support to provide incentives for farmers in order for them to abandon the drug crops. Implementation had been particularly problematic due to the shortage of viable state institutions, which ultimately had impacted the sustainability of project benefits. Another factor that came into play was the fact that both of the UNODC's missions (Afghanistan Drug Control and Rural Rehabilitation Program, Afghanistan Pilot Program: Poppy Reduction Project) ended earlier than originally planned due to the lack of funding. Recently the foundation responsible for the Thailand Alternative Development program (Mae Fah Luang) launched a new project in Afghanistan and is starting to have some success¹¹.



Picture 1¹²: USA soldier in opium poppy field in Afghanistan

¹¹ "Mae Fah Luang Foundation." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. July 2017.

¹² "Drug War? American Troops Are Protecting Afghan Opium. U.S. Occupation Leads to All-Time High Heroin Production." *GlobalResearch*. N.p., n.d. Web.

Colombia

Colombia's Alternative Development program was planned and carried out extensively by the USA as a part of their Plan Colombia strategy with approximately 20% of the plan's budget going towards AD. Originally the proposal was to give the farmers \$980USD for them to stop coca cultivation in 12 months. While that might seem reasonable and a good plan at first glance, there are many faults and difficulties that the USA didn't take into consideration. Firstly, \$980USD isn't nearly enough for a family to live on for 12 months and even if it was, a great percentage of the coca farmers did not have Colombian citizenship and thus were not able to access the funds. Then there was the problem of a limited market for licit goods to be sold to and even less roads, which was an issue at its own right as the farmers couldn't take the produce to be sold in larger markets. A great part of the US plan relied on aerial fumigation, a process frequently used, but more often than not, it affected licit crops and as a result further encouraged the farmers to continue the cultivation of coca. This process shouldn't be part of a militarized security strategy as it defeats the humanitarian aspect of the mission and development process. All in all, Alternative Development in Colombia failed as most of the families who were able to access the funds returned to coca cultivation 12 months later¹³.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Events
1969	Alternative Development starts in Thailand as a Royal Initiative with the aim of stopping opium production entirely
1997	Establishment of the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime
1998	United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem provides definition of Alternative Development and ten-year Action Plan
2000	USAID develops an Alternative Development strategy as part of Plan Colombia with a budget of \$42.5USD
2007	The Peruvian government presents the "Miracle of San Martin" as the path to follow to achieve drug supply reduction
2009	Commission on Narcotic Drugs political declaration and Plan of Action for innovative strategies to support alternative development
2013	The United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative are proposed on resolution A/RES/68/196

¹³ EURAD. "Alternative Development Report." EURAD, n.d. Web

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS AND ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THIS ISSUE

[A/RES/68/196](#) United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development

[A/RES/71/210](#) Promoting the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development

[A/RES/S-20/2](#) Definition of Alternative Development from the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem 1998

[E/2006/33](#) Strengthening international cooperation for alternative development, including preventive alternative development, with due regard for environmental protection

[E/2008/26](#) Promoting sustainability and integrity in alternative development as an important part of drug control strategy in States where illicit crops are grown to produce drugs

(If you click on the underlined document number it will take you straight to the webpage)

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The solutions you shall propose are of course going to be related to and based on your country's policy but here are some more general suggestions that are quite universal for mostly every Member State:

- Looking into the details as to why the Doi Tung Model worked and see how the findings can be implemented on regions that could be candidates for Alternative Development programs.
- Rehumanize the ongoing missions in order for them to remain or to be more successful, keeping in mind how badly the missions in Colombia and Afghanistan went, in part because of constant military interventions
- Introduce a fund by the World Bank specifically for Alternative Development investments, as the World Bank currently invests in general rural development projects and not Alternative Development, which is both more complex and needs more stability which a fund would ensure.
- Increase efforts to eliminate drug use through NGOs, which will lead to elimination in demand of drugs and thus elimination in production.
- Take measures to prevent the balloon effect, which is in brief an analogy which is used to describe the way that drug production can be moved across regions and borders in response to strong drug eradication and interdiction efforts.
- Implementing the Lima Declaration.
- Taking into consideration the UN Sustainable Development Goals and how Alternative Development fits in them.
- Start research on areas where preventative AD could be used so as to combat the problem in its early stages.
- Agree that any and all future AD projects should be carried out exclusively by the UN and its agencies so as to prevent bias and any rash actions being carried out without the appropriate research regarding the end results in order to avoid the projects failing like Colombia and Afghanistan.

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