

Intervention
by
Representative of Thai Delegates
The Sixth Meeting of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary
Assembly(AIPA) Fact Finding Committee(AIFOCOM) to Combat
the Drug Menace
Le Meridien Chiang Rai Resort, Chiang Rai, Thailand
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Agenda 7: Discussion on Alternative Development in Solving the
Problem of Illicit Drug Crop Cultivation

Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Throughout the lengthy years of the effort to curb an availability of narcotic crops, especially opium poppy, in Thailand, the Royal Thai Government and their people have learned that the struggle to eradicate such narcotic crop from the Thai territory is a very strenuous work. The exertion of all social strata in the Thai society as well as international cooperation and assistance have played the key role in reducing illicit opium poppy cultivation areas from 17,920 hectares with a yield of 145 tons in 1965/1966 season to 1,103 hectares with 13.7 tons of opium in 2000/2001 and 4.5 tons of opium in 2007/2008.

People who grow opium poppy are the poor and remain poor because of the exploitation by the middlemen. As you are aware, opium plays key role in their life such as their income, medicine and social element. Poverty is the root cause of the problem. To solve the problem of the opium poppy cultivation, the alternative development has been used to create the better living of the opium poppy growers as alternative source of income. Alternative development is one measure to fight against illicit drug source.

Thailand implements the highland development projects with national budget and external budget from donor countries and international organizations. Thailand has successfully implemented the alternative development for at least 30 years. The first crop substitution and replacement programme was initiated by His Majesty

the King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1969 on the Royal Project, which has been implemented up to present. Doi Tung Development Project, that all of you had an opportunity to visit yesterday, is another great success of alternative development work in Thailand initiated by Her Royal Highness Princess Srinagarindra, the late Princess Mother of His Majesty the King in 1988. The project's objective from its inception has been to tackle the problems of opium production, environmental degradation and rural poverty in the Doi Tung area.

For the success of alternative development work, I view that people's participation and market access for the alternative development product are key factors for the sustainable alternative development. Other factors include visionary leadership, political commitment, in-country cooperation, international assistance, demand reduction and law enforcement measures. In this regard for the cooperation among AIPA member countries, I would like to propose as follows:

1. Thailand is willing to share experiences and best practice on alternative development through study visits, workshops, seminars, etc. and encourage that ASEAN member countries should pay more attention to the capacity building on sustainable alternative development (S.A.D.). ASEAN should speak in one voice to promote sustainable alternative development program to eliminate any kinds of illicit crops in ASEAN member countries. In this regard, ASEAN member countries should support the utilization of the Royal Project Foundation and Mae Fah Luang Foundation as regional centres of excellence to provide technical assistance and to promote capacity-building activities, including study visits at the Doi Tung Development Project and the Royal Projects, for interested ASEAN member countries and to share their experiences and best practice through the Doi Tung Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and the Royal Project Foundation.

2. Market is vital for the alternative development for both in-country market and external market. There are calls for the market access in every international forum for the alternative development products but the movement is quite slow since it deals with trade issue. I view that ASEAN countries should cooperate in exploring the market for the alternative development products. ASEAN member countries should promote market access for Sustainable Alternative Development products to prevent the local people from resuming illicit crop cultivation. To this end, ASEAN should consider taking possible measures including tax exemption.

3. Thailand has developed the cross-border trade scheme with neighbouring countries which will help for social and economic well-being of people living along the border, under this scheme, Thailand will become the market for agricultural products produced in neighbouring countries. According to the cross-development plan, Thailand and Lao PDR will cooperate in producing agricultural products such as soy bean, corn, peanut, garlic, cashew nut, coffee, rattan, cotton, vegetable, Eucalyptus. For Myanmar, Thailand and Myanmar will cooperate in producing corn, soy bean, fruit, rubber, castor bean, palm. So for the alternative development products, we can encourage the farmers to grow such crops that Thailand will buy. We would like other ASEAN countries to look for the possibility to be the market for the agricultural products of alternative development.

4. Non-agricultural products and non-agricultural activities should also be considered to be alternative source of income, such as handicraft, weaving products or even tourism.

5. People's participation at the grass-root level was recognized as keys to the success of sustainable alternative development. ASEAN member countries should address the root causes of the drug problem through holistic and integrated approach including promoting poverty alleviation, improving basic health, food security and livelihood as well as informal and formal education. Concrete actions should be taken to promote mutual TRUST and partnership among national government, local government and the local communities to promote sustainable alternative development in the ASEAN region.

Thank you