



## **Regional Report from ASOD on Efforts Taken in Combating the Drug Menace**

### **I. Introduction**

1. ASEAN's resolve to combat the drug menace can be traced back as early as the ASEAN Experts Group Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Drug Abuse in 1972. A further boost to combat the problem was derived from the Bali Accord 1976 signed by the Heads of Government/State of the founding Members of ASEAN which called for the intensification of cooperation among Member States as well as with the relevant international bodies in the prevention and eradication of the abuse of narcotics and the illegal drugs trafficking.

2. The adoption of the ASEAN Declaration of Principles to Combat the Abuse of Narcotics Drugs in 1976 by ASEAN Foreign Ministers proved to be a major landmark in ASEAN's efforts towards regional collaboration in drug abuse prevention and control. This declaration provided the framework for the adoption of a programme of action in the context of cooperation to combat the abuse of narcotics drugs.

3. An immediate response to the declaration was the convening of the First Meeting of ASEAN Drug Experts in Singapore in the same year, which led to the establishment of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) to take full responsibility for ASEAN cooperation in combating illicit drugs. ASOD is focusing its cooperation in five major areas: preventive education, treatment and rehabilitation, law enforcement, research, and alternative development. It also formulates strategies to enhance mutual cooperation for the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration of Principles.

4. In more recent times, ASEAN has reiterated the urgent need to act against this ever- increasing menace. ASEAN Leaders, at their 2nd Informal Summit in 1997 adopted the ASEAN Vision 2020 - a document setting out a broad vision for ASEAN in the year 2020. Among the goals forecast is the creation of a drug-free Southeast Asia and a region of agreed rules of behaviour and cooperative measures to deal with problems that can only be met on a regional scale.

5. ASEAN Foreign Ministers also signed the Joint Declaration for a Drug-Free ASEAN affirming the association's commitment to eradicate the production, processing, trafficking and use of illicit drugs in Southeast Asia by the year 2020. At the 6th ASEAN Summit in 1998, the ASEAN Leaders reiterated their calls for strengthening and promoting regional linkages among ASEAN institutional mechanisms, including those involved in fighting drug abuse and trafficking.

6. The 31<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) held in 1998 adopted a Joint Declaration for a Drug-Free ASEAN 2015, as an attempt to further implement ASEAN Leaders' Vision of a Drug-Free ASEAN by 2020.

## **II. Updated drugs situation in ASEAN region from 2005 to 2009**

7. ASEAN Member States have both politically and operationally committed to the overall achievement of a Drug – Free ASEAN 2015 and in improving the security and stability of the region by dealing effectively with the threat of illicit drugs. The level of policy-level attention that the issue of drugs has received is a testament to focus the political leaders of the region place to mobilize government efforts to deal with this joint concern.

8. At the operational and programmatic levels there is a heightened sense of need to work together and meet the goals and targets that the region has set for Supply and in Demand Reduction. In terms of trans-national cooperation, the region has moved forward in significant ways to respond to international crime syndicates with a joint and coherent response. This is evident in the Border Liaison Offices (BLO) mechanism.

9. In light of the changing nature of the drug problem there are particular areas of cooperation and intra-regional support that must be reviewed. For example: the arrangements that allow for the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (MLA) framework established by ASEAN to work optimally are complicated by national legislation. Several countries in the region have signed bilateral agreements that have shown good results – the challenge is to find operational solutions for a wider implementation of MLA.

10. In terms of identifying the progress made so far the region is far better equipped to gather information and create intelligent assessments. The establishment of data collection networks at the national level and the consolidation of a regional data collection regime have produced significant results in terms of the understanding of the size and scope of the drug problem.

11. However, while opium cultivation has been reduced significantly there remains a threat that this problem could re-emerge if enforcement is not maintained and the livelihoods of farmers are not consolidated via licit means. The re-emergence of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS) as the drug of choice for both traffickers and new users is now fully entrenched in countries that were previously transit points but do not have laboratories operating within their borders.

12. In responding to the new emerging threat of ATS and ensuring the continued progress towards a Drug-Free ASEAN 2015, ASOD will be updating its Work Plan this year, for the period of 2009-2014. The ASOD Work Plan will address all the primary thrusts for coordinated action from civic awareness, treatment and rehabilitation, law enforcement, research, and alternative development with the general paradigm for equal emphasis in demand and supply reduction.

## **II. Development of Drug-Free ASEAN 2015**

13. Despite the continued and growing challenges posed by drugs, we must recognize that ASEAN is far better prepared to respond to these threats than in 2000. There is now a clear understanding of the need to address the issue of drugs in a comprehensive way with an equal emphasis on supply reduction and its related enforcement approaches and on demand reduction and its health and education approaches. Government officials in the region from both police and public security are now sharing information with officials from Ministries of Health and Education. The fact that drug dependence is a treatable disease as recognised by all drug control agencies as evident in their strong interest for effective treatment modalities. Law enforcement is well trained and better equipped with skills to manage investigations and communicate with their counterparts in other countries.

14. According to the comprehensive study on the feasibility of achieving a Drug-Free ASEAN by 2015 which was jointly conducted by the ASEAN Secretariat and UNODC indicated that the opium-producing region in Southeast Asia (known as the Golden Triangle, comprising Northeastern Myanmar, Northern Thailand, Northern Lao PDR, Northwestern Viet Nam, and China's Yunnan Province) has seen a sharp reduction in opium poppy cultivation and opium production over the past five years. In China and Thailand, production of opium has almost been eliminated;

existing areas under poppy cultivation in Viet Nam are minimal and the country is no longer considered an opium producer.

15. Lao PDR declared itself opium free in the year 2005.

16. In Myanmar, supply reduction efforts in the last few years have resulted in a considerable decrease in the number of hectares under cultivation and a steady decline in potential production. According to the 2004 Myanmar Opium Survey, the number of hectares cultivated was 44,200, a decrease of 29 percent compared to the previous year. Likewise, production levels decreased 54%, the largest percentage drop in the past several years. The reduction in opium cultivation in Myanmar is in line with the national Action Plan to eradicate opium cultivation by the year 2014.

17. Seizures of ATS peaked in 2000, and are now seized in only moderately greater quantities than heroin and opium, despite the dramatic reduction in poppy cultivation. The number of arrests associated with ATS has peaked in several countries, while in Lao PDR and Cambodia the number of ATS arrests continue to rise. More effective patrolling of known trafficking routes has forced criminal syndicates to diversify trafficking routes and techniques, leading to increased availability of ATS in new markets. New trafficking techniques, increasing numbers of methamphetamine abusers, and stronger law enforcement efforts are reflected in the increasing number of arrestees in possession of relatively small amounts of drugs.

18. Shifting patterns of ATS manufacturing has been observed in the region, possibly in response to the strong crackdown in manufacturing in the southern provinces of China, in particular Guangdong and Fujian. Since the late 1990s, many of ASEAN Member States have faced increasing trends in the manufacture of synthetic drugs on their soils, especially the manufacture of crystallized methamphetamine and ecstasy. It

appears that international crime syndicates are driving much of the shift of manufacturing activity into the region.

19. However, in order to achieve the commitment of a *Drug – Free ASEAN 2015*, more needs to be done to intensify both supply reduction and demand reduction. For example:

- a. Establishing region-wide key capacities curriculum for law enforcement;
- b. Setting up collaborative initiatives with the customs authorities to integrate cargo-control modalities into free trade agreements and transport facilitation agreements;
- c. Assessing high-risk groups for drug use in all relevant locations and initiate focused campaigns;
- d. Scaling up treatment coverage and widen the community-based programmes for drug dependence in order to capture as many individuals as possible;
- e. Adopting science-based approaches for addressing the nexus between injective drug users (IDU) and HIV/AIDS;
- f. Seek the active participation of the private sector in order to ensure that alternative development products are marketable; and
- g. Expanding and strengthening Border Liaison Offices (BLO) as the premier method to enhance regional cooperation.

### **III. Updated ASOD Activities**

#### **III.a ASOD**

20. ASOD is well aware of the need to maintain a regional approach to addressing the drug problem. National actions are important but the multilateral approach to the cross border aspects of the problem, primarily data collection and analysis, cross-border cooperation, capacity building and training and regional frameworks for the control of precursors are best targeted through

regional and multilateral mechanisms. The enormity of the problem and the interconnectedness of the direct and indirect causes and effects of drug abuse, trafficking and production must be addressed in ways to drastically reduce the drug challenges in the region.

21. The 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) was convened on 24 to 26 August 2008 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. The Meeting was chaired by Acting Director of the Narcotics Control Bureau, Brunei Darussalam and was attended by Senior Officials on Drugs Matters from the ASEAN Member States.

22. At the Meeting, Member States acknowledged that one of the key challenges facing ASEAN is the rapid emergence of new drugs such as Ketamine, the Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS) especially methamphetamine and ecstasy, as well as the new modes of trafficking. The following general trends were observed:

- Significant reduction of opiate-based drug abuse and production, while at the same time there is a rapid emergence of the manufacture, trafficking and abuse of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS).
- In responding to this new trend, law enforcement cooperation, legal instruments, as well as rehabilitation services have been strengthened to anticipate the impact of the new emerging drug threat.
- More specifically, some Member States have raised their concern on the use of Ketamine as well as the diversion of chemicals to manufacture ATS.
- Concerns on the West African Syndicates which have been operating through the use of local women as drug mules.

23. The Meeting will continue to develop an ASOD Work Plan that will incorporate the Work Plans to be developed by the Working Groups as well as the ACCORD Plan of Action and the

SOMTC Work Programme on Illicit Drug Trafficking. A Workshop will be held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam in July 2009 in order to discuss the draft ASOD Workplan for consideration and endorsement of the forthcoming 30<sup>th</sup> ASOD in Siem Reap Cambodia.

24. The 29<sup>th</sup> ASOD Meeting decided that an ASOD + Pakistan Consultation in conjunction with the forthcoming 30<sup>th</sup> ASOD in Cambodia in 2009 would be held. However, the Meeting will decide whether to continue the consultation with Pakistan after reviewing its outcomes.

25. ASOD and India also exchanged views on the illicit flows of Ketamine from India through ASEAN region as well as drug route connecting Southeast Asia and South Asia. The Meeting also agreed to create a list of relevant contact points of ASEAN Member States and India to enable effective coordination and information sharing. The project proposal on ASEAN-India Workshop on Curbing ATS Threat has been endorsed by ASOD at the First ASOD+India Consultations in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam on 27 August 2008 and has been submitted to India for possible funding by ASEAN India Fund.

### **III.b ACCORD Mechanism**

26. Recognizing that China plays an important role in combating illicit drugs, ASEAN together with China have established the ASEAN-China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD). The ACCORD Plan of Action was initially developed to reduce the production of natural drugs such as opium and cannabis, especially in the Golden Triangle area. While the objective has been relatively achieved through drastic reduction of natural drugs production, the region is now facing increasing prevalence of production and trafficking of synthetic drugs such as amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and ecstasy. In response to this grave development, the 2<sup>nd</sup> ACCORD

Congress held in Beijing in September 2005 decided to revise the Plan of Action to adequately address the new challenges.

27. Both the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) Work Plan and ACCORD Plan of Action contain priority pillars, i.e. preventive education/civic awareness, treatment and rehabilitation, law enforcement cooperation, research (ASOD), and alternative development programme. The latter was developed to reduce illicit crop production in the region, which yielded significant result as evidenced in Lao PDR's success in achieving opium production-free in December 2005. The opium production in Myanmar was also notably reduced. These reports were confirmed by UNODC and the US' Drugs Enforcement Agency (DEA) reports.

28. ACCORD has established a Working Group on Regional Joint Actions Against ATS-Related Crime. The Working Group is a closed-door forum aimed at sharing information on activities and data of drug syndicates in the region and to follow-up on joint operations in combating illicit drugs in Southeast Asia and China. The ACCORD also conducted an ACCORD Workshop on Establishment of Mechanism to Support Joint Investigation on West African Syndicate in Southeast Asia, which was held back-to-back with the regular Working Group on Regional Joint Actions Against ATS-Related Crime. The Meetings were held in Bangkok, Thailand on 28-29 October 2008.

29. The 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ACCORD Task Force I and II was held in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam on 8-12 July 2008. The ACCORD Task Force III and IV were conducted on 17-18 July 2008 at Makati City, Philippines. The Fifth Joint Task Force Meeting held on 27 August 2008 at Bandar Seri Begawan discussed among others future direction of the ACCORD; the Meeting continued the endeavour to sustain the ACCORD through

self-reliance as UNODC's F73 project ended. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam as participating countries have contributed to the ACCORD Account and have therefore sustained two projects under the ACCORD Framework.

### **III.c Cooperation with the Plus Three Countries (China, Japan and Republic of Korea)**

30. In an effort to strengthen extra-regional cooperation in combating illicit drugs, ASEAN also forged its cooperation with the Plus Three countries namely China, Japan and Republic of Korea. In this regard, SOMTC established its Working Group on Narcotics which is one and the same ASOD Working Group. The SOMTC + 3 Working Group on Narcotics convenes its annual meetings back-to-back with the annual ASOD Meeting.

31. The 4<sup>th</sup> SOMTC + 3 Working Group was held on 29 August 2008 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. China, Japan, and ROK reiterated their support to regional cooperation in combating the drug menace as well as updating current trends of drug abuse and trafficking in East Asia. ASEAN Member States would be working closer with the Plus Three Countries to guide the prioritization of their cooperation with ASEAN.

32. Meeting also noted the progress report of the ASEAN-ROK Project on Knowledge Transfer on Narcotics Crime and endorsed Republic of Korea's proposal for the Philippines to be the project country for its final stage in 2009. The Republic of Korea also informed the Meeting that ROK will initiate another project for 2010 – 2012 to include Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and Myanmar as project countries.

## **IV. Activities in Combating Illicit Drugs (2007-2008)**

33. As approved by the 2<sup>nd</sup> SOTMC + 3 Working Group on Narcotics in August 2006, an ASEAN – ROK project on Knowledge Transfer on Narcotics Crime Transfer implemented by the Supreme Prosecutors’ Office (SPO) of the Republic Korea for a period of 3 years commencing from January 2007. The first phase of the project has been successfully implemented in Lao PDR and the second phase in Cambodia and Viet Nam. Outcomes and lessons learned from the first phase were shared with all ten Member States at the ASEAN-ROK Workshop on Knowledge on Narcotic Crime Transfer held in Seoul on 20 – 22 January 2008, while the second phase results were presented during the 4<sup>th</sup> SOMTC Working Group on Drug Matters on 29 August 2008 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. With the successful conclusion of the first phase and the second phase of the project is planned to be conducted in two other Member States for 2009-2010 namely the Philippines and Indonesia.

34. A comprehensive study on the feasibility of achieving a Drug-Free ASEAN by 2015 which was jointly conducted by the ASEAN Secretariat and UNODC. Its report was reviewed at the ASEAN Workshop on Evaluating the Report of the Study on Achieving Drug Free ASEAN 2015: Status and Recommendation, convened on 29 - 30 October 2007 in Jakarta. The outcome of the Workshop, Report on Vision, Benchmarks and Recommendations towards Achieving Drug-Free ASEAN 2015 was later presented to the 6<sup>th</sup> AMMTC.

35. At the 6<sup>th</sup> AMMTC, which was held on 8 November 2007 in Brunei Darussalam, the Ministers tasked ASOD to determine specific targets and timeline to its Work Plan and report on progress of its implementation to the next AMMTC; and agreed that in achieving a Drug Free ASEAN 2015 within the broader ASEAN Community, cross sectoral linkages among existing regional and extra-regional mechanisms need to be further strengthened and coordinated.

36. On 28 November – 7 December 2008, a Basic Training Course on Investigation in Anti-Drug Money Laundering for ASEAN Law Enforcement Officials: phase II was conducted in Singapore. The training was sponsored by Japan and conducted by CNB Singapore for over 30 police officers from all ASEAN Member States.

37. On 24 – 30 March 2008, a training workshop for Youth Leaders on Social Development and Drug Abuse Prevention was conducted in Chiang Rai and Bangkok for 50 Youth Leaders from ASEAN Member States and China on drug abuse prevention measures and strategies. The training was funded by the ACCORD Fund and implemented by ONCB of Thailand.

38. A training workshop on Centre-based Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Model for drug control officials from 11 ACCORD Member States was conducted in Ho Chi Ming City on 9 – 10 April 2008. The training was conducted by SODC of Viet Nam under funding support from ACCORD Fund.

39. The ACCORD Workshop on Establishment of Mechanism to Support Joint Investigation on West African Syndicate in Southeast Asia, was held back-to-back with the regular Working Group on Regional Joint Actions Against ATS-Related Crime. The Meetings were held in Bangkok, Thailand on 28-29 October 2008. The Workshop managed to increase regional joint actions to counter the West African Drug Syndicates under funding support from the ACCORD Fund. Japan also attended the Workshop under self-funding.

40. The ACCORD Study visit on ATS Treatment in Thailand was conducted in Bangkok and Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand on 10-13 February 2009 under funding from the ACCORD Fund. The Study visit presented the various treatment centre rehabilitation modalities for ATS treatment in Thailand.

41. ASEAN Controlled Delivery Training on Illicit Drugs will be conducted in Semarang, Indonesia on 12-19 May 2009 under funding support from the ASEAN China Cooperation Fund (ACCF).



*One ASEAN Vision*