

Remarks of Yury Fedotov, Executive Director UNODC, at the 36th Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Asia and the Pacific

Delivered by Regional Representative Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific

Bangkok, 30 October 2012

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sawaddee Khrub – and good morning.

Sound law enforcement is an essential element of successful international drug control.

This is why an annual event such as the HONLEA for Asia-Pacific – of which this is the 36th such meeting – assumes such a large degree of importance in the drug law enforcement calendar of Asia.

It is a great opportunity for the international community of drug law enforcement officers to share experiences, as well as reinforce a common **understanding** and agree on joint action on drug control.

In this region, illicit drugs continue to remain among the highest-value illicit commodities trafficked internationally.

Through UNODC's annual reports on the opiates situation in East and Southeast Asia, UNODC is keeping track of developing trends. We are also recording and acknowledging your successes.

Released in June, *The World Drug Report 2012* shows that illicit drugs remain a significant contributor to transnational organized crime in the region.

All together, illicit drugs – and in our region, particularly opiates and ATS – command the largest share of revenues. They fuel violence, corruption, conflict and addiction.

So my message today – at the opening of this important HONLEA meeting – is simple: We cannot afford to ignore the threats of drugs and crime.

Traffickers seek the paths of least resistance in order to minimize risk and maximize profit. It must, therefore, be our job to stop them.

But for us to succeed, we must improve in three areas.

First, we need to **understand the threat better**. For this, we need to improve the quality of the information we have – and to better share it.

Second, we need to enhance **our operational capacity to prevent and respond to illicit trafficking in drugs and precursor chemicals.**

We need to support professionalism among our law enforcement agencies and prosecution services.

The UNODC Regional Centre in Bangkok is currently working with many of the organizations represented at this meeting to strengthen our response to drug trafficking.

Notably, in the areas of border control and control over precursor chemicals, the UNODC computer-based training syllabus for frontline law enforcement officers has proven its effectiveness.

Other initiatives include specialist support to prosecutors in evidence-gathering.

The third area where we must encourage improvement is the delivery of **better cooperation across the region and between our respective agencies.**

This may involve regional training, professional networking, and officers learning new techniques and skills.

It may require the sharing of knowledge and training by experienced mentors. It can also involve efforts to promote better understanding between law enforcement agencies and the judiciary – including from peers in other countries.

Cooperation can develop through joint operations, or requesting assistance from a neighbour.

It will always require high professional standards from the agencies involved, efficiency in responding, and working to build trust between the services.

All three of these elements are essential given the priority which Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary-General, has given to fighting TOC – a prioritization reflected in the work of the **UN Task Force on TOC and Drug Trafficking**, which he created last year.

As I conclude, I would like to emphasize one more thing. We must approach the drug problem both globally and regionally by promoting both demand as well as supply reduction.

The main political instruments guiding the response of the international community to the world drug problem are the 2009 Political Declaration and the Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem.

In adopting the Political Declaration and Plan of Action, Member States acknowledged that the fight against drugs is a common and shared responsibility requiring an integrated and balanced approach.

Our efforts must also focus on persuading our citizens to stop consuming drugs.

We must continue to raise awareness about the dangers of drug use to health and development. We must champion evidence-based, community-based treatment.

But, in order to restrict and minimize the supply reaching our citizens, we need to focus on building cooperation and coordination.

As the custodians of the laws designed to protect the young and the vulnerable we can all play an invaluable role in turning the illicit flows of drugs into a high-risk operation for the criminals.

And while the criminals may form a network, so can we.

A network devoted to concerted cooperation and coordination at both the regional and international levels to defeat the criminals.

I wish you a successful HONLEA. Thank you.

Yury Fedotov
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