

# **UNGASS NEWS**

## ***ISSUE 5***

### **December 2008**

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Welcome to the fifth edition of the IDPC UNGASS News. This brief update is intended to provide an overview of progress on the UNGASS review process, drawing attention to significant developments and keeping our network of colleagues around the world abreast of the rapidly changing situation.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the last edition of UNGASS News, distributed at the end of October, we discussed the Annex to the Political Declaration drafted by the CND secretariat and circulated by the Chairwoman – Selma Ashipala Musavyi. This document was intended as the basis on which members states' discussions will be focussed as they negotiate the text of the Political Declaration for the High Level Meeting at CND 2009. This edition of UNGASS News describes how the negotiations are progressing, and gives a report on the recent launch of UNODC's 2008 Opium Survey.

## **THE FIRST NEGOTIATING MEETING**

This took place in Vienna on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November. Almost the entire meeting was taken up with discussions regarding the structure and status of the draft. The original draft annex, based on the outcomes of the 5 intergovernmental expert working groups that were held through the summer, followed the same structure as the action plans agreed in 1998. While this allows for some consistency over time, it runs the risk of continuing the imbalance in the 1998 documents between supply and demand reduction, and of giving insufficient attention to new challenges or learning that has emerged in the last 10 years. There were a number of proposals for alternative structures tabled and discussed at the meeting, but no consensus could be achieved, so the Chairwoman concluded that the negotiations would continue on the basis of the existing structure of the document, and that member states could request that particular paragraphs be moved to other sections of the document as the negotiations progressed. This makes it likely that the final document will maintain a structure of a short declaration of principles, followed by a number of appendices on specific subjects.

## **THE SECOND NEGOTIATING MEETING**

The second meeting convened on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, for three more days of negotiations. The Chair proceeded on the basis previously stated – there would be no further discussion on structure, but the draft text would be negotiated paragraph by paragraph, and delegations could suggest movement of paragraphs as they wished. The 3 days were thereafter taken up entirely with debates on language in the draft. In accordance with the draft, this started with the Demand Reduction section, and by the end of the meeting, had gone through that section, those on money laundering and judicial co-operation, and half of the supply reduction section. Even with the sections covered, there are many paragraphs where consensus was not achieved, so will need further discussion at future meetings. In terms of the issues that we have been most concerned with:

**COTAINMENT** – The discussion on this was inconclusive, mostly dealing with where in the document this should be addressed. There is a general intention to enter a paragraph on this into the body of the political declaration.

**HARM REDUCTION** – Still unresolved, with most countries maintaining the same positions. The EU continues to press strongly for the language and key concepts to be included.

**HUMAN RIGHTS** – There was overall agreement on the basic principle that drug control needs to be implemented in compliance with human rights obligations, but unresolved whether this should be addressed in the various sections or only mentioned in an overarching pre-ambular section.

**BALANCED APPROACH** – There were exchanges on this issue, with many delegations speaking in favour of more balance between supply and demand reduction, but some others noting concerns about watering down the 1998 commitments. Once again, no consensus language yet agreed.

**DATA COLLECTION** – The need to improve data collection in order to allow for better evidence-based policy making was confirmed in the demand reduction section, but there was difficulty in having similar wording introduced for the supply side.

**ESSENTIAL MEDICINES** – There was a disturbing unwillingness of several member states to accept that this issue was part of the CND mandate. Proposals to strengthen the wording of this paragraph could not be agreed, so it will be necessary for those promoting this issue to move quickly to present clear arguments to helpful delegations on this issue before the next meeting.

**PROPORTIONALITY** – This also hit problems, some countries arguing that the international community should not be telling individual nations what is proportionate. If there is to be any recognition of this concept in the political declaration, then careful compromise language will need to be produced for the next meeting.

**ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT** – This section was not reached in this meeting, but it is likely to be hotly debated at the next meeting.

Where disagreement was apparent and no quick compromise language could be found, paragraphs and amendments were placed between square brackets for further deliberation at the next negotiating meeting, scheduled for 10th and 11th December. The Chairwoman's original intention was to finalise the text of the annexes in that meeting, then present the first draft of the body of the political declaration on the following day. Given the number of debates on the annex paragraphs that remain unresolved, however, this timetable now seems unrealistic and the key controversial issues are sure to be debated into the new year. Dates for further negotiating meetings will most likely therefore be needed.

## **THE LAUNCH OF THE 2008 OPIUM SURVEY**

Antonio Costa, Executive Director of the UNODC, launched the publication of the 2008 Afghan Opium survey on November 24<sup>th</sup> in London. The figures in the survey represented positive news:

- The area of poppy under cultivation in Afghanistan had reduced by 19% between 2007 and 2008.
- Of 34 provinces, 18 are now considered 'poppy free' (13 in 2007).
- Average yield (amount of opium produced per hectare) was up 15%, meaning that, despite the large reduction in area under cultivation, the total potential opium production was only down by 6%.
- The numbers of households involved in the drug market was down by 28%.
- Opium now represents around one third of Afghan GDP (down from 60% in 2004).
- The potential profits from wheat cultivation have increased almost 200%, to a level almost one third of potential profits from growing opium.
- The current estimate is that 50-60% of the opium leaving Afghanistan travels through Iran, 18-35% goes through Pakistan, and 5-22% goes through Central Asia.

There was an acknowledgment that, while these were broadly positive figures, the continuing uncertainty over the accuracy of much of the data, and the fact that a one year data set does not necessarily signify a trend, means that there is no room for complacency. However, Mr Costa saw this report as an indication that the current strategy in Afghanistan was working, and should be continued.

Following the presentation of the report, Mr Costa responded to a number of questions:

- In response to a suggestion that the UN should buy the opium crop, Mr Costa stated that this option had been rejected, as it would create an incentive for growers to produce more opium, that the global market for licit opium remained underdeveloped, and that it would be impossible to stop a secondary market developing.
- It was pointed out that the level of forced eradication was significantly down. Mr Costa agreed that this was a result of the Karzai government's policy not to support forced eradication, and that most of the reduction in hectares cultivated in the past year had been achieved through voluntary eradication.

- Mr Costa was asked if the UNODC was considering conducting some form of Cost-Benefit Analysis of different policies. He indicated that there was some work in this area being considered, but that it was clear that things were greatly improved by the work of the control system.
- Mr Costa was asked for his view on the disagreement between the EU and the USA on the issue of aerial spraying. He answered that the UNODC policy is to support the policy of the host country on this issue – the Uribe government in Colombia is in favour, while the Karzai government is against. He also pointed out that aerial spraying is only likely to be effective in areas where cultivation is large scale and concentrated.
- Finally, it was pointed out that the US government figures on opium production in Afghanistan were different from those contained in this report. Mr Costa accepted that the figures were different, but emphasized that the UN figures were compiled using transparent methodologies, while it was unclear how the US figures were calculated. The important thing, however, was that the direction of change was the same.

We hope that you have found this fifth edition of UNGASS News to be both informative and helpful to your work in various parts of the world. The next issue is due to appear in the New Year, and will include feedback from the third negotiating meeting (10/11 December), and the outcome of the intersessional meeting (12<sup>th</sup> December).

THE INTERNATIONAL DRUG POLICY CONSORTIUM