

The Drugs Trade as a Development Issue: Proposals for an EU Response

■ *Andy Atkins*

Drugs is a vital issue in all EU countries. This article provides observations and suggestions for improving the effectiveness and coherence of six instruments of drug supply control which are either used, supported or contemplated by the EU and its member states in relation to developing countries. It also discusses the impact of inappropriate drug control measures on the economy of developing countries, especially among poor rural communities.

Introduction

The Irish government has declared the fight against drugs to be a priority during its Presidency of the European Union. Drugs is a hot domestic issue in Ireland and in most EU member states. But drugs is also an international issue par excellence, connecting the impoverished coca grower of Bolivia with the youth of Dublin, the Colombian drug baron with the banker in London.

It is also a development issue. The fact that the greatest part of the world's production of "natural" drugs (heroin, cocaine and marijuana) comes from developing countries is not coincidental. It is intimately linked to issues such as poverty, inequitable land distribution, conflict and unjust international trade which deny whole communities the opportunity to make a

decent living from legal means. Judging from approximate seizure figures illegal drugs exports to the EU are increasing rapidly. Heroin seizures rose from 4.6 tonnes in 1993 to 5.9 tonnes in 1994, while cocaine rose from 16.8 to 28.9 tonnes.¹

Because of their role in the drug trade, third world countries have long been a major focus for international drug control efforts led by the United States. Over the last decade, however, the European Community/Union, and its member states, have played an ever greater role, directly through their own programmes and also or via contributions to the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP).

In comparison with the US, the EU is seen by many southern governments as an enlightened and cooperative "partner" in the fight against drugs. Nevertheless, in the face of international failure to stem drug supply from the developing countries, EU policy must evolve.

The direction it takes will have important implications for developing countries and the EU alike. And not just for the success of the fight against drugs. The drugs trade has noxious consequences for developing countries just as it has for the developed world. But, as study of the Andean Region of Latin America reveals, drugs control policies may themselves have negative consequences for key components of development including democracy, human rights, economic development and the health of the environment.

The EU, in the Maastricht Treaty, committed itself to take account of its development objectives in the formulation of other policies. EU drug control policies towards developing countries should be scrutinised, therefore, not just for their effectiveness but for their coherence with the EU's development objectives.

The six drug supply control instruments used, supported or contemplated by EU member states are referred to explicitly or implicitly in the EU's framework drug control strategy (the European Union Action Plan to Combat Drugs 1995-99) approved by the European Council in mid-1995. They are:

1. Crop eradication
2. Alternative development
3. Strengthening law enforcement and the administration of justice
4. Conditioning aid to drug control performance
5. EU trade preferences
6. EU political dialogue

Of course these are not the only measures EU member states take against the drugs trade. Customs controls at EU frontiers, law enforcement and drug rehabilitation programmes within member states are among the diverse measures employed. But the six instruments discussed in this paper have the most direct impact within developing countries.

1. Crop eradication

Internationally funded drug control efforts in developing countries have long held the eradication of drug-linked crops as one of their chief aims. Towards this end, developed country donors have supported attempts to reduce the area of land planted with drug-linked crops both through programmes of voluntary crop substitution and campaigns of compulsory or forcible crop destruction. The EU and certain member states fund the UNDCP. Among its various activities in developing countries is the funding and implementation of “alternative development” programmes which seek the voluntary eradication and substitution of drug-linked crops. Certain member states (such as the UK) have also given their moral and financial support to forcible eradication campaigns carried out by the governments of developing countries. In Latin America at least, such campaigns are usually effected with the logistic support and instruction of the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Crop eradication has become so standard a tool of drug supply control that it is not even explicitly mentioned in the European Action Plan although it is implicit.

The results of eradication campaigns are mixed. In some countries, or zones within countries, it has been possible to reduce the area of drug-linked crops substantially. In others, progress has been extremely slow. But even where there has been some successes in reducing drug-linked cultivation in one zone, the net result in terms of national or regional drug production has usually been minimal. Crop reduction by eradication has been offset by new cultivation. Indeed, according to a recent UN report: “At the global level, the most optimistic assessment is that eradication efforts play at best a role of containment.”² The chief reasons are these:

- Where the local economy does not offer farmers attractive alternatives to drug-linked cultivation, many will simply replant

if their crops are eradicated, either in the same place or in remoter territory beyond the easy reach of drug control forces.

- If compulsory eradication reduces drug-linked cultivation in one area, but international demand for the final drug remains the same, the price paid to remaining producers is likely to rise. This often induces a short term increase in production from areas not affected by eradication and, in the medium term, replanting in those areas where eradication has taken place.
- The functioning of this natural law of supply and demand is often assisted by criminal traffickers. Faced with a restriction of raw material supplies from one source (whether due to crop eradication or intensified efforts to disrupt trafficking routes), traffickers respond by increasing their purchases from alternative sources and by offering incentives to induce cultivation in previously unaffected areas.
- Finally, if rural dwellers believe there is a reasonable likelihood of eradication, they may plant more than they need precisely to offset the risk of having some of their crop destroyed.

Intensified efforts, since the late 1980s, to bring about a reduction in drug-linked cultivation in the Andean region have had negligible net impact. According to US State Department figures, in 1989 there were 215,450 hectares of coca planted in the region. This fell to 206,240 hectares in 1991 but had risen to 214,800 hectares by 1995.³

The reason is that eradication has simply created a “balloon effect”: squeezing cultivation in certain areas has simply caused it to expand in others. A similar phenomenon has been demonstrated in South-East Asia where destruction of poppy crops in Thailand seems merely to have encouraged a boom in Burma. Burma is now the world’s largest opium poppy grower, with an estimated 154,070 hectares in 1995 from which it is expected to produce 2,500 tons of raw opium – enough for half the world’s heroin demand.⁴

Not only does the balloon effect erode the gains of eradication but, by spreading cultivation over a much wider area, makes it even harder to contain. It simultaneously exposes more communities to the destructive consequences of closer contact with the drug trade as well as dispersing the environmental damage done by illegal cultivation and processing activities into previously unaffected areas.

Certain methods of eradication may themselves do direct damage to human health and to the environment. Such is the case with the use of herbicides, especially when they are applied aurally. Many observers, including Church sources in Colombia, for example, report that the use of glifosate to destroy poppy and coca crops has caused ill-health among humans and damaged surrounding "innocent" vegetation, including food crops and has led to the death of livestock.

Finally, under certain circumstances, forced eradication may seriously aggravate political conflict, impeding further attempts to control the drug trade by any method. Such is the case at present in Colombia, where US pressure has led the government of President Samper to launch mass eradication campaigns in the Amazonian departments of Guaviare, Caquetá and Putuymayo. The area is largely under the control of the guerrillas of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) who have long acted as the local government – and taxed coca production accordingly. In August and September 1996 mounting hunger and desperation among communities dependent on coca production provoked massive rural protests. The guerrillas launched vicious counter attacks on the Colombian armed forces which have produced the most serious escalation of the guerrilla war in recent years. In late August, more than 50 soldiers were killed in a single guerrilla attack, according to one press report.⁵

Arising from this analysis are three suggestions for EU policy.

- In areas where drug-linked crops are grown by traffickers or direct employees, the EU should support forcible eradication only when there is an enforceable strategy compatible with human norms and which prevents a balloon effect following eradication.
- In areas where drug-linked crops are grown by poor rural producers, the EU should support voluntary eradication, in the context of negotiated agreements between farmers and third country governments and where there is a viable strategy for providing economic alternatives for the farmers.
- The EU should carefully monitor the environmental impact of drugs control efforts which it is asked to support.

Officials within the EU are aware of the futility of forcible eradication. Yet the EU has yet to take a high profile stance against it and officials in many member states still speak as if it is a solution. This may reflect ignorance and an understandable

desire to look “tough on drugs” at home and abroad. But one suspects it has much to do with a reluctance openly to disagree with the US which has stepped up pressure on Andean countries and Burma, in particular, to eradicate drug-linked crops.

2. Alternative development

The EU and various member states have supported so called alternative development in zones of drug-linked cultivation in developing countries. This support has been given both through bi-lateral aid agreements and via the UNDCP, which funds and administers alternative development programmes in countries such as Thailand, Pakistan, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Burma. The aim of such programmes, in general terms, has been to encourage the voluntary eradication of drug-linked crops through substitution by legal production. The programmes attempt to do this through providing a development package. This frequently includes the introduction not just of a range of alternative crops but of other potential sources of income such as agro-industrial installations, to add value to traditional and non-traditional crops through processing. Programmes may also include a social infrastructure component, from roads and electric power supply, to potable water supplies and health posts. These are not only directly beneficial to the inhabitants of the programme zones but are vital for the success of other components of the programmes.

The European Action Plan implicitly reaffirms the EU's commitment to alternative development, by stating the need for “the reduction of production through policies designed to promote the development of durable and productive alternative economic activities in the zones of illicit production...” It also reiterates its support for the UNDCP, a key implementor of alternative development programmes. These programmes are an enlightened response to the problem of drug-linked cultivation. This response recognises that such cultivation is frequently linked to rural poverty and the absence of viable legal sources of income, and attempts to address this “root” cause.

Yet such programmes have only limited results to date. While some, in Pakistan and the Cauca region of Colombia for example, have succeeded in sharply reducing the cultivation of drug-linked crops in the project area, even here they have not led to a reduction in the net supply of drugs from those

countries. Elsewhere, such as in Bolivia, projects have failed even to reduce illicit cultivation in the project area. A number of studies reveal common causes of failure.⁶

1. Lack of participation by the peasant farmers in the design and implementation of the programmes has led both to avoidable errors and to a lack of a sense of ownership of the programmes by the target groups.
2. Over-bureaucratization of programmes leading to a disproportionate amount of alternative development funds being spent on administration, and relatively little on concrete project items. The slow pace of project implementation has led to frustrations and loss of interest among the target groups.
3. A most unfavourable economic climate which has made it virtually impossible for legal crops to compete with illegal ones. Attempts to encourage farmers to substitute drug-linked crops with traditional commodity crops, such as coffee or cocoa, have been impeded by the continuing low or wildly fluctuating prices of many such commodities on international markets.
4. On occasion rural dwellers' produce has been rendered uncompetitive even in regional and national markets by a flood of food imports from more developed countries. This was the case in Peru, for example, following the lowering of tariffs on grain imports in 1991. Across the Andean region, for example, the implementation of other planks of structural adjustment, such as the reduction of subsidised credit and state marketing networks, has further undermined the ability of peasant farmers in isolated zones to make a living from conventional crops. The problem of external debt lies behind the structural adjustment programmes, a key objective of which is to ensure developing countries cut public expenditure and boost exports to make debt repayments.
5. There has been an over-concentration on introducing substitute crops for export and a lack of attention given to developing crops for the local or national markets for home consumption.

Where alternative development programmes have been successful in substituting drug-linked crops in the project zone, local communities may enjoy a higher quality of life and freedom from the violence and vice which often accompany linkage to

the drugs trade. But even in these cases, the projects have clearly had little impact on global supply. And not surprisingly: demand for the final drug has not dropped, so production has simply expanded elsewhere to meet that demand.

This experience has many implications for EU policy.

- The EU and the member states should, in principle, continue to support alternative development, as much as a means of providing rural communities with an opportunity to de-link from the drug trade, as to reduce drug-linked cultivation itself.
- The EU and member states should support only those programmes where legitimate representatives of the target population are integrally involved with the design and implementation of the programmes (in fulfilment of the European Parliament decision of 27 October 1994 concerning EU contributions to the UNDCP).
- The EU and member states should seek to address the adverse impact on peasant agriculture in general of low and fluctuating commodity prices.
- Through their influence in the World Bank, IMF and other international financial institutions who grant loans to assist the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, the EU and member states should seek to ameliorate the impact on the rural economy of economic restructuring in developing countries. The EU should act decisively to write off the multilateral debt of the most severely indebted countries.
- The EU and member states should consider financing studies to identify environmentally and economically sustainable models of small-scale production in zones of drug-linked cultivation. In particular it should focus on those models geared to production for the local and national (rather than export) markets.

3. Trade preferences

In 1990 the EC granted four countries of the Andean Region (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) special trade preferences under the terms of the GSP (Generalised System of Preferences),

allowing the reduction or removal of tariffs and quotas on a range of manufactured and agricultural goods imported into the EC, for four years (January 1991 – December 1994). This move was taken explicitly to encourage the production and export of legal produce from the Andean region as a means of providing alternatives to illegal drug production. Following complaints from the Central American countries, the special preferences were extended to them a year later.

The European Action Plan recommended continued support for the use of trade preferences in the fight against drug production and supply. Indeed, the EU's revised GSP for industrial goods, which came into force on 1 January 1995, again extended preferences to the Andean countries, this time including Venezuela, until 1998. Then, in June 1996, after a temporary, one-year extension of agricultural preferences, the EU extended these for another three years, until the end of June 1999.

The EC's original offer of trade preferences was a timely and important response to Andean requests. The Andean countries had complained that they were hamstrung in their efforts to remove the local economic causes of drug production – primarily widespread rural poverty – by the absence of viable alternative income generators. Low commodity prices and trade barriers erected by the developed countries were identified as partly responsible for this.

Trade preferences have provided definite benefits for the Andean countries. In turn, these may have had an indirect impact on drug production by creating jobs in commercial farming and certain manufacturing sectors, thus absorbing some of those who might otherwise have become involved in the drug trade. But preferences have had little direct impact in the zones of cultivation. The reasons are many.

- Those involved in drug-linked cultivation are small farmers. They typically lack either capital or access to credit. Financially, therefore, they are the least able to respond to enhanced export opportunities offered by the EU.
- Zones of drug-linked cultivation are usually isolated, lacking the transport and communications facilities necessary to market legal produce successfully at the national level, let alone on international markets. Thus, in geographical terms also, small farmers in these areas are the least able to take advantage of EU trade concessions.

- In the case of Bolivia and Peru, the greater part (in value) of traditional exports to the EU are primary products. These enter tariff-free in any case and, therefore, have not benefited from the trade preferences.

To improve the direct and indirect impact of trade preferences on drugs production the EU should adopt the following measures.

- Ensure that the small scale rural sector, including those cultivating drug-linked crops, receive effective assistance to enable them to take advantage of the trade preferences.
- Use other development instruments, such as aid funds, to assist this objective by, for example, funding programmes designed to improve the quality, supply and marketing of locally produced goods eligible for tariff reductions.

4. Strengthening the law and the administration of justice

Another strand of international efforts to reduce drug production in developing countries has been to promote the strengthening of local anti-drug legislation, and the more effective enforcement of the law. This is a standard method adopted when trying to reduce any illegal activity anywhere. It is entirely understandable that it should be attempted in the case of the drug trade, not just in the hope of reducing drug supply but also to eliminate the noxious effects of drug-related corruption and violence on democracy and the rule of law in developing countries. The European Action Plan reaffirms EU support for “the establishment of institutional, legal and administrative structures for the prevention and suppression of production and/or illicit trafficking...”

In practice, in the Andean region at least, strengthening the law enforcement approach has had perverse consequences. While the drug trade carries on undiminished, some of the legislation introduced to reduce it has instead restricted civil rights and encouraged human rights violations. In Latin America, regional human rights organisations such as the Andean Commission of Jurists have been protesting against this trend since President Bush launched his “War on Drugs” in 1989. More recently

international human rights organisations, such as the New York-based Human Rights Watch, have also attempted to raise the alarm by publishing two detailed reports on the situation in Bolivia.⁷ There are at least four reasons for the negative impact of drug law enforcement on human rights:

- Anti-drugs legislation has often been extremely crude, defining certain crimes imprecisely at best, and at worst explicitly criminalising a range of activities which would not be considered misdemeanours elsewhere.
- Moreover, drug control legislation has reduced both the evidence required to sentence the accused and the rights of the accused to a defence. Sentences for drug control offences, meanwhile, have been raised out of all proportion to the crime. In the Andean region, for example, certain drug control laws (such as Law 1008 of 1988 in Bolivia) constitute catch all legislation open to abuse. Given that a number of developing countries where drugs are produced have a history of political intolerance and social polarisation this is particularly dangerous.
- Legislation is often being enforced by police or military authorities notorious for their political bias, heavy-handedness and complete disregard for the norms of due process and respect for human rights. Drug control legislation has endowed these historically undemocratic forces with even more control over civic life while providing no safeguards against the abuse of that power.
- Security equipment donated by the US ostensibly for drugs control purposes, has been used in counter-insurgency campaigns. In 1990, for example, 95 percent of a \$40 million US anti-drugs package to Colombia was spent on fighting the guerrillas. In such campaigns, obviously, the military's priority is not drug control but to defeat the guerrilla forces and subjugate rural communities perceived to sympathise with them. Such conflicts already occasion severe human rights abuses. Adding more arms to the situation through the diversion of drug control assistance is likely only to fuel the conflict and increase human rights abuses.

In other situations where there is internal conflict claims to have taken a hard line on drugs must be viewed sceptically. Such is the case with the military regime of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in Burma. Although Khun Sa

surrendered control of his rebel Mong Tai army in January 1996, the deal is thought to give him army protection, allows him to run legal "laundering" enterprises such as bus companies and a guarantee against extradition to the US. In return the SLORC will take over Khun Sa's heroin business and give the regime much needed cash to fund the ongoing war with other rebel groups.⁸

All this suggests that the international community must be much more discerning about the kind of drug control legislation it supports, and more conscious of the political and social context in which it will be enforced.

Implications for the EU include:

- Before granting drug control assistance to a third country the EU and member states should seek the opinion of independent national and international human rights and judicial bodies as to the implications for human and civil rights of that country's drug control legislation.
- Member states should not offer security assistance for drug control purposes to countries where there is evidence that drug law enforcement forces are responsible for human rights abuses or corruption.
- The EU and member states should, in such circumstances, offer assistance only in the form of legal and judicial advice to improve the fairness and efficiency of the judicial system, and to tackle corruption and human rights abuses by law enforcement forces.
- The EU and member states should require and ensure that any security aid given for drug control purposes is used solely for such purposes and not, for example, for general counter-insurgency.
- The EU and member states should support the involvement of independent national human rights organisations in monitoring the use of drug control assistance.

5. Conditioning aid on drug control performance

The US has for some years made the disbursement of development aid to the Andean countries contingent on cooperation in drug control matters. The European Action Plan to Combat Drugs proposes that the EU also should consider conditioning its aid to developing countries on their drug control performance. This might appear reasonable. But the experience of US aid conditioning in the Andes exposes a number of failures and dangers.

First of all, there is no evidence that conditioning aid has led to a reduction in drug production or supply. In the case of Bolivia, US pressure on the government to attain previously determined crop eradication targets have, at times, led to an accelerated pace of crop destruction. But, for the reasons explained above, the net drop in cultivation throughout the region has been negligible.

Aid conditioning has, however, contributed indirectly to serious social instability and human rights abuses. In both 1994 and 1995, under pressure to meet eradication targets and so avoid losing US aid, the Bolivian government launched an eradication campaign in the main coca growing region of the Chapare. In so doing it violated long-standing agreements with farmers' organisations, whereby the farmers eradicate their coca voluntarily as other livelihoods are made available through alternative development programmes. The government's disregard for these negotiated agreements has caused profound fear and resentment among farmers who grow coca. This has been exacerbated by government repression of the farmers' protests which have led to several deaths and dozens of serious injuries.

Periodic farmers' protests have gained widespread popular support and, on several occasions the government has been forced to back down and return to the negotiating table, in order to preserve national stability and its own authority. In the course of these events, however, public trust in the government had been severely eroded, complicating its efforts to reach a national consensus on the issue of eradication and alternative development.

Conditioning may have a wider economic impact which is hardly likely to help defeat the drugs trade if poverty is one of its roots. Peru provides a case in point. According to one study the

conditioning of US goodwill on the signing of a drug control cooperation agreement in the early 1990s was prejudicial to that country's development.⁹ The Fujimori administration inherited a disastrous domestic economic situation and pariah status with the international financial community. Fujimori's priority was to repay Peru's debt with the international financial institutions (IFIs), in order to be eligible for new loans. In order to do so he needed the support of a donors group. The US, however, refused to join the donors group or sanction further loans to Peru through the IFIs, until Peru signed a bi-lateral drug control agreement. The Peruvian government resisted for 18 months, on the grounds that US demands prejudiced Peru's sovereignty and were unlikely to solve the drug problem. Particularly controversial was the US insistence that Peru involve its armed forces in drug control activities and accept US military training. Eventually, however, despite broad domestic opposition, the Fujimori administration felt obliged to sign a drug control agreement in order to unblock international financial assistance. But Peru's re-entry into the financial community had been delayed by more than a year over the issue of drug control.

An analysis of US aid conditioning to the Andean region suggests at least two lessons for the EU.

- The EU and member states should not condition general development aid on drug control criteria.
- The EU and member states should develop clear criteria for conditioning drug control assistance on drug control performance. Such criteria *should* include evidence that the government of the third country is taking concrete steps to tackle impediments to drug control such as corruption among government employees, particularly in the judiciary, police and military forces, and human rights violations by law enforcement bodies. The criteria *should not* include complying with eradication targets.

Happily the EU has not yet openly conditioned aid on drug control performance. It has been keen to present itself as a more equal partner with third countries than is the US, with its big-stick approach. The Clinton Administration is known to be aggrieved, however, at what it interprets as the EU's softness on drug-producing developing countries, particularly those in the US' back-yard.

6. Dialogue

Given the serious damage done by the drugs trade it is understandable that the international community wishes to encourage third countries to take action against drug-linked cultivation, drug production and trafficking. The European Action Plan suggests that this be done under the Common Foreign and Security Policy, through dialogue with the countries concerned.

Naturally, international dialogue on the drug issue is of crucial importance for the identification and pursuit of effective drug control methods. By definition, however, dialogue should be two way. The EU is much more open than the US. But there is room for improvement.

To start with, the EU could do more to put into practice the principles which have emerged from earlier dialogue. By the early 1990s, for example, there was much greater acceptance that the rich drug-consuming developed countries must take effective steps to reduce their drug demand. It was also acknowledged that the fight against money laundering is essential to the fight against drugs, and that most laundering takes place in the industrialised countries.

These ideas have been enshrined in numerous US and EU policy statements but there has been little effective action. Take demand reduction: US drug consumption rates appear to be rising again. In the EU, some kind of monitoring centre to support demand reduction campaigns was mooted in the late 1980s. In 1991 the Commission began work on setting one up. But, thanks to haggling between the member states over its size, role, budget and location, it was not until 1995 that the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) was able to open its doors in Lisbon.

A 1991 Commission directive on money laundering was a step in the right direction in this area. But it is quite inadequate and, arguably, futile while member states insist on maintaining the bank secrecy in offshore banking centres.

In addition to following up on the results of past dialogue, the EU needs to be open to discussion of new issues which have emerged. One issue is Northern attitudes towards plants such as coca and khat which have long been used for social or ritual purposes by indigenous cultures, but which the international community has either classified as a drug (in the case of coca) or is considering such a classification (in the case of khat). Both the Bolivian and Peruvian governments have, at different times,

announced plans to seek the international depenalisation of coca (a plant from which a variety of harmless and even useful products can be made, in addition to the drug cocaine).¹⁰

Another issue concerns the possible benefits of legalising drugs themselves, which would require the revision of current international conventions. The legalisation option has a growing number of adherents in Latin America. Behind this lies at least three factors: mounting frustration at the failure of increasingly repressive measures against the drug trade; concern at the negative side effects of these measures; and anger at the way the US is perceived to manipulate drugs policy for its own ends. Together they are generating a willingness, in popular and political circles, to explore any other means of limiting the damage done by the drug trade.

Whatever their misgivings about such proposals, the EU and member states would be wise to be open to discussion. To refuse even to countenance discussion (as the US has done) will simply deepen the sense of frustration in certain developing countries, that international drug control policy is being defined in the developed countries (who remain the main consumers and money launderers) without serious analysis of the lessons from the developing countries, the important cultural differences, and the serious alternative proposals being made.

Conclusions

The EU, under the Irish Presidency, has a crucial opportunity to put some of these lessons into practice. The November Council of Development Ministers meeting will decide on a Commission proposal on a budget line regulation for North-South Cooperation in the Fight Against Drugs, operational since 1989. It would do well to ensure that the Commission's proposal is amended to incorporate many of the ideas set out above, as the European Parliament has already declared it should.¹¹

Secondly, EU member states are considering a Bolivian government request for \$105 million to assist drug control, including alternative development. This is an opportunity to signal the EU's commitment to overcoming the economic roots of drug production in one of the world's poorest countries. But, to be more effective than past assistance, it must take on board many of the lessons which have emerged from various attempts to reduce drugs supply in the Andean region in the last decade.

Thirdly, achieving a greater commitment from the EU and member states to take concerted action to reduce drugs demand will be a major breakthrough. This will be good for citizens of the EU. It will also be welcomed by producer countries in the developing world. The first EMCDDA Annual Report on the State of the Drugs Problem in the EU, published in October 1996 and to be presented at a seminar in Dublin on 5-6 November, will be interesting in this regard.

Looking further ahead, the EU could play a crucial role in moving international drugs control policy on, by taking an inclusive and open-minded approach toward the next major global drugs forum – a special session of the UN General Assembly which has been called for 1998. The session, if it is not to be so much hot air, must encourage a serious evaluation of international drug control efforts over the last decade and allow for serious discussion of different strategies. That this will happen is not a foregone conclusion. The Clinton Administration has already made it clear that it feels there is nothing to discuss about current drug control conventions and strategies, except how they may be better implemented. This view is not shared by an increasingly broad spectrum of civic groups, individuals and government officials in many developing countries.¹² The EU would do itself and developing countries a favour if it encouraged hard-headed analysis and genuine dialogue in the preparation and staging of this special session.

Self-evidently, reducing the drugs trade and the damage that it does is not easy. This is partly because the drugs trade, while it causes many problems, is itself the symptom of others -whether it be conflict and dire poverty in the third world or lack of opportunity or direction in the first world. This means that the drugs trade, in North or South, cannot be tackled in isolation from other issues. Drugs policy has to be coherent with social policy, economic policy, development policy, trade policy, foreign policy etc. If it is not, one policy will undermine another.

Of course in the real world there may have to be trade offs. But perhaps the most useful thing the Irish Presidency could do on the drugs issue is to initiate a thorough, honest, evaluation of the coherence between the EU and member states' drug control policies and their various other policies. This would not only be to the EU's benefit; it would provide invaluable input for the 1998 special session. And if that helps to cut through the usual rhetoric and clarify the trade offs and policy options facing the international community, the EU's self-examination may do the world a big favour.

Footnotes

- 1 Draft report of the Group of Experts on Drugs to the Madrid European Council by the Permanent Representatives Committee, Brussels, November 1995
- 2 United Nations, "Crops from which drugs are extracted and appropriate strategies for their reduction", Report to the Secretariat, Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the Economic and Social Council, 1 March 1996, p.12
- 3 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, (INSCR), US Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 1996
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 "Colombia reels from cocaine rebel offensive", Christopher Torchia, in *The Independent*, London, 2 September 1996
- 6 See, for example, James Painter, *Bolivia and Coca: A Study in Dependency*, UN Research Institute for Social Development and UN University Studies of the Impact of the Illegal Drugs Trade, London, Lynne Rienner, 1995. Ricardo Vargas and Jackeline Barragán, "Drugs-linked crops and rural development in Colombia: an alternative action plan", London, CIIR, 1996. UN, "Crops from which drugs are extracted", op.cit.
- 7 See Human Rights Watch/Americas, "Bolivia: Human rights violations and the war on drugs", New York, July 1995 and "Bolivia under pressure: Human rights violations and coca eradication", New York, May 1996
- 8 *Geopolitical Drugs Despatch*, no.55, May 1996; no.59, September 1996, Observatoire Geopolitique des Drogues (OGD), Paris. In Burma what is needed to tackle the massive drugs trade is a return to democracy. Members of the National League of Democracy, notably Aung San Suu Kyi, are calling for trade, investment and other sanctions. The EU is at present engaged in "critical dialogue" with the SLORC.
- 9 Victor Hugo Quiñones, "Peru ajuste estructural, drogas y ayuda norteamericana: Atando cabos sueltos", in Roberto Laserna et al *Economía Política de las Drogas*, CERES- CLACSO, Cochabamba, Bolivia, 1993
- 10 For a full discussion of this complex topic see Hugo Cabieces, *Commercialising Coca: Possibilities and Proposals*, Narcotics and Development Discussion Paper no.11, CIIR, London 1996
- 11 In a resolution of 19 April 1996
- 12 See, for example, Report of the Conference: Drugs, Dependence and Interdependence, EDRC/North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, Lisbon 1996

