



UNGASS 2016: Considerations from the Peruvian experience

*by Alberto Otárola Peñaranda**

The phenomenon of illicit drugs is one of the most urgent public affairs of contemporary politics. There is practically no indifferent State to the narcotic drugs control or the prevention of its consumption. The political field on this theme is now subject of much controversy and conflicting views. Precisely, one of the central objectives of the Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS), to be held in New York in April this year, is to bring the positions closer and create a general consensus.

Despite the plurality of approaches and priorities of each country, in recent years there has been a conceptual trend, so far a minority, which sustains and diffuses two large premises: (i) the drug control policy in most countries has not worked; (ii) instead, by emphasising the security and control of supply, the drug policy has generated unwanted impacts on social life, exacerbating tensions and conflicts that detriment the Rule of Law. Therefore, it begs the question: has the international drug control policy - and the translation of this into the national scenarios - really failed?

I do not agree, in principle, with maximalist or apocalyptic premises that overlook the enormous effort of the international community against the drug problem expressed in the last decades through consensus and an appropriate legal framework embedded in the United Nations Conventions currently in force.

Peru considers that drug policies should be adopted in accordance with the reality of each country, with unconditional respect for Human Rights and in accordance with international conventions on drugs. If the reality of each country demands new approaches, these must be comprehensive, balanced and multidimensional, aligned with the United Nations fundamental values: peace, security, fundamental rights and development. Key in this conception is the integral and sustainable Alternative Development, a public policy applied in Peru since several years ago, its success highlighted by the indicators expressing its triple conception: prevention, supply control and alternative development.

Peru considers necessary to mitigate the social impact that dynamics of the illegal market pose to vulnerable populations. For this reason, Peru lays particular importance to alternative, integral and sustainable development, whose programmes are developed based on the Guiding Principles of the United Nations on Alternative Development (Lima, 2012), which are an essential part of our strategy to deal with the drug problem to the extent that it aims at eliminating factors that cause poverty, social exclusion and



environmental degradation, in order to, among others, prevent the engagement of vulnerable populations in activities related to the production and trafficking of illicit drugs.

Within the wide approach and equilibrium, we keep policy aligned with our legislation, aimed at limiting new criminal action strategies related to illicit drug trafficking, identifying and obstructing the illegal actions, as well as dismantling the national and transnational criminal organisations involved in all the illicit activities related to drug trafficking in all its extent.

In this regard, we can mention two relevant stories that illustrate the results of this approach with absolute clarity: on the one hand, the San Martin region case and, on the other, the Monzon Valley. In both cases illicit crops and networks of illicit drug trafficking coexisted. The problems of State coverage were serious. Today these illicit economies look transformed; although there are still some coca crops in both areas, these are not the protagonists. The criminal activity has virtually disappeared, and today productive chains, neighbourhood groups and producers committees are progressing in articulation with markets.

What were the relevant factors in this process? Here are three: (i) the political decision by the government to intervene and mobilize - not without resistance - a common discourse among the political actors “that crops control and alternative development are State policies”; (ii) disarticulation of major illicit drug-trafficking networks through police intelligence operatives; (iii) synergy between the State, international cooperation and rural communities, oriented at implementing productive conventions. This third component had as axis the provision of cocoa and coffee crops that today are demanded by the international trade, the endowment of infrastructure, training of neighbourhood and producers committees.

Peru looks forward to an open and tolerant discussion in UNGASS 2016, convinced that the lessons learned in many South American countries are beyond the common descriptions (“repressive approaches”, “war against drugs”), and have moved to a political paradigm of equilibrium and sustainability to face the world drug problem.

***Alberto Otárola Peñaranda** is the Executive President of the Peruvian Commission for Development and Life without Drugs – DEVIDA. Visit the official website: <http://www.devida.gob.pe/>



EU-LAC Foundation
Fundación EU-LAC

This paper was prepared for the EU-LAC Foundation's Newsletter of March 2016 on the theme "The World Drug Problem". This article gives the views of the author, and not necessarily the position of the EU-LAC Foundation. This is a translation of the responsibility of the EU-LAC Foundation; to read the original version in Spanish please follow the link: https://eulacfoundation.org/es/system/files/UNGASS_Otarola_ES.pdf