

PROSPECTIVE DRUG POLICIES

CHAIRMAN VIKTOR CHERKESOV

CHAIRMAN, FEDERAL CONTROL OF NARCOTICS OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION

Dramatic growth of drug prevalence is posing a serious threat to many states. This context makes fighting drug trafficking not a local but a comprehensive problem of social development. The drugs business has long since acquired trans-national characteristics, featuring high organisation, a stable protection of trafficking routes and an established mechanism of laundering proceeds. There is an ever more sustainable tendency among the criminal agents of the process, i.e. manufacturers, couriers and vendors, to unite into a single global network.

It is becoming clear that because of the internationalisation and globalisation of drug distribution, the epidemic of drug addiction has grown to an unacceptable and very dangerous scale. No one can fail to notice that the problem of addiction has become a deeply personal pain for many people today. Drug-related crime is seeking to penetrate economic, political and social structures of society. It harms legal economies, lowers the efficiency of social protection systems, stimulates the growth of drug trafficking and abuse, and threatens democratic values and the international community as a whole.

No single state can tackle this disaster on its own – there is a need for international solidarity and balanced, collective and simultaneous actions of the international community. It is time to somehow summarise the international understanding of the problem. Thus Russia welcomes the efforts of international organisations, including an organisation of such authority as the Beckley Foundation, as well as the efforts of individuals, to fight drug abuse.

The Russian Federation is deeply concerned with the linkage of illicit drug trafficking, finances of terrorist groups and transnational organised crime. Because of so-called transparent borders, the international drugs business establishes itself on our territory, harvesting enormous profits and leaving us thousands of sick people and problems – family, medical, social and economic.

Organised criminal groups from foreign countries engaged both in drug business and financial fraud, treat Russia as a growing market and an important transit point, as well as a reasonably safe region to launder the money. These are the reasons why the foreign drug business is expanding in Russia. Official medical statistics point out a strong growth in the involvement of a sizeable part of the Russian population, mainly the youth, in illicit consumption of drugs. Between 1991 and 2004, registered prevalence increased eleven fold. Assessments indicate even more dramatic dynamics.

Fighting drug addiction and drug business includes a sizeable complex of diverse measures, which are carried out by various state bodies and public entities. Generally we would like to see a well-adjusted, well co-ordinated system of counter-narcotic legislative, social, enforcement, economic, medical, psychotherapeutic and other measures.

It is understood in Russia that an increasingly important condition of more effective counter-narcotic operations is the deployment of a multi-level system of international cooperation as a mechanism of coordinating the efforts of everyone involved in fighting drug business and addiction. It is impossible to achieve any tangible results in this fight solely by initiatives of one or several nations. We have had fruitful developments in relationships with many international organisations, including the United Nations. Russia has become involved in the international system of countering drugs, and is prepared to oppose this threat together with the international community.

In setting up international co-operation, particular attention should be paid to measures of preventing drug aggression from the territory of Afghanistan. After the overthrow of the Taliban, the expectations and hopes of the international community for the liquidation of a hotbed of opiate and heroin production and general drug threat proved to be premature. Incidentally, intelligence analysis puts the Afghan-sourced opiates on the UK market at nearly 80%. Countering the Afghan drug threat is a priority for the Russian Federation, as Russia lies along the supply route of Afghan narcotic drugs into European countries.

The initiative of our country contributed to the framing of new international approaches to the containment of Afghan drug trafficking, and was reflected in the political declaration of the Berlin *International Counter-Narcotics Conference on Reconstruction of Afghanistan*. It confirms support for the Russian conception of creating security belts around Afghanistan to form an effective system to disrupt the production and contraband of opiates. Russia has been undertaking practical steps to implement the idea of security belts. Together with the *Collective Security Treaty Organisation*, it has been conducting international, inter-agency operations to disrupt the activity of transnational criminal drug communities on the territories of adjacent states.

It is apparent that prohibition cannot be the only method of fighting drug business and addiction. This most complicated social issue cannot be resolved without a vigorous prevention effort in conjunction with effective treatment and rehabilitation of addicts. Eradication of illicit drug trafficking is a collective task for the entire international community that should be translated into moral, legal and enforcement influences at regional, national and international levels. Illicit drugs have imposed hard tribulations upon humanity that it cannot be easily relieved from. Together we will be able to accomplish a lot more than we are able to carry out today.