

Drug trafficking, once viewed largely as a social and criminal problem, has transformed in recent years into a major threat to the health and security of people and regions. The \$61 billion annual market for Afghan opiates is funding insurgency, international terrorism and wider destabilization. In West Africa, the \$85 billion global cocaine trade is exacerbating addiction and money-laundering while fueling political instability and threats to security. Every \$1 billion of pure cocaine trafficked through West Africa earns more than ten times as much when sold on the streets in Europe.

Because the threat is so urgent, I recently established a Task Force to develop a UN system-wide strategy to coordinate and strengthen our responses to illicit drugs and organized crime by building them into all UN peacekeeping, peacebuilding, security, development and disarmament activities. In this way, the United Nations can integrate the fight against drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime into the global security and development agenda.

This year's International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is an opportunity to highlight the importance of addressing these twin threats through the rule of law and the provision of health services. Our commemoration coincides with the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

This Convention and the other major international drug control treaties do more than help us in the fight against drug trafficking; they protect vulnerable people through a wide range of activities to which States parties commit themselves, including education and prevention, treatment of drug dependence, care and rehabilitation for drug users, and social support.

These measures are critical, because drug use, at its core, is a health issue. Drug dependence is a disease, not a crime. The real criminals are the drug traffickers.

But the supply side is only half of the equation. Unless we reduce demand for illicit drugs, we can never fully tackle cultivation, production or trafficking.

Governments have a responsibility to counteract both drug trafficking and drug abuse, but communities can also make a major contribution. Families, schools, civil society and religious organizations can do their part to rid their communities of drugs. Businesses can help provide legitimate livelihoods. The media can raise awareness about the dangers of narcotics.

We can succeed if we reinforce our commitment to the basic principles of health and human rights, shared responsibility, a balanced approach to reducing supply and demand, and universal access to prevention, treatment and support. This will foster communities free of drug-related crime and violence, individuals free of drug dependence who can contribute to our common future, and a safer world for all.