Statement by Myanmar Delegation

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I wish to congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of this 40th CND Meeting. Mr. Chairman,

The measures taken by the Union of Myanmar in eradicating narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in line with the exhortations of the Global Programme of Action in both supply and demand reduction have been comprehensively presented in the country report distributed through the secretariat.

Myanmar has waged a relentless war on illicit drugs, sacrificing lives and limbs, since regaining her independence in 1948. Myanmar fully recognizes the threat of narcotic drugs and accordingly attaches full attention and high priority on drug matters, laying down consistent policies to combat this menace.

The areas where poppy is being cultivated are along the remote border areas where infrastructure is almost non-existent and means of communications are primitive. Various ethnic races of these border areas have been engaged in poppy cultivation which is their livelihood. These areas were out of reach of effective
rule of law and order as it was dominated by insurgent groups since our independence in 1948. Only in the post-1989 years, these armed groups returned to the legal fold.

They chose to abandon armed struggle and joined hands with the government in launching development programmes in these far-flung areas. Today 15 armed groups have peace agreements with the government and 1 armed group, the Shan Sa Shong Tai army, have surrendered unconditionally.

All areas where armed opposition has ceased, are now under government administration, and the rule of law and order is prevalent, which helps to expedite development.

In this context, another important point I would like to bring out is the conscientious participation of the ethnic people in the border areas. The Eastern Shan State Special Region 4 is, in 1997, "Opium Free Zone". The Wa and the Kokang ethnic groups have also drawn up annual plans to establish opium free zones in their areas. It is only natural the people will suffer economically for setting up poppy free zones, but they have made this sacrifice even though they know this is their livelihood.
In this connection, Mr. Chairman, although Myanmar has been commonly referred to as a major opium producing country in the international sphere, we have been ignored regarding assistance to eradicate this menace. The Government of Myanmar alone has been tackling this enormous challenge using her limited resources.

But the resolve to combat narcotic drugs has not diminished and on the contrast, Myanmar is fully committed to carry out this national and international duty with or without international assistance.

Mr. Chairman,

In the sphere of international cooperation, Myanmar is a party to the 1961, 1971 and 1988 UN Conventions. Myanmar has also signed bilateral agreements to control drugs with China, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam and very recently, in January 1997 with the Russian Federation. Bilateral agreement is to be signed with Laos within this month. Myanmar is also a signatory to the 6-country and UNDCP Memorandum of Understanding for drug control in the region and has been actively engaged in subregional cooperation in drug abuse control joint projects with China and Thailand with financial and technical assistance from UNDCP. During the second week of this month, responsible persons from...
Myanmar and the United States of America made a successful joint opium yield survey in Shan States where most of the poppy were grown in Myanmar.

A five-year integrated rural development programme in the Southern Wa Region, emphasizing on crop substitution is to be implemented in the very near future and we highly appreciate the initiative and guidance of UNDCP and the interest and generosity of donor countries, whose financial assistance will enable this important project to materialize.

As the Executive Director of UNDCP, Mr. Giacomelli had rightly pointed out in his opening statement, Myanmar also has embarked on an undertaking of historic proportions, and, although success is clearly possible, it will only be achieved through long-term commitment, and can be more effective if there can be more shared appreciation at all levels of the universal nature of the drug phenomenon and our responsibility to face it together.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate our commitment that Myanmar will never shy away from its responsibilities in combating the threat of narcotic drugs, the menace to mankind.