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## Centennial of the Drugs Control System

### LACK OF SECURITY MAIN OBSTACLE TO STOP OPIUM GROWING IN AFGHANISTAN, SAYS INCB

Vienna, 19 February (*United Nations Information Service*) – Despite the shrinking cultivation areas of opium poppy in Afghanistan, the country still is the source of over 90 per cent of the illicit opium in the world. The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) warned today that the lack of security is severely hampering the efforts to tackle the drug problem. In its Annual Report released today, INCB exposes the increasing danger for those involved in eradication in the country. During the harvesting season 2007/2008, 78 persons working in opium eradication lost their lives in Afghanistan, a sixfold increase over the previous season.

In 2008, the total eradicated areas accounted only for 10 per cent of the target set for that year. In spite of the poor progress in eradication, opium cultivation declined by 19 per cent. Although the total area under cultivation is decreasing, INCB notes that the drug trade is a scourge spreading nationwide and the drug abuse situation is worsening. Drug abuse is a serious concern in Afghanistan, where 1.4 per cent of the population abuses opioids. The large scale smuggling of Afghan opiates has resulted in a wide range of social ills, including organized crime, corruption and drug abuse. For example, Iran (Islamic Republic of) has, for a number of years, had the highest rate of opiate abuse in the world.

But opium cultivation is not the only problem. Cannabis cultivation has also increased as this crop has become more lucrative. INCB urges the Government of Afghanistan to give priority to stopping this alarming trend and to provide farmers with sustainable options of legitimate livelihoods.

While INCB welcomes the progress achieved by Afghanistan and the international community in preventing the diversion of acetic anhydride, the main chemical used to manufacture heroin, heroin manufacture appears to be on the rise and the diversion of chemicals continues. INCB is concerned that the control mechanisms currently in place may not be enough. In its Report, the Board recommends to the Government of Afghanistan to enhance the capacity of its national authorities to stem the diversion of chemicals.

INCB urges full implementation of Security Council resolution 1817, adopted in June 2008. That resolution calls upon all Member States, in particular those producing chemical precursors, those neighbouring Afghanistan and the countries on trafficking routes, to eliminate loopholes used by criminal organizations to divert precursor chemicals from international trade.

In its Report, INCB reiterates its call to the Government of Afghanistan to take immediate measures to address the drug problem while it continues consultations with the country. INCB has invoked article 14 of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 against Afghanistan. Article 14 is invoked only in exceptional cases of critical and continuous treaty violations. Under article 14, INCB can ultimately recommend an embargo against a country to the Economic and Social Council, if the Government fails to take corrective actions.