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Statement by Professor Hamid Ghodse, President of the International Narcotics Control Board

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Györgyi Martin ZANATHY of Hungary on her election as Chairperson of the Commission. The Board looks forward to exchanging views with you at its next session in May 2006. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the members of the Bureau. For now, I wish the Commission a fruitful session under your able leadership.

INCB Report 2005

Mme. Chairperson,

I am pleased to announce that this year's report of the Board includes for the first time, a fourth chapter that outlines key recommendations addressed to Governments, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization and other relevant international organizations. The Board has taken this initiative in the hopes that by highlighting these important recommendations in one chapter, policy-makers can more easily identify them which will facilitate their implementation. The Board has also reviewed and improved its three technical reports in order to make them more reader-friendly.

Mme. Chairperson,

As members of the Commission will recall, since 1992, the first chapter of the report has been dedicated to a topical issue, which is of particular concern to the Board. This year, the Board has chosen to examine alternative development and legitimate livelihoods. This topic is closely related to and complements the first chapter of last year's report which dealt with the interaction between supply and demand.

Alternative development, as is well known, started some 30 years ago. It was based on the premise that illegal drug crops, in particular opium poppy and coca leaf, could be substituted by legal cash crops that would provide crop growers with similar or even higher incomes. The cultivation of illegal drug crops would then become undesirable, and that in turn would reduce the supply of raw materials and ultimately reduce drug abuse.

Alternative development in the form of "crop substitution" has been applied in a number of countries including Thailand, Turkey and Peru. Earlier experiences in those countries

as well as elsewhere have shown that when alternative development is focused solely on "crop substitution", it has met with limited success and the problem of long-term sustainability of secure and legitimate livelihoods for the community remained.

In general, the Board believes that it is much more complex than initially anticipated to halt illicit cultivation of crops from which drugs are extracted and to encourage the cultivation of another substitute crop. We now know, for example, that in addition to having an economically viable and legitimate alternative to illicit cultivation, alternative development programmes can only be successful if the people who grow these crops have access to a number of other services, such as health, education and justice. Moreover, the programme must be combined with law enforcement and drug prevention activities as well as with a set of principles including full participation of the crop growers and other community-based initiatives.

Mme. Chairperson,

Alternative development is thus about providing holistic, legitimate alternatives for people whose only livelihood so far has come from the drug business. This also means that the concept of alternative development needs to be expanded still further beyond the bounds of rural communities and poppy and coca. It must also include cannabis and synthetic drugs.

It is proposed therefore, that the principles of alternative development, in its widest sense, should be applied in socially marginalized urban environments as well as in the remote rural areas where earlier efforts have been focused.

A much broader application of alternative development in both rural and urban societies will reap greater dividends than if it is practised in either of these societies alone because of the symbiotic nature of the relationship between supply and demand. Both rural farmers and socially marginalized city dwellers need and are entitled to the opportunity of a legitimate livelihood.

We should make renewed efforts to reach all of them, striving to create environments less conducive to the production and abuse of drugs.

These are not simple solutions. However, the simple truth is that there are no simple solutions in international drug control.

The chapter contains concrete recommendations to Governments, International Organizations and other concerned parties on how to ensure that the relevant communities-not just communities growing illicit drug crops but all communities affected by the illicit drug economy-are provided with legitimate livelihoods that are both viable and sustainable in the long term.

Mme. Chairperson,

The second chapter of the report deals with the normative aspects of the Board's work during 2005. In particular, the Board reviews the actions that Governments have taken to implement the provisions of the international drug control treaties, as well as any shortcomings and proposes relevant remedial actions.

Mme. Chairperson,

In addition to its work on UNGASS recommendations and the promotion of the ratification of the Conventions, the Board paid particular attention to several topics of special interest including drug control in Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina, smuggling drugs by mail, methamphetamine, supply of controlled substances in emergency situations and availability of opiates for medical purposes.

Mme. Chairperson,

For the past eighteen months, the Board has been examining the implementation by Governments of the UNGASS Action Plans, with particular reference to areas relevant to INCB's mandate. The findings of the Board will be conveyed to the Commission in due course.

Mme. Chairperson,

At this point, it is worthwhile to mention the ongoing dialogue of the Board with Governments that have not yet become state party to the conventions, including discussions that I had in July 2005 in New York with the Representatives of twelve Governments, where I urged them to become state party without delay. I am pleased that such activities have resulted in the accession to the international conventions by a number of countries, including Bhutan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Samoa.

With regard to Afghanistan, the Board noted that the Government has strengthened its drug control machinery and built up its institutional capacity. The Board also notes that measurable progress has been made in the area of law enforcement activities, resulting in significant seizures and the dismantling of illicit laboratories. The Board welcomes these positive developments that have been achieved by Afghanistan with the assistance of the international community.

However, the Board remains concerned that illicit opium production continues to be high, despite some reduction in the quantity of opium produced in 2005. The Board also remains concerned that most of the provinces where opium has been produced continue to be involved in this.

The Board calls on the Government of Afghanistan to continue its commitment to enforcing its drug control strategy and to work closely with its partners towards comprehensive programme of alternative development and legitimate livelihoods and the elimination of illicit opium production in the country.

Mme. Chairperson,

As the Board is concerned about continued drug trafficking from the Balkan route, in August 2005, the Secretary of the Board and I met with the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina. All parties agreed that the adoption of comprehensive legislation on drug control should be a priority of the Government. I am pleased to announce that both houses of the Parliament approved a drug control bill late last year (end of November), which has been promulgated in February 2006. The Board hopes that the international community, in particular, the European Union, will provide appropriate assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina to fight drug abuse and trafficking more effectively.

Mme. Chairperson,

The Board also conducted several country missions during 2005 to review the drug control situation in various countries and Governments' compliance with the Conventions. A summary of the findings and recommendations of the missions can be found in the report.

Mme. Chairperson,

Another major issue that is taken up in the second chapter is the smuggling of drugs by mail. Almost all regions in the world have experienced an increase in smuggling of drugs by mail and several Governments have reported large seizures. For instance, in the United States, where 200 billion pieces of mail are handled every year according to the Government's report, there are indications that traffickers are increasingly attempting to smuggle narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors through the mail. In 2004, Thailand reported a seizure of half a million diazepam tablets and capsules in twelve different cases. The main destinations for the consignments were Western Europe and North America.

The large quantities involved indicate that traffickers are intending to distribute them to the illicit market. Illicit drugs such as cocaine and heroin, pharmaceuticals containing internationally controlled substances, as well as MDMA are being shipped in the mail system. Illegally operating Internet pharmacies often act as the supplier and dealer for such shipments.

To counter this problem, the Board recommends that Governments ensure that regular and thorough searches of incoming and outgoing mail for illicit drug consignments are conducted. Experience has shown that limiting the number of entry points for parcels can facilitate the control of such consignments. As in all counter-trafficking activities, national and international cooperation is essential for them to be successful.

Mme. Chairperson,

The second chapter also highlights the alarming issues surrounding the abuse and illicit manufacture of methamphetamine, which represent a global menace. These issues are taken up in more detail in the second report of the Board.

Mme. Chairperson,

With regard to the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes, immediately following the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the earthquake in South Asia, the Board and its secretariat expeditiously granted requests for additional supplies of narcotic drugs to be shipped to the affected countries. The Board contacted the Governments of major exporting countries and advised them of the simplified export-import control procedures in emergency situations, in accordance with the model guidelines for such situations, which were developed jointly by WHO and the Board.

Concerning the broader issue of supply and demand for opiates for medical purposes and in response to ECOSOC resolution 2005/25, the Board together with WHO is finalizing a feasibility study that will make recommendations regarding possible assistance mechanisms to facilitate the adequate treatment of pain using opioid analgesics. We have distributed to all delegations a joint interim report outlining the activities undertaken so far, as well as those planned for the future. The study will be available in early April.

Mme. Chairperson,

The third chapter of the report presents the Board's views of the drug control situation in different regions of the world from information and data obtained from various sources, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, international and intergovernmental organizations with drug control mandates, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Interpol, the World Customs Organization, Board missions and reports submitted by Governments.

Mme. Chairperson,

Although it is our aim to produce a balanced and comprehensive report, it is not always possible to reflect every important event that has occurred during the period covered. In addition, the cut-off date for all information for the annual report is 1 November of the respective year. Therefore, significant developments that occur between that date and the end of the year are included in the report for the following year.

Mme. Chairperson,

I would like to end the first part of my statement with our new chapter on recommendations. This chapter includes 56 recommendations, half of which are addressed to Governments. They cover topics such as treaty adherence, treaty

implementation and control measures, prevention of diversion and abuse, availability and rational use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical treatment and the Internet and smuggling by mail.

Report of the INCB on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention

Mme. Chairperson,

Now I would like to turn to the Board's "second" annual report, the report on precursors, which now includes specific recommendations to Governments on measures to be taken against the diversion of and trafficking in precursor chemicals and the illicit manufacture of drugs.

A prerequisite for successful precursor control is an adequate legislative basis. During the period under review, many Governments introduced, or further strengthened, their existing controls. The Board is especially pleased with the entry into force of new European Union legislation that improves the monitoring of exports and introduces import controls. With the accession of Switzerland to the 1988 Convention, all major manufacturing, exporting and importing countries are now parties to it.

The abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), particularly methamphetamine is increasingly becoming a global problem. Countries in North America (USA and Canada), East and South-East Asia and Africa (South Africa) have reported a significant increase in abuse of methamphetamine.

Illicit manufacture is no longer restricted to North America and South-East Asia. It is spreading to other areas such as Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Oceania. For example, during 2004, South Africa dismantled 28 illicit laboratories, and in 2005, the authorities of New Zealand seized millions of tablets containing precursors that were being smuggled into the country.

During 2005, the Board monitored 2,200 shipments in international trade and was able to assist Governments in successfully preventing 46 attempted diversions involving 91 tonnes of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine and making 14 seizures totalling 1.5 tonnes of those substances.

Traffickers continue to attempt to divert the raw material from licit manufacturers. However, as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are under stringent international monitoring, traffickers are increasingly placing orders through third countries. For example, recent diversion attempts that were successfully prevented include multi-ton shipments to countries in Africa (Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Mozambique) and Latin America (Belize, Paraguay).

A worrying trend is the use of finished pharmaceutical preparations containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine. As such preparations are exempted from control under the 1988 Convention, they are not controlled in most countries in the same manner as the raw material. More recently, the Board uncovered attempts to divert ephedra, the plant material from which ephedrine can be obtained.

The Board recommends to all Governments to estimate their licit requirements for ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, to control pharmaceutical preparations containing those substances in the same way as the chemicals themselves and to provide pre-export notifications for the two substances and their preparations despite our limited resources. The Board is happy to assist Governments in developing and implementing such an estimate system for these precursors.

However, as the CND recalls, we have an ongoing need for additional resources to enable the Board to more effectively carry out various activities in precursor control. These activities have been acknowledged and approved by the Commission for the past few years, but so far, no appropriate resources have been provided.

The Board remains equally concerned about the illicit manufacture of cocaine and heroin. During 2004, 170 tons of potassium permanganate was seized in the Americas, which marks a record high. In contrast, hardly any seizures of acetic anhydride were reported by Afghanistan or the countries bordering it. However, the illicit manufacture of heroin in Afghanistan continues, made possible by the availability of acetic anhydride within the country. The Board therefore calls upon Governments to take additional measures to identify and intercept consignments of acetic anhydride that are being smuggled into Afghanistan.

While Operations Purple and Topaz provided mechanisms to address the diversion of chemicals, both operations have been running for an extended period of time and traffickers appear to have adjusted their activities to counter monitoring activities. The Board therefore welcomes the decision taken at the combined meeting of the steering committees to merge the two operations into a single activity, called Project Cohesion, which provides for the exchange of real-time information, backtracking investigations and regular evaluation of activities.

The Board will continue to serve as the international focal point for the exchange of information under Projects Prism and Cohesion and stands ready to assist with activities within the scope of its treaty mandates.

Mme. Chairperson,

The system of pre-export notifications for shipments of chemicals is the backbone of the international monitoring regime and continues to function. It is also expanding: More and more countries, among them the world's major exporting nations, are now routinely providing such pre-export notifications.

The Board has developed, with the support of UNODC, a new online electronic system that makes full use of modern communication technology. That system is Internet-based and is available, upon request and free of charge, to all competent national authorities. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all Governments that have not yet done so to make use of this new tool as soon as possible. All delegates are invited to a presentation on the new system on Thursday, 16 March 2006.

Mme. Chairperson,

In conclusion, as always, the Board is prepared to assist Governments in their drug control efforts. We look forward to working together closely with you this year.

I thank you for your attention.