

**51th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

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**Statement by Dr. Philip O. Emafo,  
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**AGENDA ITEM 6 B: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Eugenio Maria Curia of Argentina for his election as Chairman of this very important 51st session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and through him all the other members of the bureau. May I also thank especially my old friend Ambassador Hans Lundborg of Sweden for his outstanding performance as Chairman of the Commission in the previous year. Mr. Chairman, the Board looks forward to working closely with you.

Mr. Chairman,

As has been the practice of the Board in the recent past, the annual report is divided into four chapters. The first chapter attempts to explore the principle of punishment being proportional to the seriousness of the drug-related offence committed. The second chapter discusses the operation of the international drug control system and the cooperation the Board enjoys from Governments. The third chapter attempts to highlight the world drug problem from a regional perspective while the fourth chapter summarizes recommendations the Board has addressed to Governments, the United Nations systems and other relevant intergovernmental organizations.

The first chapter of the report recognizes that Parties are required by the 1988 Convention to establish as criminal offences under their domestic law, a wide range of drug-related activities. The conventions also require parties to respond proportionately to these drug-related offences. This principle of proportionality of sanctions to offences dates back to over 4,000 years.

Mr. Chairman,

It is also recognized that differences exist between countries and regions in their responses to drug-related offences and offenders. The conventions encourage parties to

adopt such measures subject to their domestic laws and constitutional principles. It is also observed that while some states target major drug traffickers in their enforcement of their domestic laws, many other states do not do so. These differences it is observed, have a way of impacting on international drug control.

The chapter reminds parties of the principle of equality before the law and that powerful drug criminals should not be able to use their resources to compromise the justice system.

The chapter emphasizes the need to provide law enforcement agencies with the resources and skill to apprehend especially major drug traffickers.

The chapter calls on the justice and health-care systems to work together in respect of drug dependent persons who become involved in other criminal activities when under the influence of drug(s). The Board notes that while provision of treatment for drug abusers may be voluntary, it is appropriate that the treatment that is adopted should be one that is effective. The chapter urges that treatment facilities should also be made available within the prison systems for those who abuse drugs inside prisons or are incarcerated in prison for drug use offences.

Mr. Chairman,

In chapter 2, the Board discusses among other subject matters, drug demand reduction and access to opioid analgesics.

The international drug control treaties require that parties to the Conventions take all practicable measures for the prevention of drug abuse and for treatment, education, aftercare and rehabilitation. All too often, this treaty obligation is neglected, with Governments focusing on the reduction of drug supply, a field where short-term gains are relatively easy to achieve.

However, as we are all familiar with, gains in supply reduction without a significant decline in reducing the demand for drugs are squandered opportunities. We should be concerned that ten years after the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, preventing and reducing drug abuse remains a formidable challenge.

The Board has continuously reminded Governments over the years to make demand reduction a priority in their drug control efforts, stressing the inextricable relationship between demand reduction and supply reduction. In its report for 2004, the Board devoted an entire chapter to this issue and stated emphatically that neither demand reduction programmes nor supply reduction programmes alone can be fully successful in addressing the drug problem.

Unlike supply reduction interventions which must be implemented uniformly, demand reduction involves policies and interventions that must consider the cultural, social and economic backgrounds of target groups.

Mr. Chairman,

At the last session, I informed the Commission on efforts of the Board and the World Health Organization to facilitate adequate management of pain using opioid analgesics. These substances are still underused for medical care in many countries of the world. WHO has developed the Access to Controlled Medications Programme which aims to overcome the impediments that still prevent adequate utilization of these medications.

As spelled out in recommendations 34 and 35 of its annual report, the Board strongly encourages Governments to cooperate with the World Health Organization in the implementation of the Access to Controlled Medications Programme so as to promote the rational use of internationally controlled substances by health-care professionals. The Board also calls on Governments to provide resources to the World Health Organization for the implementation of the programme.

Mr. Chairman,

In chapter 3, among the many ominous developments in drug trafficking and abuse, is the targeting of some countries in Africa and South Asia by cocaine traffickers from South America. Africa and West Asia are also emerging as major transshipments areas for precursor chemicals due to weak national controls. Countries so affected by this deluge of transshipment should put in place appropriate countermeasures to ensure that their territories are not used for the transit shipment of cocaine and precursor chemicals.

Mr. Chairman,

I would now like to turn to the Board's report on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

Delegates and observers to the Commission have always acknowledged the importance of international cooperation in drug control. I am glad to note that participating governments in the international initiatives for precursor control, such as Project Prism, have supported those declarations with deeds. Multilateral cooperative agreements, such as Operation "Crystal Flow", have enabled authorities to exchange data and intelligence in real-time, over the past year and months and the outcome has been encouraging. The Task Force of Project Prism has shown that a lot can be achieved through international cooperation. Needless to say that the Board was pleased to contribute and provide support to these activities within its treaty mandate.

Moreover, the Board was informed that similar operational initiatives, linked with Project Cohesion, are contributing to suppressing the diversion of and trafficking in acetic anhydride, a key chemical for heroin manufacture. Recently governments have prevented the diversion or reported seizures of significant amounts of this chemical. In this connection, the Board appreciates that the Government of Slovenia has very recently

seized over 110 tons of acetic anhydride destined for the illicit manufacture of heroin. This major success is the result of cooperation and investigations involving several countries within the framework of Project Cohesion. We hope that these developments may lead to a breakthrough that will ultimately assist the Government of Afghanistan in addressing the serious problems related to heroin manufacture in the country.

With the accession of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Liechtenstein to the 1988 Convention, we are close to universal accession to this important international treaty. The Board again invites the 12 States that have not acceded to this convention to become party to it.

A further encouraging development has been the operation of the electronic system for the exchange of pre-export notifications (PEN Online). As highlighted in the report, this system, has, after only two years of operation, provided an effective communication path between more than 90 countries and territories in the prevention of chemical diversion. Moreover, the online system has become the backbone of operational activities in international precursors control. The Board again encourages all governments to register and use this tool as soon as possible.

I would like to thank the 105 governments that responded to our request and furnished estimates of their countries' licit needs in selected precursors. These requirements are published on the INCB website and provide an important element in creating an efficient system for the control of such chemicals.

Mr. Chairman,

It would obviously be wrong to provide only a positive picture of precursors control. Results achieved demonstrate that efficient international cooperation is feasible, but a lot remains to be done, particularly at the domestic level. It is regrettable that criminal organizations continue to obtain some of the chemicals they need for the manufacture of illicit drugs.

With successes achieved in the monitoring of international trade, diversion from domestic distribution channels and smuggling across borders are now the most commonly used methods of obtaining chemicals for use in clandestine laboratories. Therefore, the Board urges Governments to adequately monitor the domestic manufacture and distribution of precursors used in the illicit manufacture of drugs, as stipulated in paragraph 8, article 12, of the 1988 Convention.

The UNGASS decisions also highlighted the importance of information on non-scheduled chemicals, because it enables Governments and the Board to identify new trends in illicit drug manufacture and in trafficking precursors. Because of strengthened precursor monitoring, trafficking organizations are also seeking out non-scheduled substances. Governments should make use of the updated Limited International Special Surveillance List of Non-Scheduled Substances that was released to all competent

authorities last year. The Board also encourages Governments to establish mechanisms for exchanging alerts and information on suspicious trade in and seizures of substitute chemicals.

Mr. Chairman,

Missions offer the best opportunity for gathering relevant information at close quarters and the Board carried out 11 missions in 2007. While on mission, the Board met with Ministers and senior Government officials to discuss with them drug control policies and measures taken to address the drug problem. The Board members on missions also, discussed with non-governmental organizations in the countries visited, to familiarize themselves with their drug control activities. Missions also frequently offer the opportunity of discussing with drug abusers who are in organized treatment facilities. These discussions can and do have great impact on one's perception of the evils of illicit drug use and how young people's lives have been ruined by drug dependence. Listening to their struggle to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives is a poignant experience that one does not forget easily. You cannot but empathize with these unfulfilled young people. I value these visits because they open our eyes and unmask the myths behind certain drugs. I have seen how cannabis, despite its public reputation as a "harmless" drug has wreaked unimaginable havoc in the lives of some young people. I value these visits because they challenge conventional wisdoms. In fact, some of the drug abusers do strongly support governments' efforts at preventing the substances that led to their problems being readily available.

Through the missions we have undertaken, we have observed a considerable need for high-level concerted action if lasting and sustained results are to be achieved in drug control. The Board stands ready to promote such concerted action whenever it is deemed necessary.

The Board also found invaluable in its work information supplied by the United Nations entities, for example, from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization. Intergovernmental organizations active in drug control also supply the Board with information and participate in some of the sessions of the Board. The Board appreciates the work of all institutions involved in drug control-Governments, inter-governmental and civil society.

This year the Board has prepared an additional report for the attention of the Commission, focusing on actions that the Board has taken following the resolutions adopted by the Special Session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, which met almost 10 years ago, in June 1998.

The report, which was finalized at the session of the Board in February and is therefore available only in English as a conference room paper, shows, from the Board's perspective, progress that Governments and the international community have made in addressing the world drug problem. The acceptance of the international drug control treaties as effective instruments for international drug control is almost universal. The

rate of accession is highest for the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs to which 186 States or 96 per cent of all States are party.

Our report also focuses on the areas where we believe more progress is needed, for example, in addressing the trafficking over the Internet of pharmaceutical preparations containing internationally controlled substances. The report makes recommendations on how these and other issues should be tackled.

Mr. Chairman,

For the special report on the implementation of the goals set at the Special Session of the General Assembly, more than 130 Governments submitted exhaustive replies that provided useful information that is the foundation of the Board's analysis. I would like to use this opportunity to thank Governments for their efforts and support.

Mr. Chairman,

May I conclude my presentation by repeating the final portion of my foreword to the 2007 Annual Report of the Board. There are no "quick-fix" solutions to the drug problem. Governments should continue to take action to address drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking in a comprehensive, sustained and concerted manner. That is where the solution to the world drug problem lies. To do nothing is not an option.

Mr. Chairman,

I thank you all for your attention.