



## Special Issue on Afghanistan

### United Nations urges better monitoring of chemicals used in Afghan heroin

**I**n June, the Security Council called upon all Member States to improve monitoring of the international trade in chemical precursors used to make heroin in order to better combat drug trafficking in Afghanistan.



Instruments used to make heroin from opium in Afghanistan (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).

The 15 members of the Security Council adopted resolution 1817 (2008), in which they urged all Member States to boost cooperation to counter the illicit drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan, including by strengthening the monitoring of the international trade in chemical precursors, notably but not limited to acetic anhydride.

In that resolution, which was drafted by France, the Council called upon all States, in particular countries where such precursor chemicals are manufactured and countries along trafficking routes, to increase their cooperation with INCB. The Council acknowledged the leading role played by the Board in the implementation of the international drug control conven-

tions and the international control of precursors.

Further, the Council requested the Secretary-General to include, in his regular reports to the Security Council and the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan, observations and recommendations on the fight against drug production and trafficking, in particular on the issue of the illicit trafficking in chemical precursors, in close consultation with INCB.

The adoption of the resolution coincided with the *International Conference in Support of Afghanistan* that took place in Paris that same week. At the Conference, representatives from 80 countries and international organizations stated

*continued on page 4*

### A few words from the INCB President

It is with pleasure that I present you with the first of edition of *Focus on international drug control*, which the Board decided to publish following a meeting, in May, with the representatives of some Permanent Missions based in Vienna.

This newsletter will allow the Board to exchange information and opinions with its readers. The Board invites interested parties to submit contributions, news articles and op-eds on topics related to the work and mandate of the Board, for publication.

This first issue begins by providing information on recent developments in Afghanistan. The Board *continued on page 2*

#### Contents

INCB at work	3
On mission to Ethiopia	3
INCB elections	3
INCB President addresses the Economic and Social Council	4
Article 14 of the 1961 Convention	5
Internet pharmacies	6
100 years of drug control	8
Staff changes	8

*continued from cover page*

remains concerned about the extensive areas of land used for opium poppy and cannabis plant cultivation in Afghanistan, as well as about increasing drug abuse, which is why it welcomes the outcome of an international conference held in Paris in June. At that conference, Governments and international organizations pledged to continue assisting the war-torn country (*see lead article on cover page*). The continuing dedication of the international community to work with the Government of Afghanistan to address its drug problem and create a stable society is heartening.

The publication also includes reports on several issues that were discussed at the May session of the Board and on the international response to curb the sale of illicit drugs through Internet pharmacies. There are also updates on the planned commemoration of 100 years of drug control scheduled to take place in Shanghai, China, in February 2009.

As this newsletter is a work in progress and the Board wants to continue improving its communication with all interested parties, Governments and non-governmental organizations included, readers are encouraged to submit comments and suggestions.

Prof. Hamid Ghodse  
INCB President



## Upcoming events

### 2008

*November* INCB holds its ninety-third session in Vienna.

*November* The Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA), Asia and the Pacific, meet for their thirty-second session in Bangkok.

*December* UNODC holds the International Conference on Drug Addiction Prevention and Treatment: from Research to Practice.

### 2009

*February* INCB holds its ninety-fourth session in Vienna, at which it will present its annual report for 2008 to representatives of Governments and the media.

*March* The Commission on Narcotic Drugs meets for its fifty-second session to discuss the adoption of a declaration setting out drug control priorities for the following decade.

## About *Focus on international drug control*

*Focus on international drug control* is a quarterly publication of INCB that provides insight into the activities and positions of INCB and information on other issues relevant to the Board's mandate; it also functions as a platform for interested parties to share opinions. The Board decided to develop this newsletter at its session in May 2008.

*Focus on international drug control* is developed by the Secretariat of INCB, which is based in Vienna. The views expressed in *Focus* do not necessarily reflect the position of the Board unless expressly stated.

The Board is the independent and quasi-judicial treaty body for monitoring the implementation of the international drug control conventions.

Established by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the Board supports Government compliance with the international drug control treaties.

Members are elected by the Economic and Social Council to serve five-year terms. Members of the Board act in their personal capacity.

The current thirteen Board members are:

- Joseph Bediako Asare (Ghana)
- Sevil Atasoy (Turkey)
- Tatyana Dmitrieva (Russian Fed.)
- Philip O. Emafo (Nigeria)
- Hamid Ghodse (Iran)
- Carola Lander (Germany)
- Melvyn Levitsky (United States)
- Maria-Elena Medina Mora (Mexico)
- Sri Suryawati (Indonesia)
- Camilo Uribe Granja (Colombia)
- Brian Watters (Australia)
- Raymond Yans (Belgium)
- Xin Yu (China)

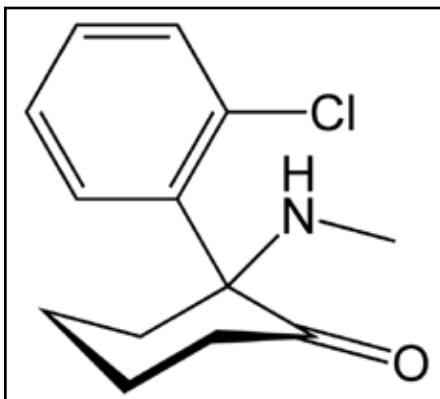
## The International Narcotics Control Board at work

**A**t its sessions, the Board discusses matters ranging from the contents of its annual reports to estimates that are used to determine the amounts of controlled drugs that countries may manufacture or import. The ninety-second session of INCB was held in Vienna from 19 to 30 May. On that occasion, the Board examined the first chapter of its annual report for 2008 on the relevance of the international drug control system, and evaluated the supply of and demand for opiates for medical and scientific needs.

### Ketamine

**I**n response to an increase in the abuse of ketamine, the Board decided to send a letter to all Governments reminding them to place ketamine under national control, in line with Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 49/6, which was adopted in 2006. Pursuant to that resolution, Governments are encouraged to introduce import and export authorizations for ketamine.

The letter also contained a short questionnaire relating to the implementation by Governments of that resolution. The Board has decided that, once replies are received, to publish the information on the control measures for ketamine introduced by Governments on its website and to communicate the findings to the World Health Organization.



**Ketamine (ketamine hydrochloride) is an anaesthetic that can produce hallucinations and dreamlike states of mind. It was developed in the 1970s as a medical anaesthetic for both humans and animals. Ketamine is often mistaken for cocaine or crystal methamphetamine because of a similarity in appearance.**

Source: National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

### INCB elections

**P**rof. Hamid Ghodse of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a physician and professor at the University of London, was elected INCB President at the Board's session in May. Prof. Ghodse has been a member of INCB since 1992 and has served as INCB President eight times. Also elected were:

Prof. Sevil Atasoy  
- First Vice-President

Dr. Camilo Uribe  
- Second Vice-President

Prof. Maria-Elena Medina-Mora  
- Rapporteur

### Follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly

**A**t its session in May, the Board discussed its contribution to the ten-year review of progress made since the twentieth special session of the General Assembly was held in 1998. At the session, Member States adopted a declaration and action plans in order to address the world drug problem during the following decade. It is likely that in 2009, Governments will adopt a declaration that builds on the previous one.

The Board decided to submit discussion papers to the five working groups involved in preparing the declaration, as well as a paper to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its session in March 2009, when the declaration will be discussed.

### On mission to Ethiopia

**I**NCB representatives made an official visit to Ethiopia from 26 to 28 March. The mission was conducted by Ms. Tatyana Dmitrieva, Board Member, who was accompanied by Mr. Pavel Pachta, Deputy Secretary of the Board.

During their visit, the INCB representatives held discussions with the Minister of Health, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Federal Affairs, as well as with senior officials of other agencies involved in drug control. The discussions focused on issues related to cooperation with INCB, measures to combat

drug abuse, drug trafficking and the availability of narcotic drugs for the treatment of pain. A visit was also made to the customs unit at the airport of Addis Ababa and at two centres for the treatment of drug addicts.

In 2008, INCB members also went on mission to Japan and the United Arab Emirates. A technical visit on precursor chemicals was made to Pakistan. The findings of the missions will be reflected in the next annual report, to be published early in 2009.

## Special Issue on Afghanistan

# INCB President addresses the Economic and Social Council

INCB President Hamid Ghodse addressed the Economic and Social Council in New York on 24 July. The Council serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, including problems related to drug control, that affect the international community.

Prof. Ghodse discussed the Board's continuing concerns over illicit drug production in Afghanistan: "Large-scale opium poppy cultivation in that country seriously endangers the aims of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 and, for that reason, the Board invoked article 14 of that Convention in 2000" (see page 5).

The INCB President went on to say that "since then, the situation has not improved. An unprecedented 193,000 hectares were devoted to the illicit cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan in 2007. In addition, cannabis cultivation has boomed, reaching 70,000 hectares in 2007. The recent seizure of 238 tons of cannabis in Afghanistan suggests that cannabis cultivation has been firmly established in some parts of the country. Another concern is the trafficking of chemicals, in particular acetic anhydride, to Afghanistan for the illicit manufacture of heroin.

Afghanistan has no legitimate requirements for acetic anhydride

The Board calls on Governments to report to it any order or request involving the shipment of acetic anhydride to Afghanistan.

## INCB President meets the Secretary-General



While in New York on 24 July, INCB President Prof. Hamid Ghodse and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met to talk about international drug control issues, including the situation in Afghanistan and progress made by Governments since the twentieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem took place in 1998.

and although the chemical is controlled under the 1988 Convention, large quantities still find their way to the country."

impedes progress on the drug problem and, eventually, the economic development of the country."

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their continued commitment to advancing peace, security and development in Afghanistan. Fresh pledges of resources for the country's rebuilding efforts were made and the Government's five-year plan to reduce poverty and promote economic and social development, known as the Afghanistan National Development Strategy was launched.

The meeting, co-chaired by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the President of Afghanistan and the President of France, concluded with the adoption of a declaration

in which participants voiced their support for the Strategy, which they said "will be our road map for joint action over the next five years and sets our shared priorities."

Prof. Hamid Ghodse, INCB President, participated in the conference and released a statement afterwards. He called on the Government of Afghanistan to continue its drug control efforts and take firm measures against officials at all levels of Government involved in illicit drug-related activities. He also said that "the commitment of the international community to support Afghanistan was impressive."

Prof. Ghodse said that "in addressing the burgeoning illicit drug trade, the Government of Afghanistan must take firm measures against officials at all levels of Government who are involved in illicit drug activities. Widespread drug-related corruption among officials at various levels of Government

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### Article 14 of the 1961 Convention: the most powerful instrument of the Board

**A**rticle 14 of the 1961 Convention can be used when the Board believes that the aims of the 1961 Convention are seriously endangered by the failure of a State to comply with treaty obligations. Under article 14:

- The Board can start consultations and request explanations from the Government concerned
- It can call upon the Government concerned to adopt remedial measures
- It may propose that a study be carried out regarding a State's drug control problems
- If the Government has not given satisfactory explanations or adopted remedial measures, the Board may bring the matter to the attention of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

#### Background: why the Board invoked article 14 with respect to Afghanistan

Invoking article 14 is a rare measure that the Board only takes when a State does not make progress in addressing its drug control problems over a long period of time. Historically, this provision has been invoked with respect to a limited number of countries. Generally, the identity of the country is kept confidential and the Board brings the matter to the attention of other Governments only when it considers it necessary.

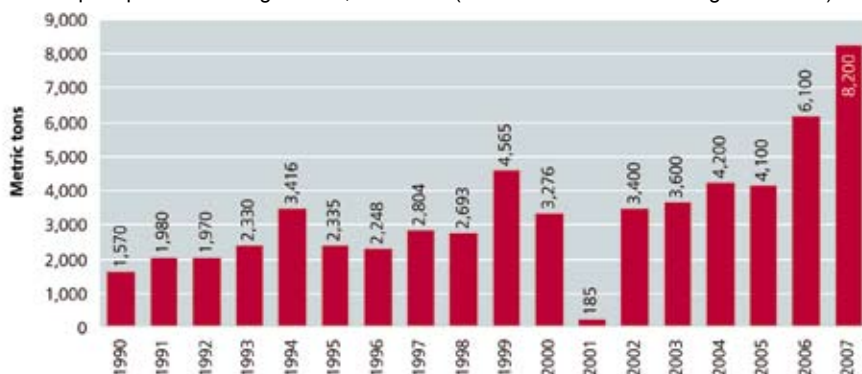
The Board invoked article 14 with respect to Afghanistan in May 2000, as the country had become by far the world's largest illicit producer of opium, seriously endangering the aims of the international drug control system. The Board held consultations with the Afghan authorities on the measures they had taken against the illicit cultivation of opium poppy. While it is true that the total ban on opium poppy cultivation pronounced by the Taliban au-

thorities in July 2000 had resulted in a sharp decline in opium poppy cultivation, other aspects of drug control had not been addressed. Over time, the decline achieved was not maintained and opium poppy cultivation has since soared to record levels (see the table below).

In 2001, the Board drew the attention of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Economic and Social Council and all the parties to the 1961 Convention to the situation in Afghanistan and to the need for support and cooperation, in particular by neighbouring States, to address that state of affairs.

Since then, the Board has maintained a continuous dialogue with the Government of Afghanistan, including by undertaking missions to the country. However, the opium problem remains of such a magnitude that the Board has not yet suspended article 14.

Potential opium production in Afghanistan, 1990-2007 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)



#### Timeline: Afghanistan and the Board

**May 2000** The Board invoked article 14 of the 1961 Convention with respect to Afghanistan.

**September 2001** Board members visited Afghanistan in order to consult with Taliban authorities.

**August 2002** Board members visited Afghanistan again in order to continue consultations with President Karzai.

**February 2004** A delegation of the Government of Afghanistan attended a session of the Board to report on progress made in terms of drug control.

**July 2006** The first UNODC/INCB national training seminar took place in Kabul with the aim of strengthening the capacity of national authorities to implement the international drug control conventions.

**November 2007** A delegation of the Government of Afghanistan attended a session of the Board in order to discuss measures taken and progress made under article 14.

**May 2008** A UNODC/INCB training seminar on treaty compliance was held in Kabul for national drug control administrators.

## Illicit drugs increasingly sold through Internet pharmacies

### The Issue

Experts attending the World Forum against Drugs, held in Stockholm from 8 to 10 September 2008, said that drug trafficking through the Internet had become very common and posed many more challenges to law enforcement than traditional trafficking. "Buying drugs on the Internet is really easy. You only need an Internet cafe, a credit card, and it's done," said Daniel Altmeyer, an officer from the International Police Organization (INTERPOL).

In particular, Internet pharmacies pose an important challenge to international drug control efforts. Internet pharmacies are websites that allow people to order prescription drugs online and have them sent to them by mail. There are bona fide Web-based pharmacies that only dispense drugs against proof of a real doctor's prescription, but most such websites do not require prescriptions. In a study done by

the Drug Enforcement Administration of the United States of America, it was revealed that 85 per cent of online pharmacies examined did not require a doctor's prescription. Many of those websites were operated from North America, but some were located in Europe, South Asia, South-East Asia and West Asia, from where large quantities of controlled prescription drugs are illegally shipped around the world.

Buying drugs through the Internet without a prescription or a doctor's supervision places people's health at risk, especially since Internet pharmacies sell medicines of dubious quality. Expired, counterfeit or fake medicines provide people running Internet pharmacies with an easy way to make money. Neither customers nor health authorities have the means to effectively ensure that such drugs are of good quality. Individuals can also easily obtain large quantities, further increasing the risk of damaging the health

of clients. Risks are particularly high for young people, who have easy and anonymous access to the Internet and who, in general, have less access to prescription drugs through their medical practitioner and traditional pharmacies.

Traditional pharmacies require prescriptions for a much larger variety of drugs and internationally controlled substances only make up 11 per cent of all prescriptions filled. At Internet pharmacies, about 80 per cent of all orders are for internationally controlled substances.

INCB oversees the international regime that comprises these most dangerous and addictive drugs. Such substances include painkillers such as morphine and oxycodone, as well as stimulants such as amphetamines. Dispensing controlled drugs without a prescription violates the international drug control conventions and, consequently, is illegal in most countries.

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Screen shot of a web site that sells internationally controlled substances such as codeine, hydrocodone and valium without a prescription.

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**We careantee:**

- Our pharmacists will counsel on each prescription filled.
- Our staff will help with product selection for over-the-counter products when requested.
- We will assist you with any insurance billing issues.
- Friendly, professional, courteous service.
- We will have the medication in-stock to refill your prescription.

Screen shot of an Internet pharmacy that was approved by LegitScript, an Internet pharmacy verification programme.

## The Response

The international community is very aware of the challenges that drug trafficking through the Internet poses to the existing drug control regime. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which facilitates discussion among Member States on drug-related issues, has recognized that drug trafficking through the Internet is a growing problem that entails serious health risks. Adequate responses from State law enforcement and health authorities are required to control the operation of Internet-based pharmacies.

In some countries, action has been taken against websites illicitly selling drugs. Drug control authorities are working to curb payments to such websites by collaborating with credit card companies and Internet search engines like Google and Yahoo. Also, pharmacy verification programmes have been established to help customers identify trustworthy Internet pharmacies.

The Board welcomes such measures but recognizes that regulators worldwide are facing difficulties

cracking down on Internet drug traffickers because of the fleeting nature of their operations. People running such websites are difficult to track; they can easily shut down one website and set up shop elsewhere.

Therefore, the Board encourages Governments to continue their efforts in curbing the operation of Web-based pharmacies that function outside the control of national authorities. Adequate legislation should be in place. Awareness campaigns can inform people of the risks involved in buying drugs from Internet pharmacies. Instruments such as verification programmes should be further developed to allow customers to recognize illegal Web-based drug retailers.

In an effort to assist Governments in addressing illegally operating Internet pharmacies, the Board has developed *Guidelines for Governments on Preventing the Illegal Sale of Internationally Controlled Substances through the Internet*, which were adopted at the INCB session in May. The Guidelines are intended

to provide assistance in formulating national legislation and policies for medical practitioners, pharmacists, law enforcement authorities, regulatory authorities and the public with regard to the use of the Internet to dispense, purchase, export and import controlled substances.

The Guidelines should help Governments to identify the control measures most appropriate for their country. Some of the recommendations, particularly those relating to the provisions of the three international drug control treaties, need to be implemented in all countries as required by the provisions of the relevant conventions. In order to ensure concerted international action, basic requirements on information exchange and cooperation should also be implemented by all States.

The guidelines will be published and sent to Governments by the end of 2008. The Board encourages Governments to take the Guidelines into account when addressing challenges related to Internet pharmacies.

## 100 years of drug control, part one



The International Opium Commission in Shanghai in 1909 (United Nations Office at Geneva).

**N**ext year, the current international drug control framework will celebrate its one hundredth anniversary. On 26 February 2009, the Government of China will host an event to commemorate the meeting of the first International Opium Commission, which took place in Shanghai in 1909.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a serious drug problem had developed in China. Opium

had been traded and trafficked to China, mostly from British India. Trade was increasing and addiction was spreading despite strong attempts by the Chinese imperial Government to curb the drug trade and protect its citizens from addiction. Those measures had largely failed.

Two conflicts between Great Britain and China (the Opium Wars) erupted in the nineteenth century,

resulting in the legalization of opium trading and consumption in China in 1890. The consequences of such legalization were devastating: the number of drug addicts in China increased astronomically. According to the Chinese delegation to the International Opium Commission, by 1906 opium consumption had affected 23.3 per cent of the male adult population and 3.5 per cent of the female adult population in China. Before legalization, most of the opium consumed in China came from India but once opium had been legalized, production in China rose tremendously, from 6,500 tons in 1880 to 35,300 tons in 1906. In comparison, today's illicit opium production in Afghanistan is less than 9,000 tons.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, opposition to the free availability of opium started dominating in political circles in some countries, including the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States. This anti-opium lobby was the driving force behind the organization of the Commission's meeting in 1909.

### Staff changes

**T**he Board welcomes the following staff members, who recently joined the INCB Secretariat:

Ms. Adelia Aquino (Brazil)  
- Psychotropics Control Section

Ms. Siria Gastelum Felix (Mexico)  
- Precursors Control Section

Ms. Zhenzhen Huang (China)  
- Precursors Control Section

Mr. Michael Kunz (Germany)  
- Narcotics Control and Estimates Section

### Call for contributions

The Board invites readers to submit comments and contributions, preferably by e-mail ([focus@incb.org](mailto:focus@incb.org)), but also by facsimile ((+43-1) 26060 76948) and mail at the following address:

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The Board reserves the right to edit and select articles depending on their relevance and the availability of space.