

Afghanistan: Board's call for international assistance and cooperation

1. After examining the extent of illicit cultivation of opium poppy and illicit trafficking in opium, morphine base and heroin from Afghanistan, the Board at its sixty-eighth session in May 2000, concluded that the critical drug control situation in the country, if left unaddressed, seriously endangered the aims of the 1961 Convention, and decided to invoke article 14 of the 1961 Convention with respect to Afghanistan. The Board's objective in doing so has been to encourage compliance by Afghanistan with the international drug conventions as well as to bring this matter to the special attention of the ECOSOC and call upon the international community, in particular Afghanistan development partners, to support the Government of Afghanistan in its drug control and development efforts.

2. Since then, the Board has closely followed the drug control situation in Afghanistan and maintained an ongoing dialogue with the Government through bilateral meetings, correspondence and continuous updates received from the Government on the drug control situation and efforts of the country. One of the recent highlights of the dialogue with the Government was the a high-level INCB mission to Afghanistan from 8 to 10 May 2016, which was led by the President of the Board to continue consultations with the Government of Afghanistan under article 14 of the 1961 Convention.

3. Despite the challenges related to security, peace process and political transformation, the Government Afghanistan has been taking steps to strengthen its drug control system, including through updating its national drug action plan, legislation, strengthening cross-border cooperation and drug abuse prevention measures as well as improving treaty-mandated drug reporting to the Board. The Government of Afghanistan acceded to the 1972 Protocol amending the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs in 2015, which contains important provisions such as the need for treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts, measures to seize and destroy illicitly cultivated plants as well as allowing for treatment, rehabilitation, education and social reintegration as an alternative, or in addition to conviction or punishment for drug users.

4. At the same time, the Board regrets to observe that while over 90% of world's opiates comes from Afghanistan only 2% is seized in country and that illicit opium poppy cultivation and production in Afghanistan have not been contained. Opium production in Afghanistan rose by 43 per cent to 4,800 metric tons in 2016 compared with 2015 levels, according to the latest Afghanistan Opium Survey figures released by the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics and the UNODC. The area under opium poppy cultivation also increased to 201,000 hectares (ha) in 2016, a rise of 10 per cent compared with 183,000 ha in 2015.

5. The level of drug use and abuse in the country had reached epidemic proportions, with the number of drug users ranging up to 3.4 million people (ca. 10-15 per cent of the population – there are no recent censuses or accurate population estimates) and between 1.4 and 2.1 million drug addicted persons. The Board believes the drug abuse situation is critical and national resources totally inadequate to tackle a potential drug abuse population of the aforementioned size.

6. INCB has been using every opportunity to call the attention of the international community to the drug challenges the country faced, including in the statement in advance of Brussels Conference

in October 2016 on Afghanistan, and other fora, stressing the fact that sustainable development is not possible without effective drug control in the country. International community should ensure that the cross-cutting issue of drug control is comprehensively addressed. Unless the drug control and drug abuse situation in Afghanistan is urgently tackled head on by the Government of Afghanistan with the support of its international cooperation partners, the security situation, terrorism threat, corruption and development issues affecting the country will remain unresolved.

INCB is the independent, quasi-judicial body charged with promoting and monitoring Government compliance with the three international drug control conventions: the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

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