

UNIS/NAR/730
5 November 2001

International Narcotics Control Board Meets In Vienna To Look At How Globalisation And New Technology Has Changed The Drug Trade

VIENNA, 5 November 2001 (UN Information Service) – The impact of globalisation and new technology on drug trafficking will be examined by members of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) which is meeting in Vienna this week. "Just as electricity and the telephone changed lives in the 20th century, the Internet is revolutionizing lives today", Professor Hamid Ghodse, the President of the Board stated. "However, as with many innovations, advantages go hand in hand with new problems and, with the Internet, there is a real danger that its benefits might be seriously undermined by individuals and criminal groups for illicit gain. It is therefore the responsibility of the Board to alert Governments and the general public to any such developments relating to drug abuse and trafficking."

The Board will review how modern technologies are changing the face of drug trafficking and what Governments should do to address this problem. This topic has been chosen by the Board for special emphasis in its next Annual Report which will be published early in 2002.

The report will also review trends in drug abuse world-wide and trafficking such as how drug traffickers are using the Internet to finalize drug deals in cyberspace. Another issue the Board will consider is how prescription-only drugs are being sold over the Internet by some Internet pharmacies contrary to international law.

The Board will look at how Governments are implementing the provisions of the international drug treaties, particularly in countries to which the Board has sent missions over the last year. Since its last session in May 2001, the Board has sent missions to Bolivia, Chile, Finland, Morocco, Myanmar, Norway, Syria and Ukraine.

In addition, the Board will examine the situation of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, particularly in the light of recent developments. "Any authority in power in Afghanistan, now or in future, must make full compliance with the international drug control treaties one of its core commitments," the President stressed.

There will also be discussions by the Board on the control of cannabis following moves by several European governments to relax the laws on cannabis. The Board will consider whether with these changes governments are still meeting their obligations under the drug control treaties. "The Conventions," the President said, "are very supportive of the reduction of human suffering and explicitly recognize that drugs should be available for medical purposes. At the same time, the Conventions seek to protect individuals so that they do not become casualties of dependence and addiction through the recreational use of controlled drugs. For those who do become such casualties, the Conventions offer a humane response, with provision for treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration. However, the Conventions do not sanction the recreational use of drugs."

The Vienna-based Board is an independent body, established by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs to monitor Governments' compliance with the international drug control treaties. Its 13 members are elected by the Economic and Social Council to serve in their individual capacities for a term of five years. Its meetings are held in private. The current session of the Board is its 72nd and runs through to 15 November.

The 13 members of the Board are: Edouard Armenakovich Babayan (Russian Federation), Chinmay Chakrabarty (India), Dr. Nelia P. Cortes-Maramba (Philippines), Dr. Philip O. Emafo (Nigeria), Jacques Franquet (France), Professor Hamid Ghodse (Iran), Nüzhet Kandemir (Turkey), Dil Jan Khan (Pakistan), Maria Elena Medina-Mora (Mexico), Herbert S. Okun (United States of America), Dr. Alfredo Pemjean (Chile), Sergio Uribe Ramirez (Colombia) and Jiwang Zheng (China).
