

President Of The International Narcotics Control Board Welcomes Drug-Control Assistance To Afghanistan

VIENNA, 23 January (UN Information Service) -- Professor Hamid Ghodse, President of the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), has welcomed the commitment of the international community to support the Afghan Interim Government in its efforts to rid the country of opium poppy cultivation.

"By banning opium poppy cultivation, the Afghan Interim Administration has shown that it takes its responsibilities under the three international drug-control treaties seriously," the INCB President said, "INCB will continue its dialogue with the Afghan authorities to ensure that the ban is maintained."

"For many years, Afghanistan has been the largest producer of opium poppy in the world. Civil war, violence, instability and corruption created a situation where drug trafficking and terrorism flourished with devastating consequence for Afghanistan and the world. The international community must make every effort to ensure that such a situation does not repeat itself, in Afghanistan or indeed, elsewhere in the world."

Since May 2000, INCB has been engaged in consultations with the authorities governing Afghanistan, following its invocation of article 14 of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Article 14 is enforced when the Board has reason to believe that the aims of the convention are being seriously endangered.

"Cessation of opium poppy cultivation is essential if the people of Afghanistan are to live in peace and security in future," the INCB President continued. He also recalled Security Council resolution 1378 which called on the Interim Government of Afghanistan to cooperate fully in international efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking within and from Afghanistan.

"The Board stands ready to support the Interim Government in developing a plan of action for drug control," the INCB President said. The President urged speedy action in this regard since there are reliable indications that opium poppy cultivation has resumed since October 2001 in some provinces of Afghanistan. The Board is calling on the Government to implement the ban in its entire territory as soon as possible.
