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AFGHANISTAN'S DRUG PROBLEMS – MORE THAN JUST OPIATES **International Narcotics Control Board urges comprehensive strategy** **to tackle the problems**

Afghanistan has to develop a comprehensive and coherent national drug control strategy to include all drugs illicitly cultivated, produced and trafficked, says the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) in its latest Annual Report published today in Vienna. Sustainable and peaceful development in Afghanistan will not be possible without addressing the drug problem in its totality, according to INCB.

The Board is seriously concerned that widespread cultivation of opium poppy continues to take place in Afghanistan despite an eradication campaign carried out by the Government and enactment of two decrees prohibiting cultivation of opium poppy and related activities.

The Board has been closely monitoring drug control issues in Afghanistan and has been working with the present Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan as well as with previous governments, including the Taliban. In May 2000, the Board invoked Article 14 of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, an article used only in exceptional cases, when the aims of the international drug control conventions are being seriously endangered by developments in a country. Under Article 14, the Board can recommend an embargo against a country to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, if the Government fails to take actions or to cooperate.

Recognizing the efforts of the current Government, the Board calls for full and urgent support and cooperation from the international community, also from countries in the region. The Board also stresses that eradication of illicit opium poppy can only be achieved if relevant laws are fully respected and implemented while sustainable alternative livelihoods are provided for farmers.

The Report also emphasizes that a viable drug control strategy for Afghanistan has to include all drugs. Chemicals needed for the manufacture of heroin are trafficked into Afghanistan through neighbouring countries. Similarly, traffickers have attempted to divert psychotropic substances to Afghanistan, which may also be used to adulterate heroin. The Board, in cooperation with the Government of China, recently prevented the export to Afghanistan of 5 tons of diazepam, a quantity which is so large that it exceeds the annual medical requirements of that substance in almost all countries of the world. Samples of heroin seizures revealed that diazepam has been used to adulterate the substance.

Illicit cannabis cultivation makes Afghanistan also a major source country for cannabis resin (hashish). The eradication of such illicit cultivation and the suppression of trafficking in cannabis have to go hand in hand with the combating of illicit opiate cultivation and trafficking.