

INCB Concerned about Failure of Turkmenistan to Cooperate With International Community in the Fight against Illicit Drugs

VIENNA, 3 March (UN Information Service) -- Turkmenistan's lack of cooperation with the international community in the fight against illicit drugs has drawn strong criticism from the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) in the Annual Report of the Vienna-based body released here today. Active cooperation of Turkmenistan, a country which has more than 700 km of common borders with Afghanistan is essential for the success of global efforts to prevent smuggling of illicit drugs from and precursor chemicals to Afghanistan.

The Board called already last year in its Annual Report on the Government of Turkmenistan to improve its data collection and reporting mechanisms and to share drug related statistics with international organizations. The Board was concerned by the fact that the Turkmen authorities had not reported to INCB any seizures of opiates and precursor chemicals since 2000, although significant quantities had been seized in previous years.

Turkmenistan is the only neighbouring country of Afghanistan, which is not yet participating in Operation Topaz, an international monitoring operation which was launched by INCB in 2001 focusing on acetic anhydride, a critical chemical used in the illicit manufacture of heroin. The Board urges the Government of Turkmenistan to join Operation Topaz without delay in order to ensure that traffickers will not use that country to smuggle acetic anhydride to Afghanistan.

The Board is also concerned that Turkmenistan has failed to take part in several regional and sub-regional drug control activities or was not actively participating in those cooperation arrangements, which it had formally joined. The Board refers specifically to a seminar which INCB co-organized in August 2003 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in order to strengthen the capacity of countries in Central Asia to prevent the diversion of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals from licit manufacture and trade into illicit channels. Turkmenistan was the only country in the region which did not participate in that seminar. Similarly, Turkmenistan was the only country from Central Asia that did not attend the Third Anti-Narcotics Regional Training Exercise for police and customs officers, which was held in Tehran in December 2002.

The Board, therefore urges Turkmenistan to join the international community in the fight against drugs stressing that Turkmenistan must not become the weak link in the chain of international drug control efforts.

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