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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Supply and demand for illicit drugs at first seem to be quite separate activities. Drugs are manufactured, trafficked and sold on the illicit market by one group of people; they are bought and consumed by others. However, they are in fact inextricably linked components of a single phenomenon. The demand for drugs stimulates supply and in turn, the availability of drugs creates demand as more people become dependent upon them.

The first chapter of the Board's Report for 2004 analyses this interaction between supply and demand and emphasises the need for a balanced and integrated approach. It is all too easy for Governments' actions against the drug problem to focus on just one element of the problem, supply. While this may produce results, even dramatic results, in the short-term, with large seizures of illicit drugs, it does not and cannot have a long-term effect because new sources soon materialize to meet continuing demand. Unfortunately, there are no quick ways of reducing demand, which requires sustained preventative interventions. It is therefore essential that comprehensive strategies are developed, combining action on both supply and demand. Then and only then will there be permanent improvement in drug abuse problems.

The Report also reviews the Board's consultation with Afghanistan pursuant to article 14 of the 1961 Convention. The first democratic elections held in October 2004 confirmed Hamid Karzai as President of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the widespread drug problem that has taken hold of the country is a severe threat to this new democracy as well as the stability and economic recovery of the country as a whole. Illicit opium poppy cultivation continues to increase, supplying three quarters of the world's heroin; in addition, Afghanistan has become a major source of cannabis resin and a destination for illicitly trafficked psychotropic substances and precursors.

Afghanistan has adopted a national drug control strategy which, over a 10-year period, aims to eliminate illicit crops

and production and trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors. The United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime* together with the international community as a whole is supporting Afghanistan in working towards this goal and achieving compliance with the international drug control treaties. Ultimately, however, it is the responsibility of the Government of Afghanistan to live up to its commitments under the international drug control treaties and to ensure that its people are protected from the scourge of drugs.



The rate of HIV/AIDS infections among intravenous drug abusers has been increasing rapidly in some parts of the world and particularly in Eastern Europe and Asia. In many cases, the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases is associated with shockingly low levels of awareness about the basic facts of the disease and the methods of its transmission. Governments have to address such ignorance and find ways of limiting the spread of HIV. In doing so, they must ensure that current drug control policies do not perpetuate the vicious circle of drug abuse by injection and HIV/AIDS. Specifically, measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases must not be seen as facilitating or even promoting drug abuse which is, after all, the root of the problem. In other words, the primary and over-riding focus of all interventions, must be to prevent drug abuse because it is a dangerous and damaging practice in its own right, with the potential to create even more havoc by the way in which it contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other serious infectious diseases.

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