

# **INCB Expresses Concern Over Illegal Manufacture of Heroin in Afghanistan During Annual Session**

VIENNA 3 November (UN Information Service) -- The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) during its ongoing 87th session in Vienna, Austria, has expressed concern over alarming increase in illicit opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and the illegal manufacture of heroin in the country.

"Although acetic anhydride, which is needed to manufacture heroin, appears to be available in the country, the sources and routes from where the chemical is smuggled have not been identified. The Board is extremely concerned that hardly any of the countries bordering Afghanistan have reported seizures of acetic anhydride during 2005 and 2006. The Board therefore urges all Governments in the neighbouring countries to ensure that acetic anhydride transiting through their countries illicitly, is intercepted," said Dr. Philip O. Emafo, INCB President.

The Board, during its present session, will adopt its Annual Report for 2006 which will be released in February 2007.

The Board has also expressed concern over attempts to legalize coca leaf production and consumption for non-medical purposes in some countries in the Andean subregion. The Board believes that such attempts do not reflect the collective will of the international community to address the world drug problem in a concerted manner.

The Board's deliberations will include: the abuse of prescription drugs, such as the pharmaceutical preparations containing controlled substances, in particular in North America and Europe; the theme of the 2006 Annual Report, which is the issue of unregulated markets; the problems associated with counterfeit medicines and the sale of controlled substances through the Internet; and, a review of global trends in drug abuse and trafficking with a view to recommending actions to improve international control measures.

The Board will review a report of the Board's Advisory Expert Group (AEG), which met in Vienna from 9 to 13 October 2006, to discuss a number of issues related to the Board's mandate under article 12, including the review of the adequacy and propriety of the current scheduling of a few chemicals such as safrole and ephedra which have been diverted from licit trade for use in the illegal manufacture of drugs.

Through its Standing Committee on Estimates, which met earlier this week, the Board reviewed the worldwide supply and demand situation of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes. For the first time, estimates for licit annual requirements for some internationally-controlled precursor chemicals frequently

used in the illegal manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants (eg. ephedrine and pseudoephedrine) were reviewed, in response to the relevant Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution.

Since its last session in May 2006, the Board has sent missions to 11 countries (Argentina, Belarus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, El Salvador, Estonia, Gambia, Honduras, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malawi and Myanmar). The reports of these missions will assist the Board to assess how Governments are implementing the provisions of the international drug control treaties.

The Executive Director of the *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, and representatives of the World Health Organization, the World Customs Organization and the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) will also share their latest information with the Board.

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 United Nations Economic and Social Council to serve in their individual capacities for a term of five years. Its sessions are closed to the public.

The current members of the Board are: Joseph Bediako Asare (Ghana), Sevil Atasoy (Turkey), Madan Mohan Bhatnagar (India), Elisaldo Luiz de Araújo Carlini (Brazil), Tatyana Borisovna Dmitrieva (Russian Federation), Philip O. Emafo (Nigeria), Gilberto Gerra (Italy), Hamid Ghodse (Iran), Melvyn Levitsky (United States), Robert Lousberg (Netherlands), Rainer Wolfgang Schmid (Austria), Camilo Uribe Granja (Colombia) and Brian Watters (Australia).

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