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EMBARGO:

**Wednesday, 5 March 2008,
0001 hours GMT**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In looking at the world's drug problem, two developments are of particular concern. First, criminal organizations are taking advantage of loopholes in the control systems in Africa and West Asia for chemicals used in illicit drug manufacture and are in the process of establishing trafficking hubs for chemicals in those regions. Numerous suspicious shipments of precursor chemicals to Africa and West Asia have been identified. Also of concern is the establishment of trafficking routes for cocaine between countries in South America and Africa. Countries affected by these developments should introduce appropriate measures to prevent their territories from being exploited as centres for criminal activity, possibly with the assistance of richer countries in a spirit of shared responsibility.

Almost 10 years after the adoption of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction by the General Assembly, the time has come to reflect on investments made by Governments in reducing drug demand. Many Governments have made considerable efforts, but more needs to be done. Governments should recognize that reducing illicit demand and reducing illicit supply simultaneously are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Suggestions that the legalization of drugs would “resolve” the world drug problem ignore historical facts. The first international controls over narcotic drugs introduced in 1912 helped to reduce the scourge of opium addiction in some Asian countries. Some sixty years later, accession to the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances contributed to a significant decline in the abuse of these substances, which presented serious health problems in the 1950s and 1960s. Given these and other experiences, suggestions to legalize the use of illicit drugs appear rather simplistic and misplaced. There are no quick fix solutions to the drug problem. Governments should continue to take action to address drug abuse and illicit trafficking in a comprehensive, sustained and concerted manner. There lies the solution to the world drug problem. To fold our hands and do nothing should never be an option.



Dr. Philip O. Emafo

President of the International Narcotics Control Board