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**Statement by Dr. P. Emafo,
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Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chairperson of the Commission, Ambassador Patricia Olamendi of Mexico and extend to her and all other members of the Bureau my best wishes for constructive and fruitful deliberations at this session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. I am confident that under your leadership the close relationship between the Commission and the International Narcotics Control Board will be further strengthened.

Madam Chairperson,

The annual report of the Board for 2002 devotes its first chapter to the impact of illicit drugs on economic development. The drug problem, often treated as a social problem because of its devastating effects on the drug-dependent person, the family and the community, has an economic impact that is often ignored or not addressed. The Board has, therefore, reviewed the impact of illicit drug cultivation, trade and abuse on overall economic development in recognition of the fact that economic development is a crucial component of human development.

At first sight, it may appear that the illicit drug industry could have a positive effect on an economy as it provides jobs in the agricultural sector to a number of people with limited skills and education and thus offers short-term relief in a country with high levels of unemployment. In the long run, however, illicit drug industries jeopardize human development.

Illicit drug production and trafficking do not lead to long-term economic development. There are no indications that the expansion of illicit crop cultivation has resulted in overall improvement in the economic situation of a country. On the contrary, there appears to be a negative correlation between illicit drug production and economic progress. Countries in which illicit drugs are produced have been shown to suffer a decline in economic growth.

Another adverse effect of the illicit drug industry is the fact that it:

- destabilizes the political system through promoting conflict and insurgency. Many countries can be cited where increased drug trafficking has been linked with increased violence;
- destabilises the economy through inflow of large illicit profits which fosters over-valued exchange rates and income inequality;
- undermines civil society through promoting drug abuse, disrupting the social fabric of society involving the family and the community; and
- it contributes to rising levels of crime and violence.

Furthermore, experience has shown that most countries in which illicit drugs are produced end up facing drug abuse problems of their own.

The conclusion that can be reached from this review is that long-term economic development is not feasible when effective drug control system is absent or lacking. Although the illicit drug industry offers employment opportunities to some of the disadvantaged members of the society, it jeopardises their human development and compromises economic development. It is therefore important to align drug control efforts to overall economic development of a country with a view to promoting longer-term economic development.

If a country rids itself of illicit drug production, trafficking and money laundering, this will lead to long-term social and economic benefits. However, that will entail short-term costs for governments and different segments of society in the respective countries. The Board therefore urges the international community to help countries that do not have sufficient resources to help bear some of these costs, so that they can introduce measures that should generate long-term gains.

Madam Chairperson,

The Board would like to reiterate its appeal to the international community to support the Government of Afghanistan. Since the last report of the Board was issued, the situation in Afghanistan has become more worrisome.

In August 2002, I led a mission of the Board to Afghanistan. The mission met with several Government officials, including President Hamid Karzai, who showed the country's commitment to address the drug control problem. The Government has enacted strict laws prohibiting not only the cultivation of the opium poppy but also related activities like manufacture and trafficking. There also has been an eradication campaign.

Nevertheless, the situation is far from improving. Opium poppy cultivation has returned to Afghanistan with a vengeance: According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 3400 tonnes of opium were illicitly produced in 2002. This figure has made Afghanistan once again the largest producer of illicit opium in the world.

However, the cultivation of opium is not the only drug problem in Afghanistan. Heroin is being produced on Afghan territory and the chemicals, which are needed for its illicit

manufacture are smuggled into the country because the national control system for precursor chemicals is weak.

Psychotropic substances are also being trafficked into the country. Just a couple of months ago, the Board, in cooperation with the Government of China, prevented an export of 5 tonnes of diazepam to Afghanistan, a quantity which is far in excess of the annual medical requirements of that substance. To show the extent of the problem, countries such as France and Germany do not need as much diazepam for their medical needs. We believe that diazepam diverted to Afghanistan is used to adulterate heroin. Illicit cannabis cultivation in Afghanistan makes Afghanistan a major source country for cannabis resin. Moreover, drug abuse has increased significantly in the past years. Afghanistan, like many other countries, has experienced the spillover problem I referred to earlier. It is estimated that cannabis and opiate abuse have become quite widespread.

The Government of Afghanistan is not equipped to solve this emergent problem on its own. And, I would like to stress that this situation is not only a problem for Afghanistan but one with regional and inter-regional repercussions as Afghanistan is the major source of the heroin sold in Europe.

Madam Chairperson,

The Board is concerned about some harm reduction measures adopted by some countries which tend to undermine the international drug control conventions. Almost ten years ago, in its annual report for 1993, the Board acknowledged the importance of harm reduction in a tertiary prevention strategy for demand reduction purposes. There is no doubt that some harm reduction measures can play a part in a comprehensive drug demand reduction strategy. However, harm reduction programmes should not be carried out at the expense of other important activities aimed at reducing the demand for illicit drugs. Our view is that any harm reduction policy should be consistent with the international drug control conventions.

Madam Chairperson,

In its third chapter, the annual report of the Board presents its views of the drug control situation in different regions of the world. Various sources such as Governments, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, international organizations with a drug control mandate such as the World Health Organization, Interpol and the World Customs Organization were consulted for materials used in this part of the report. Additionally, the Board used important first-hand information obtained during its country missions.

The report of the Board is only 90 pages long and so cannot reflect every development of drug control in the 210 countries and territories that the work of the Board covers. Besides, the cut-off date for all information included in annual reports is 1 November of each year. This is to ensure that the report will be translated on time, into

all official languages of the United Nations. Very important developments coming to the attention of the Board after that date are therefore also not reflected in the report.

The Board appreciates and welcomes reactions of Governments on its assessments and views even if these reactions are not always complimentary. The nature of our job is that we cannot satisfy everybody, as long as we maintain our objectivity.

The world drug problem is a global problem which can only be effectively addressed by collective action. We must recognize that a change in policy will affect not only the country where the action is taken but also others. We should therefore never lose sight of the effect that any policy change in one country can have on another and at the international level.

Madam Chairperson,

I would now like to turn to the Board's report on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention and inform the Commission of some of our major findings and of the latest developments relating to precursor chemicals control.

In June 2002, the Board convened the International Meeting on Amphetamine-type Stimulant (ATS) Precursors, in cooperation with the Government of the United States and the European Commission. This meeting was held in response to the urgent need to develop and fine-tune practical actions to be taken by Governments to prevent diversions of precursors for use in the illicit manufacture of ATS.

At a later stage, a separate presentation will be made to the Commission on Project Prism and on the work of the intergovernmental working groups established under this project. Let me, however, underline the significant progress made already in the prevention of diversion of precursors used in the illicit manufacture of MDMA (Ecstasy) due to the close cooperation, in particular, between China and the Netherlands under Project Prism.

On the basis of these positive results, the Board believes that Project Prism will make a significant breakthrough in significantly reducing or preventing illicit ATS manufacture, and the Board trusts that all Governments will continue to support this necessary initiative.

Madam Chairperson,

In addition to Project Prism, during 2002, the Board, through its secretariat, continued to assist Governments with Operations Purple and Topaz. The secretariat of the Board continues to serve as the international focal point for the exchange of information with respect to these international operations focusing on potassium permanganate and acetic anhydride, respectively.

The intensive international tracking programmes under both operations continue to function well. I would specifically like to commend the authorities of China, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United States, for their efforts in ensuring that international monitoring of trade in relevant precursor chemicals are carried out effectively.

The results of the international tracking by Operation Topaz so far indicate that traffickers are not diverting acetic anhydride from international trade, but rather from domestic distribution channels and then smuggling it to the areas where illicit manufacture of heroin takes place. For that reason, in addition to the international tracking programme, Operation Topaz now also has a law enforcement component, which will enable the original source of intercepted acetic anhydride consignments to be identified. A number of Governments successfully carried out such investigations during 2002, resulting in some trafficking networks being dismantled by the authorities of the Republic of Korea and Turkey, among others.

In a significant development, seizures of acetic anhydride have also been reported for the first time in Afghanistan, with approximately ten and a half tonnes of the substance being seized in January this year. A task force, consisting of the authorities of Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, would provide technical support, when so requested, to the authorities of Afghanistan and its neighboring countries, in initiating appropriate backtracking investigations when seizures are made. We urge countries in the region to make use of this offer which will greatly enhance the possibility of identifying the initial sources of seized acetic anhydride.

Operation Purple continues to be successful with diversions of nearly 1,200 tonnes of the substance being prevented during 2002. Had diversion not been prevented, that amount of potassium permanganate would be sufficient to purify approximately 6,000 tonnes of cocaine. Law enforcement authorities, particularly in Colombia, also continue to report large seizures of the chemical, giving an indication that traffickers are, however, still able to obtain significant amounts of that substance. We trust that, in the year ahead, a particular focus of Operation Purple will be to launch investigations of the kind carried out under Operation Topaz, so that the networks responsible for diverting the seized consignments can be identified and their operations stopped.

The Board is pleased to note that, following the transfer of acetic anhydride and potassium permanganate to Table I of the 1988 Convention, more Governments now provide annual information on the licit trade in these substances. Through such information, the Board assesses the appropriateness of the control and reporting mechanisms existing in the countries concerned for preventing diversions of the substances from licit trade into illicit traffic. Such reports further confirm the ability of Governments to monitor and control both the large volume and high number of shipments of these chemicals in international trade effectively.

Madam Chairperson,

As reflected in our report, there is no region of the world that has remained untouched by traffickers in their attempts to divert the chemicals they require. To address the changing trends encountered, the Board continues to provide forums, in the form of informal round-table consultations for countries concerned with series of diversions or attempted diversions for adopting appropriate working mechanisms and standard operating procedures for preventing diversions from licit trade into illicit traffic. During the past year the Board has convened such consultations in Africa, Central Asia and Europe and similar meetings are planned in various other regions in the year ahead.

We consider consultations of this nature to be essential, especially in progressing the activities that Governments now need to undertake in carrying out systematic investigations, not only into seizures, but into shipments that are stopped in international trade due to suspicious circumstances or administrative irregularities. It is only when investigations of this nature are undertaken immediately by the Governments concerned that it will be possible to identify the traffickers responsible for the diversion, or attempted diversion, and to ensure that similar attempts are not made elsewhere. This manner of investigation, where intelligence is developed and pursued, is essential to address the increasingly sophisticated methods of diversion that traffickers now apply, with the names of known legitimate companies being used as well as utilizing the services and expertise of corrupt employees within such legitimate companies.

I would also like to underline the fact that when the Board's recommendations relating to the control of precursor chemicals are effectively implemented by Governments, traffickers' abilities to obtain the chemicals they require for illicit drug manufacture are significantly reduced. As in previous years, many countries have continued to strengthen their precursor control legislation in compliance with those recommendations, among them Canada, where comprehensive precursor control measures entered into force at the beginning of this year. All Governments that have not yet done so, are invited to adopt appropriate measures and mechanisms in their respective countries to ensure adequate control over precursor chemicals.

Madam Chairperson,

Fifteen years ago, I served as Chairman of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. I, therefore, can appreciate the enormous responsibility thrust upon you to ensure the success of this Commission. Let me therefore wholeheartedly wish you every success for the deliberations of this Commission.

Thank you for your attention.