

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD	INCB		OICS	NATIONS UNIES ORGANE INTERNATIONAL DE CONTRÔLE DES STUPÉFIANTS
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Economic and Social Council

General segment

Item 14 d. Social and human rights questions- Narcotic drugs

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Statement by Dr. P. Emafo President of the International Narcotics Control Board

Mr. President, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) about the work of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) since the last meeting of the Council in 2006.

Allow me, however, at the outset to congratulate Ambassador Čekuolis of Lithuania, President of the Council, and other members of the Bureau on their election and extend to them our best wishes for a successful outcome of deliberations.

Mr. President,

The annual report of the Board for 2006 was officially launched in Vienna and some 20 countries around the world, in March 2007.

In addition, the annual report was presented and discussed during the fiftieth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The Board also introduced to the Commission its report on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

Mr. President,

The first chapter of the Board's annual report for 2006 highlights the danger of unregulated markets for the distribution and sale of drugs in many parts of the world. Not only do these unregulated markets operate outside national and international laws, the quality, safety and effectiveness of the drugs sold on these markets are doubtful.

Unregulated markets get their supplies of drugs from various unauthorized sources, including through unlicensed Internet pharmacies. Indeed, the Internet has become a major distribution channel for drugs as online sales of medicines have increased substantially over the past years.

Most of these online outlets supply and sell internationally controlled drugs, particularly benzodiazepines and opioids, drugs that are highly sought after by drug abusers. Only a tiny minority of these online drug sellers, estimated at 3 per cent, dispense drugs on the basis of valid prescriptions or contact the prescribing doctors. Moreover, with most Internet sale outlets, anybody with access to a credit card, including children, can easily obtain any medicine, including controlled drugs.

The first chapter contains concrete recommendations to Governments, international organizations and other concerned parties on how to ensure that all those affected by unregulated markets can take appropriate action to contain this problem.

Mr. President,

The Board continues to monitor the drug control situation in Afghanistan. Although the total area of opium poppy eradicated in Afghanistan increased threefold in 2006, over 6,100 hectares of opium poppy were cultivated, making Afghanistan's share of the illicit opium market to be over 90 per cent.

However, suggestions that illicit opium poppy cultivation should be legalized in Afghanistan have been receiving a fair amount of attention in the international media. Such suggestions are unrealistic and lack merit.

First and foremost, total production of licit opiate raw materials has been in excess of global demand for medical and scientific purposes since 1999. The Board estimates that, in 2007, the supply of opiates for medical and scientific purposes will also exceed the demand needed for the medical purposes. In addition, the current total stocks of licit opiate raw materials are sufficient to meet legitimate demand for almost two years. While it is true that the licit consumption of opiates for medical purposes is low in many countries, the reasons for that cannot be attributed to a lack of supply. The reasons for these low consumption levels are being investigated and addressed by the Board, together with the World Health Organization.

It is commendable that the Government of Afghanistan has consistently rejected the idea of those pushing for the legalization of its illicit opium poppy cultivation. The Board is

satisfied that the international community has supported the Government of Afghanistan on that issue. In a draft resolution entitled "Support of the counter-narcotic measures and programmes of Afghanistan", the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2007 notes the opposition of the Afghan Government to licit cultivation of opium poppy in the country and concurs with the concerns expressed by the Board in its report for 2006.

As you may be aware, the Board invoked article 14 of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs in 2000 because the aims of the Convention were being seriously endangered by the large-scale opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. An INCB mission will visit the country to see for itself what progress has been made in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Article 14 of the 1961 Convention remains invoked until there is a marked improvement in drug control in Afghanistan.

The international community has an important role to assist the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts. The Board therefore supports the above-mentioned draft resolution adopted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2007, which is before the Council for approval.

Mr. President,

As I said before, the low licit consumption of opiate-analgesics for the management of pain is an area on which the Board has been active in the recent past. Also, at the request of the Council and the World Health Assembly, the Board and the World Health Organization examined the feasibility of a possible assistance mechanism that would facilitate the management of pain using opioid analgesics. A Framework for the Access to Controlled Medications Programme has jointly been produced by the Board and the World Health Organisation. The report was presented to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2007 and the World Health Assembly in May 2007. The Access to Controlled Medications Programme will be implemented by the World Health Organization and with the support of the Board as far as the mandate of the Board allows us.

Mr. President,

In May, five members of the Board from Austria, Brazil, India, Italy and the Netherlands left the Board and were replaced by five new members from Belgium, China, Germany, Indonesia and Mexico. The new members participated in the eighty-ninth session of the Board and I seize this opportunity to thank the Council for electing members with wide-ranging drug control expertise to the Board. Through you, Mr. President, I would also like to thank the outgoing members of the Board for their immense contribution to its work and commitment during their tenure of office.

Mr. President,

Country missions are an important part of the dialogue between Governments and the Board. These visits are carried out to examine the national drug control situation and

measures adopted by Governments to implement the provisions of the international drug control conventions. Missions also allow the Board to determine the actual drug control situation of a particular country through access of first-hand information and discussion with relevant authorities.

In 2006, the Board undertook missions or technical visits to Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, El Salvador, Estonia, Gambia, Honduras, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malawi, Myanmar, Peru and Yemen.

The Board can only continue to go on missions if adequate resources are made available to the Board. Financial resources for the Board and its secretariat have been included in the regular budget of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. However, since 2000, the funds allocated to the Board have not kept pace with pressing calls for the Board to intervene in countries with serious risks of undermining the drug control Conventions. While some Governments might be willing to provide the Board with extra-budgetary funding, the Board is unable to accept such kind gestures if it is to maintain its independence and impartiality. It is important, therefore, that the General Assembly provide adequate funding for the Board's activities. For that reason, I have written to you, Mr. President, as well as to the President of the General Assembly to draw the attention of both bodies to this important issue and you have kindly reproduced my letter as Economic and Social Council document E/2007/72. I am confident that the relevant United Nations organs will take appropriate action to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the Board so that it can carry out all its functions and realize its full potential.

Thank you for your attention.