

**STATEMENT BY PROFESSOR HAMID GHODSE,
PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD**

**Economic and Social Council Substantive Session for 2010
General Segment
(22 July 2010)**

**AGENDA ITEM 14 (d):
Narcotic drugs**

**REPORT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour for me to present to the Economic and Social Council, as provided for in the drug control treaties, the report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2009. I wish to congratulate his Excellency Hamidon Ali for his election as President of ECOSOC and the other members of the Bureau on their election.

The Annual Report of the Board for 2009 was officially launched in Vienna and some 30 countries, in February 2010. It received broad media coverage in the international press and media and was discussed in detail during the session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

.Primary prevention of drug abuse, a key goal of the international drug control treaties

Mr. President,

The first chapter of the Board's Report, which is dedicated to a topical issue of particular concern to the Board, focuses on primary prevention of drug abuse: i.e., measures to prevent and reduce drug abuse in populations that are either not using or not seriously involved with drugs. Prevention of drug abuse is crucial to initiatives to reduce demand for illicit drugs, which is an obligation for Governments, as reflected in the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961.

In its Report for 2009, the Board highlights several reasons for society to give urgent and concerted attention to prevention of drug abuse. Evidence shows that primary prevention strategies have considerable potential to reduce demand for drugs. To realise this potential, Governments need to bring primary prevention out from the shadows of other strategic measures. To this end the Board calls on policymakers to establish a clear focal point for primary prevention and to develop improved cooperation between all parts of government involved. Partnerships with civil society need to be forged at all levels to increase effectiveness in reducing the prevalence of drug use.



The normative work of the Board: Operation of the international drug control system

Mr. President,

The normative work of the Board, with a focus on the operation of the international drug control system, is covered in Chapter II of its Report. In discharging its mandate the Board maintains an ongoing dialogue with Governments through various forms, such as regular consultations and country missions. That dialogue is instrumental to the Board's efforts to assist Governments in complying with the provisions of the treaties.

Country missions: an important part of the dialogue

During the past year, the Board sent missions to Angola, Australia, Finland, Holy See, Hungary Ireland, Jordan, Malta, Spain, Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Such missions enable the Board to familiarize itself with the actual situations of those countries through access to first-hand information and discussion, in situ, with relevant officials. As a follow-up to its previous missions, the Board also evaluated the measures taken and progress made by the Governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Latvia and Luxembourg.

Treaty obligations to be applied consistently at the national level

States parties to the international drug control treaties have applied adequate control measures to ensure that narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are available only for medical and scientific purposes, as required by the conventions.

However, the Board has noted with concern that some States parties have been implementing policies that are not in line with the treaties, such as the use of "safer crack kits", the so-called "medical" use of cannabis, and the establishment and operation of "drug consumption rooms".

Those measures, often adopted at state or provincial level, might unwittingly promote social and legal tolerance of drug abuse and drug trafficking and run counter to the provisions of international drug control treaties.

Adequate availability of opioid-based medications

Over the years, the Board has called the attention of the international community to the low availability of opioid-based medications in many countries. The Board has made the issue of inadequate consumption levels of those narcotic drugs in many parts of the world one of its main topic of dialogue with Governments, specialised agencies and civil society. The important role of the Board with regard to availability was recognized by Member States during the fifty-third session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2010.

The Board encourages Governments to develop policies to improve access to opioid medications. In the view of the Board, the first step for countries to improve availability is to realistically assess their requirements for controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

The Board will continue to address the issue of availability in close cooperation with Governments and the World Health Organization. During the World Health Assembly, in May this year, I had the opportunity to engage directly with Governments and high level officials of WHO on this matter.

Abuse of prescription drugs remains a concern

The abuse of prescription drugs containing internationally controlled substances remains a serious concern, surpassing the abuse of illicitly manufactured drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, in several countries. The number of deaths related to prescription drug abuse has risen significantly.

The Board has taken on a leading role in bringing the problem of wide abuse of prescription drugs to the attention of Governments and the public. The Board is pleased to note that recently the number of countries devoting attention to the problem is increasing.

The lack of systematic data collection is still an obstacle for the development of effective counter measures. It is difficult to fully assess the actual extent of the problem. The Board therefore calls upon Governments and international organizations to systematically include information on trafficking in and abuse of prescription drugs in drug control activities at national and international level, such as in drug abuse surveys and in reports on the smuggling of drugs.

Illegal Internet pharmacies: continued efforts by the Board

The Board is concerned by the significant risk posed to public health by Internet pharmacies that sell pharmaceutical preparations without the necessary prescription. They frequently distribute counterfeit and substandard products. To respond to this development the Board prepared and disseminated the *INCB Guidelines for Governments on Preventing the Illegal Sale of Internationally Controlled Substances through the Internet*.

The Guidelines include recommendations promoting measures to facilitate national and multilateral cooperation, on legal steps such as the registration and licensing of Internet pharmacies and on campaigns to raise public awareness of the risks involved in online purchases. The Board calls upon all Governments to implement the recommendations contained in the Guidelines without delay and to the fullest extent possible.

Diversion of psychotropic substances needs to be addressed at the national level

Almost all Governments are implementing measures which go further than the controls envisaged under the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, the additional control measures which the Economic and Social Council, in various resolutions, recommended to be applied to psychotropic substances.

Through such concerted actions, and with the active assistance of the Board, Governments have been successful in significantly reducing diversion of psychotropic substances from international licit trade. Such diversions were frequent in the 1990s. I have the pleasure to inform the Council that while psychotropic substances are currently traded frequently and in large quantities, diversion from international trade is virtually non-existent.

However, several challenges remain which the Board has highlighted in its recent Annual Reports:

First: amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), which are difficult to obtain from licit sources due to strict controls, are manufactured illicitly in a growing number of countries, including developing countries like South Africa.

Second: substances that are not controlled, such as ketamine, piperazines, GBL, are trafficked and abused increasingly to substitute for controlled substances like ATS and other drugs that may be difficult to obtain.

Third: psychotropic substances are diverted from domestic distribution, for example by sales at pharmacies without the necessary prescription or through the internet.

Fourth: psychotropic substances appear to be over-consumed in some societies for uses that can hardly be described as legitimate medical conditions.

Control of precursor chemicals to curtail illicit manufacture of illicit drugs

The Board plays a catalytic and supportive role for Government action and in fostering international cooperation. However, while we have made significant progress, there is still too much room for illicit operators to maneuver. Let me share with you some of our challenges:

- Several Governments have introduced new regulations to limit the availability of certain precursor chemicals. There has been a significant decline in attempts to divert these precursors in bulk (*raw*) form. However, this has also resulted in an increase in the share of suspicious shipments involving those substances *in the form of pharmaceutical preparations*.
- The diversion routes for precursors have also changed, with the appearance of new intermediate countries that may not be prepared to adequately address this problem.
- In response to stronger controls, traffickers are also seeking out non-scheduled chemical substances, including substances specifically designed to "mask" key controlled precursors.

Continued vigilance and the timely exchange of information on new developments are therefore critical. To assist Governments, the Board offers a number of tools, which include:

- The Board's On-line system for the exchange of pre-export notifications (PEN Online). This system has become the cornerstone of the monitoring system of international trade in scheduled chemicals. As at November 2009, 111 countries and territories had registered for the system. The Board urges all Governments to utilize PEN Online.
- Precursor estimates, to provide exporting countries with an indication of the legitimate precursor chemical requirements of importing countries.
- A list of non-scheduled substances for which substantial information exists of their use in illicit drug manufacture (so-called Limited International Special Surveillance List), for increased monitoring of suspicious shipments;

- *Guidelines for a voluntary code of practice for the chemical industry*, to guide and assist Governments in establishing the framework for cooperation with the chemical industry.

Also, in 2010, following a recommendation by the Board, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs decided to reschedule phenylacetic acid, a precursor for the illicit manufacture of amphetamine and methamphetamine, from Table II to Table I of the 1988 Convention.

The Board also continues to serve as the focal point for international collaborative initiatives, such as Project Cohesion and Project Prism, and the exchange of information on trade, diversions and seizures of substances used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. These initiatives have yielded remarkable results in reducing the availability of precursor chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.

Unfortunately, despite such achievements, heroin continues to be manufactured illicitly, fueled in part by diversion of acetic anhydride from *domestic* distribution channels. It is therefore essential that Governments continue to support ongoing international efforts to prevent the diversion of this key precursor chemical.

Activities to counter the trafficking of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of cocaine, in particular potassium permanganate, lag behind those activities targeting the precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants and heroin. The approaches taken to reduce the flow of precursor chemicals for heroin manufacture can be applied to combat the trafficking of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of cocaine.

Mr. President,

In the third chapter of its report the Board presents its analysis of the world situation. I would like to share with the Council some of the major concerns of the Board:

Measures taken by the Board under article 14 of the 1961 Convention: Dialogue with the Government of Afghanistan

Afghanistan has become by far the world's largest illicit producer of opium - accounting in 2009, for 6, 900 tons of opium or 95% of global production and 90% of the global heroin supply (380 tons), consumed mostly in Europe, the Russian Federation and countries en route to these destinations, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and the Central Asian republics.

Europe is the highest value regional heroin market, while Russia is now the single largest national heroin consumer in the world (70 tons). Afghan heroin has also penetrated other markets such as China, India, Thailand, Malaysia and Australia.

As this situation seriously endangered the aims of the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Board invoked article 14 of that Convention with respect to Afghanistan. Under paragraph 1 (a) of that article, the Board highlighted the gravity of the situation to Afghan authorities and underlined their responsibility for the implementation of the international conventions. The Board has called the attention of the parties to the 1961 Convention, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to the grave situation in Afghanistan.

The Board recognizes that addressing the serious situation in Afghanistan should not be the burden of the Afghanistan Government alone. This should be a shared responsibility.

Mr. President, the situation in Afghanistan continues to be a major concern for the Board. In my recent statement, as the President of INCB, at the International Forum "Drug Production in Afghanistan: A Challenge for the International Community" held in Moscow in June 2010, I called upon the international community to establish a broad-based anti-drug coalition, and emphasized that the international drug control treaties provided a platform for this global initiative to address the global threat from Afghan heroin.

Cocaine threat: from production in the Andean region (Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru) to consumption in North America and Europe

Illicit cultivation in the Andean region (Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia and Peru) on some 170 000 hectares, provides cocaine to 174 countries around the world.

With regards to cocaine trafficking, the vast bulk of the flow proceeds from the Andean region to North America, often through Central America, and Europe, often through West Africa. These two regions comprise more than 80% of the value of the global cocaine market, estimated at US\$ 88 billion in 2008. An increasing share is directed to the Southern Cone of South America. Cocaine trafficking constitute a serious threat to the international community.

Vulnerability of fragile States and impediments to attainment of MDGs

- In its Annual Reports, since 2006, the Board has highlighted that African countries were being targeted for the transit of illicit drugs and their precursor chemicals. In particular, West Africa has been targeted by traffickers as a transit area for trafficking cocaine from South America to Europe.
- Drug trafficking and drug abuse has become a threat to nations in many parts of the world. Recent developments in West Africa, the Sahel, and parts of Central America and Mexico, show the very real dangers of narco-trafficking to security, and even to the sovereignty of States.
- 22 of the 34 countries least likely to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are in the midst of – or emerging from – conflicts in regions that are magnets for drug cultivation and trafficking.

Mr. President,

I wish to thank the Council for its support to the Board in the discharge of its mandate under the international drug control conventions. We also express our appreciation to Governments for the on-going dialogue with the Board in the implementation of their treaty obligations.