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**Statement by Prof. Hamid Ghodse,  
President of the International Narcotics Control Board**

**Third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact Partners  
on Combating Illicit Traffic in Opiates Originating in Afghanistan  
Vienna, 16 February 2012**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year marks the centennial of the signing of the first international drug control convention, the 1912 International Opium Convention of the Hague. Many achievements have been made in international drug control since then, such as the almost complete elimination of diversion of internationally controlled drugs at the international level. However, many challenges in drug control lie ahead, notably the illicit cultivation and production of opiates in Afghanistan, and the trafficking of opiates therefrom.

We are gathered here today to reiterate the importance of international and regional cooperation in stemming the flow of illicitly trafficked opiates from Afghanistan. This Conference comes at a critical juncture and the actions to be taken by the Government of Afghanistan, its neighbours and the international community will have a profound impact on the future of Afghanistan, and on the world drug problem.

In the year 2000, the International Narcotics Control Board – the quasi-judicial body charged with monitoring the implementation of the international drug control treaties - invoked article 14 of the 1961 Convention, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, with respect to Afghanistan, in view of the widespread illicit cultivation of opium poppy in the country. Since then, the Board has maintained an ongoing dialogue with the Government of Afghanistan to ensure that progress is made in the implementation of the international drug control treaties. Among other measures, the Board has undertaken a number of missions to Afghanistan at both the political and technical levels, with the aim of assisting the country to comply with its treaty obligations. At the invitation of the Board, high-level delegations from the Government of Afghanistan have attended its sessions on a number of occasions - most recently earlier this month - as part of the continuing consultations under article 14.

The Board appreciates the ongoing efforts made and progress achieved by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community in enhancing security,

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improving governance and stepping up reconstruction and development. Progress in these areas is essential in enabling the Government of Afghanistan to improve the drug control situation. However, the growing dimension of drug abuse in the country could potentially undermine the achievements being made.

The Board welcomes the political will expressed by the Government of Afghanistan to improve the drug control situation. The increasing capacity of the Afghan National Police in general, and the Counter-Narcotics Police in particular, should have a significant impact on the Government's efforts against illicit drug-related activities.

While we are aware of the many severe obstacles currently faced by the Government of Afghanistan, the Board believes that a number of important normative activities could presently be undertaken that would significantly contribute to improving the drug control situation in the country. These include, for instance, improved control over the licit movement of internationally controlled substances, prevention of diversion and abuse of psychotropic substances, and enhanced precursor control.

The Board welcomes the steps recently taken by the Government of Afghanistan to prevent diversion and smuggling of precursor chemicals into the country. The Afghan authorities have now joined the 120 countries registered to use PEN Online, the Board's pre-export notification system for shipments of precursors. In addition, the Government of Afghanistan has invoked article 12, paragraph 10 (a) of the 1988 Convention for all substances in Table I and Table II, which requires exporting countries to notify the country prior to exporting precursors to its territory.

In another positive development, the Government of Afghanistan this year resumed its reporting obligations under the 1988 Convention and informed the Board that more than 72,000 litres of acetic anhydride – used in the illicit manufacture of heroin - had been seized in the country between 2008 and 2010. However, and although the Government of Afghanistan has declared that there is no legitimate need for acetic anhydride in the country, large amounts of the substance continue to be smuggled across its borders, and a number of large seizures of acetic anhydride and other chemicals were made last year in Afghanistan. Acetic anhydride destined for Afghanistan continues to be diverted primarily in countries beyond the region, with neighbouring countries used as transit points.

The Board calls upon the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to take adequate measures to ensure the effective implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1817 (2008) on precursor control. More specifically, the Board strongly urges the international community to assist the Government of Afghanistan to continue to improve systems for the collection and analysis of information with regard to seized precursor chemicals, in order to facilitate the identification and interdiction of smuggled consignments. The Board also calls on all governments, and relevant regional and international entities operating in and around Afghanistan to share information through the established Project COHESION mechanisms.

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To effectively address the continued trafficking of precursors into Afghanistan, further measures are required, in particular to strengthen border protection and to continue to integrate the country into international activities focused on cross-border investigation of drug and precursor-related crime. Support is required to enhance the capability of the drug control authorities to interdict precursor trafficking and to investigate seizures.

While recognising the importance of shared responsibility in stemming the illicit flow of opiates from Afghanistan, the Board reiterates that it is the Government of Afghanistan which has the primary responsibility for the implementation of the international drug control treaties upon its territory. The Board urges the Government of Afghanistan to step up its efforts in drug control and to continue to improve its cooperation with the Board. The Board also urges the Government of Afghanistan to take the necessary steps to accede to the 1972 Protocol amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961.

The drug control problem in Afghanistan and the neighbouring region is a grave concern to us all, and requires consolidated effort and commitment of all stakeholders. While the focus remains on combating illicit production and trafficking in opiates, the emerging situation with regard to illicit cultivation and trafficking in cannabis should not be overlooked. A balanced approach between supply and demand reduction measures is essential, with prevention and treatment key. A balance between control of substances for licit requirements and combating illicit activities must also be carefully maintained, so as to ensure appropriate availability of controlled drugs for medical purposes. Let us work together in striving to resolve the drug problem in Afghanistan and neighbouring regions as one of the success stories of contemporary international drug control.

Thank you.