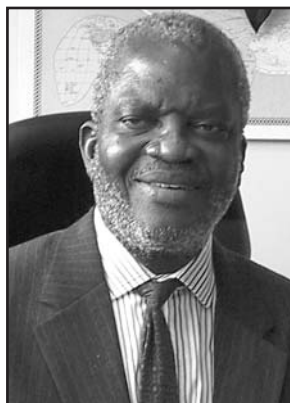


**EMBARGO: 3 March 2004
00:01 hours GMT**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Board continued to review the impact of drugs on society in 2003. As a result, the first chapter of our report for 2003 reviews the relationship between drug abuse, crime and violence at the micro level. At this level, drug abuse is often linked with antisocial behaviour such as delinquency, crime, and violence and has negative consequences for individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities that need to be addressed by the international community and individual governments.



Although only a relatively small group of serious and violent offenders are drug abusers, they account for a disproportionate amount of all serious crime committed by delinquents.

Law enforcement interventions have often been seen as the only viable response to violence and other crimes associated with drug abuse. However, there is a need to explore other means of addressing violence and crime associated with drug abuse. A multi-disciplinary approach should be pursued,

Among the factors which are regarded as contributing to the link between drug abuse, crime and violence are the type of drug, the amount of drug abused, the person abusing the drug, and the environment in which the drug is taken. The emergence of the abuse of crack cocaine has been associated with the rise in crime and violence in many cities of the world. The abuse of some other drugs has been similarly associated with other crimes and violence. In some instances, violence is committed by the drug abuser as a way of generating income to purchase drugs for illicit use. Also, violence is often associated with the illicit traffic of drugs.

Economic opportunities provided by drug trafficking can lead to rivalry among drug gangs as they compete for a share in this illicit market. These rivalries frequently spill over into violence that harms local communities.

Violence, crime and drugs have a disproportionate impact on some individuals and segments of society, and curtail the freedom of women, the elderly and young children in dysfunctional communities, where both fear of crime and actual crime is rampant. Children and female drug abusers are also at risk of increased violence being perpetrated against them.

which includes:

- a) introducing effective drug demand reduction programmes;
- b) introducing effective and efficient policing of neighbourhoods and communities to prevent illicit drug trafficking;
- c) offering assistance to drug-dependent people so that they can seek treatment;
- d) referring drug-dependent people for treatment through the justice system as an alternative to incarceration;
- e) involving the community in drug abuse prevention; and
- f) providing employment opportunities as a means of earning a livelihood or income by legitimate means.

The year 2003 marked the five-year anniversary of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem. In April 2003, Ministers assembled at a specially convened ministerial segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to review the progress that has been achieved since 1998. The Joint Ministerial statement adopted by that meeting reaffirms the commitment of the international community to the fight against drug abuse and illicit drug production and trafficking.

The Commission also called for the implementation of the drug control treaties in their entirety and for safeguarding the integrity of the international drug control regime.

The ceremony on the first day of the Commission in which more than 1.3 million signatures of ordinary citizens from 60 countries in support of the treaties were handed over to the Chairperson of the Commission and the Executive Director of the United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime* was indeed a wake-up call to the international community to do more to prevent illicit drug use wherever it exists. At the ceremony, a former drug abuser spoke about her past experiences and her future hopes, now that she was no longer involved in illicit drug use. Her call on governments to work with non-governmental organizations and civil society to protect people at risk of drug abuse and promote national compliance with the international drug control treaties is a call for action by all those engaged in prevention of illicit drug use. We cannot afford to ignore this call for collective action.

The Board believes that more needs to be done to prevent drug abuse and to protect the drug abusing population and people at risk. Governments and non-governmental organizations have roles to play in this regard. Let us work together to stop the misery and pain associated with drug abuse.

Philip O. Emafo
President of the International Narcotics Control Board