

2002 Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council

24 July 2002

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

AS DELIVERED

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and an honour to address this august body today. I bring you very warm greetings from members and staff of the International Narcotics Control Board and assure you of our commitment to international drug control. As you know, the thirteen members of the Board are elected by ECOSOC. Once they are elected, they act in their personal, impartial and independent capacity, in line with the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. I want to assure you of the independence of the members of the Board in taking decisions. It is important that this independence is not eroded.

The International Narcotics Control Board which monitors the implementation of the international drug control treaties worldwide values the opportunity of this address to exchange views and experience with the Governments participating in this session of ECOSOC.

During the past week, I visited Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana and engaged in dialogue with the Governments of both countries in respect of the action taken by these Governments to implement the three international drug control treaties. About twenty such country missions are carried out by Board members every year, in agreement with the Governments concerned. By the end of 2002, the Board will have visited the Governments of Albania, Cape Verde, Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Suriname, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Tunisia.

As you are well aware, the International Narcotics Control Board is a creation of the international drug control treaties and these treaties require that the reports of the Board are submitted to the Economic and Social Council, through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

The forty-fifth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs welcomed the 2001 report of the Board, and in particular its examination of the challenges that globalization and new technologies pose to drug law enforcement in the twenty-first century. While these new technologies bring enormous benefits to the legitimate user, they also offer immense opportunities for criminals to organize illicit drug manufacture and trafficking with great

abandon. They encourage cross-jurisdictional criminal operations and low-profile network structures which challenge the approach of conventional drug law enforcement with clear geographical demarcation lines. In many jurisdictions, the legal framework for prosecuting these crimes does not exist. The report of the Board recommends that Governments urgently address this issue by, for example, establishing dedicated anti-cyber crime units at the national level. At the international level, measures should be introduced and harmonized, as far as possible, to ensure that offences, sanctions and standards of proof are similar in countries throughout the world, to prevent the growth of data havens.

The Commission also expressed strong support of the views of the Board on the role of drug control in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Board welcomes the measures of the Afghan Interim Administration to impose a complete ban not only on the cultivation of opium poppy but also on manufacture and trafficking of opiates. So far, the Government of Afghanistan has destroyed twenty-five per cent of the crop in the country's three biggest poppy-growing provinces. Afghan officials have also reported that they have confiscated enough opium from merchants in quantities sufficient to manufacture up to eight million dollars worth of heroin.

Now that Hamid Karzai has been elected President of the Afghanistan, the Board looks to him to make drug control a top priority of his administration. The Board further looks to him to set up mechanisms for effective prevention of poppy cultivation, and manufacture and trafficking of opiates.

The Board on its part and within its mandate has been trying to contain the problem of opium poppy cultivation and production and trafficking of opiates. The Board, as you know, has been in formal consultation with the authorities of Afghanistan since April 2000, in accordance with article 14 of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. The Board, through its President, held talks with the Secretary-General and with his Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ambassador Brahimi and with other United Nations entities coordinating assistance for that country. The Board is proposing a visit to Afghanistan in August to discuss with the Afghan authorities how full compliance with the provisions of the international drug control conventions can be achieved in Afghanistan. Eradicating opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is not just about drug control. Past events have shown that peace and security in that country cannot possibly be achieved without addressing the drug control problem, which will require simultaneous action of both the Afghan authorities and the international community.

Another major theme of the report of the Board for 2001 was the increasing divergence of the application of the provisions of the international drug control treaties by Governments, with respect to cannabis. While some Governments apply more comprehensive control measures to cannabis than those required in the conventions, others have decriminalized cannabis abuse and some of its preparatory acts such as possession. It seems that the international community lacks unanimity in taking universal and collective action necessary to address the drug problem successfully. The Board does not wish to and cannot discourage discussion on the appropriateness of control measures for cannabis or any other drug. The Board however, as the main guardian of the

international drug control conventions, deprecates liberal attitudes that undermine international drug control. The Board urges Governments that have unbiased and evidence-based information on cannabis, to justify control measures different from those envisaged by the drug conventions, to come forward and present such information. Until such evidence becomes available, Governments are urged to comply with the provisions of the drug conventions to which they are parties.

In its resolution 45/15, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs echoed the concerns of the Board by expressing its support for the conventions. The Commission called for the implementation of the international drug control treaties, in particular, those provisions which oblige States parties to limit the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances exclusively to medical and scientific purposes. The Commission also reaffirmed the necessity to take appropriate measures to reduce the demand for illicit drugs. The significant reduction of drug abuse is one of the targets set by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session which was devoted to countering the world drug problem. The Board has called on Governments to elaborate national strategies and policies to meet the objectives and targets set by the General Assembly more so, as these endeavours will support the full implementation of the international drug control treaties.

In the spring of 2003, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs will hold a ministerial-level meeting at which the action taken by Governments to implement the targets of the General Assembly special session will be reviewed. This will be an opportunity to take stock of achievements but also to identify shortcomings and determine how these deficiencies can be remedied. The Board and the international community await the outcome of the ministerial-level meeting.

Thank you for your attention.

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