



UNITED NATIONS
Office on Drugs and Crime



د افغانستان اسلامي
جمهوريت
د نښه يي توکو پر ضد
دمبارزي وزارت

PRESS RELEASE

KABUL, FEBRUARY 12, 2008

UNODC and Ministry for Counter-Narcotics welcome publication of Opium Assessment

The acting minister of Counter-Narcotics, General Khodaidad and the Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Afghanistan, Ms. Christina Oguz, have welcomed the publication of the latest report on opium cultivation in Afghanistan and renewed their pledge to work together to tackle drugs and crime.

The winter assessment is a forecast of poppy cultivation and is a joint endeavor between MCN and UNODC. It is based on interviews with village leaders in four hundred and sixty-nine villages at different elevations across the country.

According to the report, opium cultivation in 2008 will be broadly similar to, or slightly lower than last year's record harvest of 193,000 hectares. Final output figures will depend on the effectiveness of eradication and on agricultural yields which are affected by weather conditions.

The diverging trends from last year are also confirmed. A decrease is forecast in the north and north-east. At least a dozen provinces are expected to remain opium free, among them Balkh which went from over seven thousand hectares to zero last year. But an increase is expected in the south and the west and results will depend in part on the success of eradication campaigns and weather conditions.

The report also points to good news in Nangarhar where cultivation is expected to drop dramatically. Badakhshan, which last year reported a 70% decrease, is also expected to see production reduce further.

Acting minister for Counter-Narcotics Ministry, General Khodaidad pledged to do more to ensure that opium levels go down. "The government led a pre-planting campaign during the latter half of 2007 that seems to have been a success", he said.

"One hundred and eight Shuras have been established in seventeen provinces where poppy cultivation was expected. Governors and community elders have an important role to play by encouraging farmers not to grow poppy," he added.



UNITED NATIONS
Office on Drugs and Crime



د افغانستان اسلامي
جمهوريت
د نښه يي توکو پر ضد
دمبارزې وزارت

“Such efforts are a clear sign of the determination of the government to press ahead with a clear strategy that will deal with this issue. As previously stated, the latest report points to a slight decrease as a result of the successful measures that have been put in place.”

The UNODC Representative for Afghanistan, Christina Oguz, underlined the need for counter-narcotic efforts, such as alternative livelihoods opportunities, law enforcement and judicial reform measures to intensify.

“The example of Nangarhar, Badakhshan and Balkh show that it is possible to reduce poppy cultivation,” she said. “In many instances it is actually more difficult to keep the reduction as it requires strong leadership, an alliance with the farmers and sustained support to rural development”.

She also called for a two-pronged strategy. “In the north, the government must make sure that there is a strong investment in rural development to give incentives for the farmers not to cultivate opium poppy. In the south there must be more emphasis on interdiction, fighting the convenience alliance of drug traffickers, corrupt officials and insurgents”.

The full text of the *Afghan Opium Winter Survey* is available at www.unodc.org

For more information contact:

Ms Maryann Maguire
External Relations and Communications
UNODC
Mobile: 0796-427-587
Email: maryann.maguire@unodc.org

Mr Zalmay Afzali
Spokesperson
Ministry for Counter-Narcotics
Mobile 0700-18-66-22
Email: zulmay_k@mcn.gov.af