

Text adopted by European Parliament

Thursday, 25 October 2007 - Strasbourg

Provisional edition

Production of opium for medical purposes in Afghanistan

European Parliament recommendation to the Council of 25 October 2007 on production of opium for medical purposes in Afghanistan (2007/2125(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal for a recommendation to the Council tabled on behalf of the ALDE Group on production of opium for medical purposes in Afghanistan (**B6-0187/2007**),
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Afghanistan, most recently that of 18 January 2006⁽¹⁾;
- having regard to the 2006 UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)/World Bank report on 'Afghanistan's Drug Industry',
- having regard to the 2007 Annual Report issued by the UNODC in June 2007;
- having regard to the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 2005/25 of 22 July 2005 on treatment of pain using opioid analgesics, in which the feasibility of a possible assistance mechanism that would facilitate such treatment is discussed, to ECOSOC Resolution 2004/40 of 21 July 2004 on guidelines for psychosocially assisted pharmacological treatment of persons dependent on opioids, to ECOSOC Resolution 2005/26 of 22 July 2005 on demand for and supply of opiates used to meet medical and scientific needs, to World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution 58.22 of 25 May 2005 on cancer prevention and control, to WHA Resolution 55.14 of 18 May 2002 on ensuring accessibility of essential medicines, and to the final recommendations of the 12th International Conference of Drug Regulatory Authorities, held in Seoul from 3-6 April 2006, urging regulators to work for better access to narcotic painkillers;
- having regard to the mission reports of its ad hoc delegation to Afghanistan, in July 2005, and of its election observation mission in September 2005;
- having regard to the final report of the European Union Election Observation Mission to the parliamentary and provincial council elections held on 18 September 2005;
- having regard to Rule 114(3) of its Rules of Procedure;
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (**A6-0341/2007**);

A. whereas international drugs policies are based on the United Nations Conventions of 1961, 1971 and 1988 that prohibit, in particular, the production, trafficking, sale and consumption of a

whole range of substances other than for medical or scientific purposes,

B. whereas the UNODC report entitled "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006" stresses that the area under illicit opium cultivation produced a record volume of about 6,100 tonnes in 2006, an increase of nearly 50% over 2004 figures,

C. whereas the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy adopted in January 2006 addresses supply as well as demand reduction, alternative livelihoods and the strengthening of government institutions, and whereas the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, established with the help of EU money, is the lead agency in the implementation of the strategy,

D. whereas the Government of Afghanistan established a Drug Regulation Committee, which comprises officials from the Ministries of Counter Narcotics, Health and Finance, in order to regulate the licensing, sale, dispensation, import and export of all drugs for licit purposes in the country,

E. whereas the EU should do more to bring about a drastic reduction in opium production (by participating in the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund and the Good Performance Fund) since – according to the UNODC's Afghanistan 2007 Annual Opium Poppy Survey – Afghanistan's opium production has now reached a frightening new level, twice the amount produced just two years ago; whereas Afghanistan has practically become the exclusive supplier of the world's deadliest drug, with 93% of the global opiates market, although it has to be noted that the number of opium-free provinces has more than doubled, from 6 in 2006 to 13 in 2007 due to successful schemes supporting alternative livelihoods and also expanded security in the north, as well as an effective awareness-raising programme including a system of rewards for good performers, and that 50% of the whole Afghan opium crop comes from the single province of Helmand,

F. whereas the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund estimate that almost 40% of Afghanistan's GDP is opium-related, and whereas the UNODC estimates that 3.3 million people (out of a population of over 31 million) are engaged in the poppy sector, producing an income of USD 1 965 a year per family,

G. whereas in 2007 the farm-gate value of the opium harvest totalled USD 1 billion, or 13% of the licit GDP of Afghanistan of USD 7.5 billion, and whereas the total potential value of the country's 2007 opium harvest accruing to farmers, laboratory owners and Afghan traffickers reached USD 3.1 billion, which represents almost half the country's licit GDP, or 32% of the overall economy including the opium sector,

H. whereas the incentive for Afghan farmers to produce opiates is largely financial and whereas licensed opiates will have to produce – in order to be economically attractive – an income higher than that coming from illegal opiates,

I. whereas the European Union remains the biggest donor as regards efforts aimed at reducing the opium supply through projects that promote alternative livelihoods – which are desperately needed as a way to complement the national diet – as a substitute for illicit crops,

J. drawing attention to the Commission's recognition, as set out in the EC's Afghanistan Country Strategy Paper (2007 - 2013), that the growing opium economy and the danger of "state capture" by narco-interests pose a critical threat to development, state-building and security in

Afghanistan,

K. whereas there are substantiated claims that insurgents, warlords, the Taliban and terrorist groups are obtaining the major part of their funding through trade in illicit narcotics,

L. considering that on 25 June 2007, the Senlis Council, an international security and development think tank, presented a detailed Technical Dossier that describes how a village-based "Poppy for Medicine" project could work in Afghanistan, including an Integrated Social Control system, the production of Afghan medicines at village level, compulsory economic diversification and general rural development,

M. noting that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has indicated that 10 countries consume 80% of the opiates legally available worldwide, and that the remaining 180 states include the majority of developing countries that make up 80% of the world's population; noting also that the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) has asked the international community to promote the prescription of painkillers, especially in poor countries, as severe under-treatment is reported in more than 150 countries where hardly anyone who is in need of treatment is being treated, and, in another 30 countries, where under-treatment is even more prevalent or where no data are available,

N. Recalls that Article 23 of the 1961 UN Convention lays down conditions governing the cultivation, production and distribution of opium under the supervision of a government agency, and insists that the Afghan Government satisfy those conditions, especially in respect of the southern provinces of the country, where there is excessive opium cultivation,

O. whereas the INCB has stated that there is a global oversupply of opiates for medical purposes, even if this evaluation does not take into consideration potential demand,

P. whereas according to the report by the International Narcotics Control Board there is a global oversupply of opiates for medical purposes,

Q. whereas the Afghan Constitution states that "the state shall prevent all types of cultivation and smuggling of narcotics" and whereas Afghanistan's 2005 Counter Narcotics Drug Law provides for the eventual licensed production and distribution of controlled substances in Afghanistan,

R. convinced that, to promote and strengthen peace and security in Afghanistan, the international presence needs to be complemented by an increased civil cooperation, in order to foster socio-political progress and economic development and also to win "the hearts and minds" of the local population,

S. considering, once again, the extremely high costs and serious flaws in terms of effectiveness of a counter-narcotics strategy that does not take into account the regional, social and economic diversity of rural Afghanistan when developing and deploying measures on alternative livelihoods, and one that is based only on eradication,

T. considering that the promotion of a process of institution-building, democratisation and affirmation of the rule of law, a fair justice system and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms can only happen through policies that do not impose violent solutions, such as forcible

eradication of crops, on what are in themselves non-violent practices,

U. whereas the fight against drug production in Afghanistan should reflect a differentiated approach by locality, whereas counter-narcotics efforts against farmers must be carefully limited to areas where licit livelihoods are possible (places where access to land and water resources is better, there is proximity to markets and land-person ratios are higher), and whereas alternative livelihood programmes need to focus especially on poorer regions with limited resources, which are the most dependent on opium in the first place,

V. whereas the Country Strategy Paper for 2007-2013 has an appropriate focus on rural development and governance, but more emphasis needs to be placed on the reform of the Afghan ministries in charge of controlling drug production, especially the Ministry of the Interior,

1. Addresses the following recommendations to the Council:

- a) oppose, in the framework of integrated development programmes, recourse to fumigation as a means of eradicating the poppy in Afghanistan;
- b) elaborate and submit to the Afghan Government, within the framework of EU-sponsored illicit supply reduction programmes, a comprehensive plan and strategy aimed at controlling drug production in Afghanistan, by improving governance and tackling corruption at the highest levels of the Afghan administration (with a special focus on the Ministry of the Interior), using existing international legal instruments; targeting action against the key traffickers on the ground; improving comprehensive rural development, particularly in the poorest areas and in those not yet producing opium on a large scale; carefully and selectively engaging in manual eradication; and looking at the possibility of pilot projects for small-scale conversion of parts of the current illicit poppy cultivation into fields for the production of legal opium-based analgesics; that production should be subject to strict on-the-spot surveillance which should in its turn be complemented with monitoring by an international organisation, such as the UNDCP, which supervises that production and prevents any diversion of the product to other, illegal, markets such as the heroin market;
- c) offer its assistance in discussing the possibilities and the feasibility of a scientific "Poppy for Medicine" pilot project that will further investigate how licensing can contribute to the alleviation of poverty, diversification of the rural economy, general development and increased security, and how it can become a successful part of multilateral efforts for Afghanistan, ensuring that a mechanism is in place to exclude regions where recent achievements in establishing the rule of law and the subsequent elimination or reduction of cultivation may easily be jeopardised;

2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council and, for information, to the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

(1) OJ C 287 E, 24.11.2006, p. 176.