

7 February 2006

Speech by Mrs. Sumru Noyan, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, at the 7th meeting in Tashkent, Kazakhstan, of Central Asian countries setting up a regional centre to combat drug trafficking

Minister,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to address you on behalf of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and to pass on Mr. Antonio Maria Costa's best wishes to our host authorities, the Uzbek Government, and all of you, for this 7th Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) meeting. We are here to review progress made since we entered into this MoU, and we will also discuss and agree on important future steps and priorities for improved regional drug control results of all MoU partners. Let me confirm, from the outset, that you have my personal support, and that of the entire UNODC team here, to assist and guide you in the key decisions that we all hope this meeting will produce.

We can be quite proud of some of our achievements so far. Today, we see the results of our joint programme, which we have built up together since the mid eighties. When I was last here in 2003, I launched several key UNODC projects, including the expanded project operations with the Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan, a border control project along the Uzbek-Afghan border, and new border control and regional enforcement and precursor control measures in other Central Asian countries.

It was then, in mid-2003, that we expanded the Central Asia programme with a package of law enforcement projects worth more than 20 million US\$. As you know, we have built up this programme further since then – all in the spirit of our Memorandum of Understanding, and of course with the help of donors who fully appreciate the strategic importance of Central Asia for drug control.

Our joint programmes have helped the creation of two Drug Control Agencies in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan – agencies which other countries look to as potential models or examples for their own national enforcement bodies. We have a fully developed

modern border crossing at the main Uzbek-Afghan checkpoint-Hayraton , and are upgrading other border control facilities along important entry routes from Afghanistan. We have set the standards and provisions for modern drug control legislation, and for the control of licit drugs, psychotropic substances and the licit trade in precursors in all Central Asian countries. Almost all Central Asian countries now have compatible national enforcement information systems in place. This regional information project was another important stone in the foundation for a Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Centre - CARICC. We are also venturing into new regional projects to help establish advanced law enforcement techniques, such as controlled delivery, in all MoU countries and to give a large number of law enforcement officers more access to modern drug enforcement training. This will be done through the introduction of computer-based training in your training facilities.

Less than two years ago, we started to address the demand reduction problems more vigorously. Since then, we have started to see better statistics and publications on the real extent and patterns of drug abuse and the alarming growth rates in drug-related HIV/AIDS in several countries. We work with NGOS in targeted prevention and rehabilitation projects for drug abusers and risk groups. A major new project of more than 5 million US\$ has just been approved, which we will implement in the entire region to respond to the drug abuse and HIV-AIDS threats. In cooperation with the Pavlodar Centre in Kazakhstan, and also thanks to the Kazak Government's contribution of more than 1.2 million US\$ to this project, we will develop a regional network of HIV-AIDS and drug demand reduction experts. These will be trained and supported in the conduct of more forceful measures against the rapidly growing drug abuse and HIV-AIDS problems.

Central Asia today is the region which benefits from UNODC's largest regional drug control portfolio. Our current portfolio exceeds 40 million US\$ and is still expanding. There is only one programme in the world with higher UNODC investments – and that is Afghanistan.

It is, of course, the Afghanistan heroin situation that has the strongest and most negative effect on drug control in your region. The 2005 UNODC Afghan Opiates Survey showed that of the 420 tons of heroin and morphine exported from

Afghanistan, more than 100 tons were trafficked through Central Asia, almost the same amount through Pakistan, and more than 200 tons through Iran. Of 1,200 tons of opium exports, about 1,100 tons went through Iran, 40 through Pakistan, and 35 tons through Central Asia. Central Asian local seizure statistics display a similar pattern. Opium seizures in Central Asia have declined significantly since 2000, but heroin and morphine seizures have gone up dramatically.

Since 2001, Central Asia has reported more than 5 tons of seized heroin every year, with total seizures in the region of 6.6 tons in 2003, and 6.3 tons in 2004. Tajikistan has been accounting for between 75% and above 80%, or between 4 and 5.6 tons, of these seizures and now ranks as the number 3 heroin seizure country in the world, after China and Turkey. For opium seizures, Central Asia as a whole ranks second after the Near and Middle East. Tajikistan is also the main opium seizure country, with stable seizures of about 2.3 tons each in 2003 and 2004. All other Central Asian countries reported significant increases in their 2004 opium seizures compared with 2003.

Growing seizures and higher arrest rates for drug offenders are a positive sign in terms of growing law enforcement success in the region. It is also evident, however, that only a very small percentage of the heroin, morphine and opium being trafficked in Central Asia is actually seized here and that more needs to be done. Similarly, there are no significant precursor seizures, despite strong indications that precursors move through Central Asia on their way into Afghanistan.

The growing drug abuse problems in virtually all MoU countries also require more attention. The problem is already alarming in Russia and the trend is very worrying in the Central Asian countries -. Several MoU countries now show drug-related HIV/AIDS growth rates that are among the highest in the world. Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have reported drug abuse and HIV-AIDS prevalence rates that are much higher than in the rest of the region. The vast majority of HIV-AIDS cases in the region are caused by drug injection. This abuse pattern is apparently still on the rise among the estimated half million abusers in Central Asia and the 2 million opiates abusers in Russia - all of that in a scenario where heroin is easily available on growing local markets. So governments need to respond with vigour and determination to halt and reverse these trends.

Excellencies,

Together we have set up the structures, institutions and knowledge needed to enable your countries to prioritize drug and crime control in your national development plans. Full-fledged donor and partner support is available to the region, as is clear not just through UNODC's own large programme. The European Commission runs multi-million Euro programmes in drug control and border management through its CADAP, BOMCA and TACIS programmes, and we at UNODC cooperate with UNDP and the Commission in delivering some of these projects. We also cooperate with NATO and the World Bank to foster new partnerships and make use of their expertise and resources for drug control, anti-money laundering and HIV/AIDS prevention activities. The OSCE is planning to intensify its work in areas like general policing and anti-corruption, and an increasing number of donors work directly with MoU countries in bilateral drug control assistance projects, some of which are large.

All these programmes are providing the enabling environment for your increased action against drugs and crime. It is now time for action to tackle the threats effectively, now and in the future. We need to see more Government programmes and allocations to fight high levels of corruption and growing organized crime. You need to implement meaningful anti-money laundering measures – and these actions will require financial and technical resources from your Governments as well.

MoU countries now have a unique opportunity. It is your responsibility to convince all partners that together we can move the drug and crime control agenda forward and enter into new forms of partnership that combine the technical and financial resources of donors and partners with those of your Governments.

We have been working together now for the last two years on preparing our joint regional law enforcement body – CARICC. We have spent time, expertise and money to develop the required legal framework and documents so as to start the operational phase. These documents will be reviewed during our meeting, for adoption and signature. We have also witnessed the negotiations and discussions over the venue for CARICC. I have to point out that these discussions have delayed not only project activities that UNODC could have undertaken already, but also the additional funding

that we need for CARICC as of 2007. UNODC has, therefore, taken on additional work to support you in your decision-making. Mr Abbot, a senior enforcement expert, has helped us in assessing proposed or potential CARICC venues and will report to this Meeting tomorrow. I want to thank participants and their Governments for having facilitated and supported Mr. Abbot's important work.

Excellencies,

It is time to make CARICC a reality and to start operations. We truly believe that you will honour the spirit and the substance of the Memorandum of Understanding, the efforts invested by all parties, through the CARICC project expert team and otherwise, and of our host Government at this 7th meeting. I encourage you to agree on the recommended venue, and to ensure rapid approval and signature of all CARICC legal documents and the CARICC project so as to start the operational phase. It is time for all of us to move on in regional drug control cooperation – so please enable us now to also move into your agreed CARICC BUILDING that stands for the principle of MOU partnership and action.

If these decisions are taken during this meeting, the MoU group and its members could really become a source of advice and expertise, not just within the current MoU setting. The experience and knowledge gained by us over the last 10 years could be shared and opened up for neighbours that are affected by the same drug control problems and that are inseparably linked to successful drug control efforts for West & Central Asia, Europe and beyond.

In conclusion, I want to thank all of you in advance for your contributions and for your facilitation of regional decision-making.

Thank you.