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Subject: Regional report on South West Asia

1. AFGHANISTAN

1.1. Overview

The drugs trade continues to pose a critical threat to the stability of Afghanistan, undermining security, fuelling institutional corruption, and eroding governance and public confidence. The drugs trade and the insurgency benefit one another through funding and protection: the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that the insurgency derives approximately \$150 million per annum from the Afghan narcotics trade.

1.2. General drugs situation

Afghanistan remains the world's largest producer of opium and derived illegal opiates including heroin. According to the UNODC, Afghanistan is also now the world's largest cultivator of cannabis and manufacturer of cannabis resin and hashish.

1.3. Afghanistan's counter-narcotics strategy

The National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) was adopted in 2006. Delivery is led by the Ministry of Counter Narcotics. The international community is supporting the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) to deliver the comprehensive approach set out in the NDCS and to foster effective international engagement against all aspects of the drug trade. The NDCS comprises eight pillars:

- Building institutions
- Information campaign
- Alternative livelihoods
- Interdiction & law enforcement
- Criminal justice
- Targeted poppy eradication
- Demand reduction
- Regional co-operation

1.4. Significant events (November 2011 - May 2012):

UNODC Afghanistan Opium Risk Assessment

- The UNODC's Afghanistan Opium Risk Assessment Parts 1 and 2 were released in Spring 2012. They provide an early qualitative indication of cultivation trends on a province by province basis, based on a small sample of villages. Over 500 village headmen were also asked to state the main reason why farmers chose to cultivate opium instead of other crops or not to cultivate opium at all.
- In the southern region, the report predicts that poppy cultivation is not expected to change significantly in Helmand, the main cultivating province in the country. Kandahar province is likely to see a decrease in cultivation. Overall, UNODC expects the south to remain the largest opium cultivating region.
- The findings also point to potential increases in a number of other provinces in the south, west, centre and east of the country, although these levels are likely to be relatively small when compared to the more significant levels seen in Helmand and Kandahar.

- In the north and northeast, most provinces are unlikely to see a significant change in cultivation levels, with many likely to remain poppy free, although an increase is expected in Badakhshan.
- The report does not provide a national level prediction. Nor does it seek to predict the precise area under opium cultivation at harvest time, which is also influenced by factors such as changing weather conditions and eradication activity between the report publication and the final harvest.
- The annual Afghanistan Opium Survey will be released later this year, and will provide a more accurate picture of opium cultivation across the country.

The Third Paris Pact Ministerial Conference

- The Third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact Partners on “Combating Illicit Traffic in Opiates Originating in Afghanistan” was held in Vienna on 16 February 2012. The conference was attended by 500 participants from 58 countries and 16 international organizations, all with the shared ambition of tackling the Afghan drugs trade.
- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon In opened the conference, emphasising the importance of the Paris Pact as a global partnership. He also referred to the growing sense of political commitment to tackling the trade that had emerged both from the Istanbul and Bonn conferences on Afghanistan late last year.
- Participants reiterated their common and shared responsibility towards tackling the illicit trade in Afghan opiates, with particular reference to 4 key areas: regional co-operation, precursor chemicals, financial flows and demand reduction.

Opium Poppy Eradication

- The 2012 programme of opium poppy eradication began in Afghanistan in March 2012. According to the UNODC, 9398 hectares of opium poppy was eradicated and verified (as of 7 May 2012) compared to 3787 hectares by 16 May 2011.
- In Helmand, 3958 hectares of opium poppy was eradicated and verified by 7 May 2012, compared to 2111 hectares by 16 May 2011.
- It is expected that eradication will continue into May 2012 across a range of provinces.

1.5. Future events

Over the next six months, key events include:

- Government of Afghanistan's National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) revision is expected to be agreed.
- Further meetings of the Paris Pact to take forward internationally agreed action against the Afghan drugs trade.
- Wider keynote Afghanistan-related meetings, including the Tokyo Conference in July, at which the international community will discuss support for Afghanistan for the coming decade.

1.6. Conclusion

- The UK continues to support both the Government of Afghanistan implement the NDCS and the UNODC as the Afghan Government's main multilateral partner in tackling the Afghan drugs trade. This requires a long-term and comprehensive approach which addresses security, economic and rural development as well as law enforcement.
- Challenges in tackling the Afghanistan narcotics trade abound. And indicators of success and progress are both complicated to analyse and easy to misinterpret. But progress is being made by the Government of Afghanistan, in partnership with the international community.

2. PAKISTAN

2.1. Overview

Pakistan remains vulnerable to the trafficking of heroin and cannabis produced in Afghanistan. Stability in Pakistan's border areas depends on stability in Afghanistan, which is threatened by the ongoing production, processing and transit of drugs along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

It is important that Pakistan continues to receive international assistance to build the capacity of the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), support growing inter-agency efforts to tackle narcotics flows, and encourage constructive Pakistani engagement in regional initiatives.

2.2. General drugs situation

- The flow of heroin from Afghanistan continues to pose a number of serious challenges to Pakistani Law Enforcement Agencies and to its healthcare system. Illicit cross-border flows of heroin have a de-stabilising effect on Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) where it fuels organised crime and corruption.
- According to the United Nations Office on Drugs Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report 2011, 40 per cent of Afghan heroin is trafficked through Pakistan. This may rise if the environment for narcotics trafficking networks becomes more difficult in Iran. Some poppy cultivation continues in Pakistan's border areas, with a trend away from FATA towards Balochistan. Significant flows of cannabis from Afghanistan also transit Pakistan. Pakistan is also a known destination and transshipment point for precursor chemicals.
- The Government is building the capacity of the ANF to interdict these flows with the support of the international community. The ANF is now more active in FATA, particularly in Khyber Agency which has traditionally been a no-go area used for storing and distributing drugs. This is a welcome development. But an inter-agency effort is needed to have significant impact on illicit cross-border flows. There is increasing traction for the Inter-Agency Task Force on Narcotics Control, which should be encouraged alongside UNODC's efforts to improve coordination along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border through its border management programme.
- The lack of available data makes it difficult to get a clear picture of the extent of domestic drug use in Pakistan. However, the Government has started to develop a more balanced counter-narcotics approach in recognition of the need to focus on drug demand reduction as well as supply reduction. Access to treatment is currently limited by the small number of drug treatment centres in Pakistan. UNODC is currently undertaking a survey of household drug use to help the Government understand the social impact of substance abuse in Pakistan and design effective interventions to address it. The survey will be released in the second half of 2012.

2.3. Pakistan's counter-narcotics strategy

The Ministry of Narcotics Control is responsible for formulating and coordinating the implementation of Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Policy, which was updated in August 2011 to take into account the devolution of some Federal Government functions to Provincial Governments as a result of the 18th Amendment to Pakistan's constitution. The policy outlines the following objectives:

Drug supply reduction

- Eliminate poppy cultivation to maintain Pakistan's poppy-free status;
- Prevent the trafficking and production of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals;
- Strengthen law enforcement agencies and streamline their agencies.

Drug demand reduction

- Enhance demand prevention efforts through education and community mobilisation campaigns and projects;
- Develop effective and accessible drug treatment and rehabilitation systems;
- Conduct a drug abuse survey to determine the prevalence of drug addiction.

International cooperation

- Promote and actively participate in bilateral, regional and international efforts to combat drugs;
- Emphasis on control of problem at source in poppy growing countries;
- Demand reduction in destination countries needs to be an important part of international efforts.

The Anti-Narcotics Policy is underpinned by the Drug Control Master Plan, a five year document spanning 2010-14 which is jointly owned by the Ministry and the ANF. The document aims to achieve supply reduction through strengthened law enforcement and demand reduction through accelerated initiatives. It is built on the need for inter-agency cooperation, human resource development, and performance and impact monitoring.

The Government has committed 25 per cent of the funding required to implement the Master Plan in full, and is seeking 75 per cent funding from international partners. The Master Plan is not yet fully funded. It is important that the Government continues to receive international assistance for its counter-narcotics work, but it will also need to be prepared to commit increasing resources to it over time.

2.4. Significant events (November 2011 - May 2012):

Seizures and prosecutions

In the first quarter of 2012, the ANF made a number of significant heroin seizures in Peshawar, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Kech, Balochistan. The largest of these, 149 kg, was intercepted from a wagon travelling through Peshawar on 6 March 2012. The ANF also seized 850 kg of opium from a jeep in Kech, Balochistan. In addition, there were a number of large Hashish seizures, including 9,863 kg recovered from a container at Karachi Sea Port on 30 January 2012.

From 1 January to 29 February 2012, 89 cases were decided by the Special Courts. Of these 78 were convicted, 10 acquitted and one case remains dormant. However, most of those prosecuted in drugs-related cases tend to be lower-level couriers due to the pragmatic requirement to catch offenders with drugs if there is to be a successful prosecution. The international community is working with the Government to fund improvements to the criminal justice system.

Regional engagement

Pakistan engages in a series of initiatives designed to improve regional coordination against narcotics trafficking networks. These include the UNODC-led Triangular Initiative with Afghanistan and Iran, the Paris Pact Initiative, and Central Asia Regional Intelligence Coordination Centre. Pakistan and Afghanistan are also engaged in bilateral discussions on counter-narcotics as part of the Canadian-led Afghanistan-Pakistan Cooperation Process. This track focuses on border management and is supported by UNODC's border management programme.

Difficulties in the bilateral relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the latter half of 2012 slowed down progress in some of these regional forums, but Pakistan continues to engage in them.

It is important that this engagement continues and that Pakistan works proactively with others to address the shared challenges posed to the region by the illegal production and transit of drugs from Afghanistan.

2.5. Conclusion

Pakistan faces a difficult challenge in tackling the drugs trade operating through its borders. The Government has shown willingness to push through a more strategic approach, but requires significant help with resources if this is to achieve success. There are also difficulties in the prosecution process that are mirrored across the criminal justice system, notably the difficulty in presenting ‘conspiracy ‘ style evidence in support of the prosecution of more complex and high-level targets.

International cooperation has resulted in a number of successful operations including controlled delivery operations in conjunction with several different countries. This reflects a significant flow of drugs direct from Pakistan to user markets, particularly heroin to Europe.
