

**Abdul Sami Popalzai, Director General Operations Counter Narcotics**  
**Ministry of Interior, Afghanistan**  
**Speech (CND)**

**Madam Chair;**

Please allow me to start my speech with congratulating you for your selection as Chair of the 64<sup>st</sup> Session of CND. It is a great platform to discuss the challenges and threats of narcotics. On behalf of the people and government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, I would like to extend my gratitude to each and every one of you for organizing and attending the event. It is my pleasure and honor to be here.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is an unfortunate fact that Afghanistan cultivates a huge amount of the world's opium and last year was a challenging year. Security being the main reason locally, there are many other reasons that trigger cultivation. Internationally, as we all know opium production is not a straight line; it is a vicious circle. It has various processes that includes trafficking of precursors, poppy cultivation, conversion of poppy into heroin, trafficking and smuggling all around the world and the consumption of heroin in various countries. Unfortunately, several people from different countries are involved in this process and my country is one of them. As rightly stated in the last UNGASS meeting in April 2016, **“it is a shared responsibility”** and a global issue. It is also a fact that Afghanistan has suffered the most from narcotics and its trade. According to UN figures, the opium business earns more than 68 Billion USD in the world per year but only less than 2 Billion remains in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, that money too is used to run the terror machine in Afghanistan. It has caused us insecurity, and more than two million drug users.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Recognizing the concept of a shared responsibility, I can assure you that the Afghan Government is firmly committed to fight narcotics. At the policy level, in order to put its efforts into a proper framework, Afghan Government has developed several laws, polices and strategies. The Counter Narcotics Law is in the process to be amended. According to this new law, a High Commission

will be established and chaired by H.E the President to oversee the entire fight against narcotics. This is a sincere effort of the Afghan Government to bring the fight to the highest level possible. In addition, efforts to address narcotics within the country are included in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework through the endorsement of the National Drug Action Plan.

More importantly, my Government's efforts extend beyond the rhetoric of policy and legislation. During the last year, Afghanistan's focus on law enforcement led to the arrest of 3527 traffickers and seizure of 338.944 tons of narcotics- the highest so far as a result of 2995 operations. There are foreigners and international traffickers in these arrests. Let me remind you that this is the highest number of arrests and operations compared to any other country in the region. Surgical airstrikes were conducted to destroy heroin storages and labs. Our grip on precursors were so tight that the price of a liter of precursor went up to thousands of Dollars while it was a couple of Dollars outside.

### **Madam Chair**

We all know that we cannot tackle this phenomenon alone. Afghanistan has approached its neighbors, region and the globe as well which is rightly described as "three tier approach". Afghanistan is willing to take the lead in these efforts and has already reached out to its neighboring countries to reach a consensus on a regional strategy. We conducted bi-lateral and multi-lateral meetings as well. Furthermore, Afghanistan with the help of UNODC is preparing to host the TI meeting in Kabul.

The idea is strengthen cooperation and work for a comprehensive approach and program. It is a good start but we need to build on this and establish regional cooperation in real terms. We were also very successful with conducting several Control delivery operation which led to seizure of drugs, Cash and arrest of several members of the network as well as seizure of precursors and giving information to other countries for their origin. This was one of the successful regional and international endeavors that Afghanistan mostly initiated.

Besides the achievements mentioned, we do have several problems which sometimes hinder us from success. Insecurity, shortages of funds for counter narcotics, and lack of regional cooperation are some that I can mention here.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen**

With all the efforts that we are all doing the most important one is to work together. We cannot win this fight alone. Here are some of our specific recommendations;

- Our resource limitation should not be interpreted as of our lack of commitment. We are serious and we are fighting it but our resources are limited. Therefore, we need your financial, technical and political support and cooperation;
- Strengthening regional and international cooperation is the key. I cannot stress this point enough.
- The value of heroin in the world is based on the simple rules of economics: supply and demand. We need to work on both. We cannot ignore either one of them.
- The link between cultivation and demand is trafficking so focus should be put on regional traffickers who earn enormous amount of money from this. Watching money laundering regionally and internationally is essential.
- In order to combat Afghan Narcotics trade, we need to seriously focus on precursors being diverted and smuggled into Afghanistan.
- Law Enforcement is important but we all need to work on the root causes of poppy cultivation such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of alternative livelihoods as well.

## **Excellencies!**

Afghanistan is aware of its international responsibility and remains committed to all the conventions we signed. In reality, narcotics have destroyed us the most. Thus, we are here to affirm that we will do our best on our part but we need help. We all know that national efforts of one country would never be enough to curtail the problem. This is a global problem and we need a global response. We need to have practical measures to combat them.

And Finally, I extend my appreciation to UNODC and would like to thank all the delegates for their presence and contribution.

Thank you.