

Production of opium for medical purposes in Afghanistan

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PURPOSE: to propose a recommendation to the Council pursuant to Rule 114(1) of the Rules of Procedure by Graham **WATSON**, Marco **PANNELLA**, Marco **CAPPATO** and Annemie **NEYTS-UYTTEBROECK** on behalf of the ALDE Group on production of opium for medical purposes in Afghanistan.

CONTENT: according to the authors of the draft recommendation, the 2006 Report issued by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) on 1 March 2007 states that, in Afghanistan, the total area being used for illicit opium poppy cultivation increased to a record 165 000 hectares, an increase of 59% over the figure for 2005, and more than twice the figure for 2003. In addition, the report entitled 'Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2006' compiled by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stresses that last year the quantity of opium harvested in that country reached a record level of about 6100 tons, an increase of nearly 50% over the figure for the previous year. Both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund estimate that almost 40% of the Gross Domestic Product of Afghanistan is opium-related, and that some 2.9 million people (12.6% of the population) are engaged in the poppy sector. The figures show that it will clearly be impossible to achieve the goals set by the political declaration adopted by the 1998 United Nations General Assembly in New York concerning the total eradication or substantial reduction of illicit crops by 2008, denouncing the fact that insurgents, warlords, the Taliban and terrorist groups find their major source of funding in trafficking in illicit narcotics.

On this basis, the European Parliament urges the Council to adopt a common position - pursuant to Article 15 of the Treaty on European Union - concerning a comprehensive 'counter-narcotics' strategy in Afghanistan, which should provide for the production of poppies for medical purposes to be used, in the PE framework of an internationally managed pilot project, for the production of opium-based analgesics for the national Afghan market and possibly for those countries that experience a lack of availability of opiates.