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Afghanistan after 2014: the narco-dimension^(*)

The magnitude of the problem

Afghanistan is currently the largest producer of illicit opium in the world, despite the counter narcotics efforts made by the Afghan authorities and the international community during the past decade. Afghan opium is a major source of instability, conflict and corruption, both within Afghanistan and in the wider Central and South Asian region. The threat posed by Afghan opium remains one of the most significant challenges faced by the international community today.

Last year, Afghanistan produced 3,600 metric tons of opium and its trades account for over 30% of Afghanistan's GDP Afghan. Opium claims around 100,000 lives worldwide and opiate economy fuels instability and un-rule of law in most provinces. The total area devoted to opium cultivation in 2010 was around 123,000 hectares¹. Ninety eight per cent of the total cultivation took place in nine provinces in the Southern and Western regions, including the most insecure provinces in the country. This further substantiates the link between insecurity and opium cultivation observed since 2006. Total opium cultivation stabilized in 2010 ending the declining trend in cultivation, which started in 2007².

The positive news of the decline in the area with illicit crops and steady cultivation figures, is coupled with the one of total opium yield and total opium production falling by almost half (48%) from 2009. This overall decrease is the result of several factors: unfavorable climactic conditions, droughts and floods, the significantly smaller size of opium poppy capsule, and a smaller number of capsules per square meter in the western and southern regions. Helmand remains the single largest opium-cultivating province, accounting for approximately 53% of Afghanistan's opium cultivation. Kandahar, the second largest opium-cultivating province accounts for another 21% of total production. The most important factor, however, was the spread of diseases affecting opium poppies in major growing areas (i.e. poppy blight). A significant number of

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Abstract

After 10 years of intervention and less than three years away from the gradual withdrawal of international military forces from Afghanistan, it becomes relevant to assess the status of the support to the reconstruction and the future perspective through a counter-narcotics lens. In this regard, much is being stated on the transition under the leadership of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which within the framework of Kabul Process is moving forward.

Another Bonn Conference set for December 2011 will aim at adding conditions and benchmarks for the exit strategy and the full drive of the Afghans. In this setting and its preparation, the narcotics play a significant role to be taken into serious consideration in order to avoid setbacks in terms of security, sustainable development and rule of law.

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¹ UNODC, *Afghan Opium Survey 2010*, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drugs/afghan-opium-survey-2010.html>.

² *Ibidem*.

(*) The opinions expressed herein are strictly personal and do not necessarily reflect the position of ISPI.

farmers were affected and average yield per hectare decreased. As a result, opium production in Afghanistan represented less than 80% of global opium production in 2010, a decline from almost 90% in 2009.

This leads to skepticism on the sustainability of such partial achievements. In fact, evidence shows that there is a strong link between insecurity and opium cultivation and in view of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF/NATO) mission withdrawal, doubt remains on the capacity of the Afghan National Army and law enforcement agencies to maintain security and safety for Afghans.

In total, around 250,000 Afghan households are currently involved in opium cultivation. According to the UNODC³, the key reasons given by farmers for cultivating are 'high opium prices' (one out of two Afghan farmers), 'poverty' and 'the need to improve living conditions'. Some preliminary 2011 rapid assessments suggested that, while the overall amount of cultivation of opium is declining, opium cultivation is spreading across the country, along with insecurity and insurgent activities. Therefore, some backlash is already expected for 2011, with strong increases in cultivation also expected in Badakhshan and Herat provinces. This demonstrates that counter narcotics measures in many parts of Afghanistan are not yet sufficient or at least not able to ensure a sustainable change. On a more positive note, opium cultivation in Helmand and Kandahar is expected to decrease, leading to an overall decline in cultivation. While a strong emphasis on cultivation in the southern provinces is of key importance, the government of Afghanistan and the international community cannot afford to neglect the rest of the country.

Because of the decrease in opium supply and increased insecurity, the price of opium has seen a spectacular rise in recent years. Between February 2010 and February 2011 the dry (at market level) and fresh opium (at farm gate) price increased by 306% and 251% respectively⁴. Between April 2009 and April 2011 opium prices have risen more than 250%, thereby increasing the incentive for farmers to cultivate opium poppy. It should be emphasized that these price levels are extraordinary by Afghan standards and represent a strong *pushing* factor for farmers to start opium cultivation and form one reason of the most important motivations for farmers to cultivate opium. The total estimated farm-gate income of opium growing farmers amounted to US\$ 604 million. This is a significant increase from 2009, when farm-gate income for opium was estimated at US\$ 438 million. But cultivation is only one side of the problem, possibly the most visible and pervasive in terms of livelihoods; the processing and trafficking are the most profitable processes involving less people and triggering a solid nexus with politics and insurgency. The total share going to the traders amounts to roughly 1,8 billion US\$.

While a small percentage (less than 10%) of Afghan opiates are consumed domestically, most opiates are trafficked to Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia. In 2010 approximately 52% of Afghan opium was converted into morphine or heroin within the country. Converting opium into heroin is a chemical process, which requires a dedicated laboratory and large quantities of precursor chemicals. It is estimated that there are currently hundreds of small-sized laboratories in Afghanistan. These laboratories have become more mobile in response to law enforcement initiatives and it is thought that some of these laboratories might have moved across the border into Pakistan.

In order to function, the Afghan heroin laboratories require over 12,000 tons of various precursor chemicals, including approximately 1,500 tons of acetic anhydride annually. Since none of these products are officially produced in Afghanistan or its immediate neighbors, traffickers procure precursor chemicals abroad (in China, Europe, India, South Korea) and traffic the chemicals into Afghanistan. Precursor smuggling represents another crucial stage of the narco-industry with economic interests going well beyond domestic boundaries.

There are three main different routes for the export of Afghan opiates: the Southern Route, through which heroin and opium enter Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) from Afghanistan's eastern and southern provinces, and then shipped to several destinations worldwide, including

³ *Ibidem.*

⁴ *Ibidem.*

Iran, China, India, the Middle East, Europe and North America. The Western Route, whereby the opiates are smuggled into Iran from the Afghan provinces of Herat, Farah and Nimroz, as well as from the Pakistani province of Baluchistan. Most opiates traveling along this route are destined for the European market, but significant quantities are consumed in the various transit countries. The Northern Route, through which Afghan opiates enter Central Asia via the mountainous borders with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and proceed to their destinations in the Russian Federation.

Lawlessness and a flourishing illicit economy

The informal economy is largely centered on opium and increasingly on cannabis production, processing and trade, which developed during three decades of conflict, and which saw the virtual collapse of the formal economy and degeneration of state institutions. Opium production has continued to provide a major 'coping' contribution to the Afghan economy, and is estimated to have generated in excess of 2 billion US\$ in revenues each year since 2002. The opium economy has been cited as the "single greatest challenge to the long-term security, development, and effective governance of Afghanistan". Opium cultivation, production, and trafficking undermine rule of law in Afghanistan through increased corruption, insecurity, and vulnerability of farmers and laborers. The opium economy has also destabilized traditional power structures (including the authority of mullahs and tribal leaders, the traditional councils, the shuras and jirgas) creating a culture of quick enrichment as it occurred in other drug producing countries, in Colombia for instance. This ill economy has led to an inability for Afghanistan to achieve long-term sustainable economic growth and a high dependence on drugs in economic terms; moreover, the growing number of drug users in Afghanistan acts as a drain on health services and social systems, and undermines the moral foundation of the state.

A point in case in this regard is the Kabul Bank near collapse, and the heavy collusion of this with country prominent political figures with blurry pasts and involvement in illicit business. This case which exploded to the international media only few months ago, though it has been going on for almost two years, since the presidential election of 2009, unveiling a system of running public funds and a financial institution at the service of the country, as private company, able to proffer favors and support to a select elite. This has been a case, which certainly has not made Afghans enthusiastic about its own governments and leaders, and forced IMF to retain its loan, with serious consequences for the reconstruction plans and development. The current crisis shows how fragile the Afghan state is and how much support Afghanistan still needs from the international community, as it worsen the reputation of the government of Afghanistan with the donor community. The Kabul Bank issue is not an economic problem, "it's rather a political-economical problem that has brought numerous issues before the country", the former bank director, Abdul Qadir Fitrat, who resigned in June 2011. "The ones that suffer the most are the Afghan people"⁵.

While most of the opium (and cannabis) cultivation can be traced to the southern part of the country, thereby linking it to the insurgency, the situation is far more complex. Power brokers and warlords alike have turned themselves in a new generation of entrepreneurs and politicians, occupying strategic positions within the government while remaining actively involved in the illicit economic fabric and the war economy. However, temporary elite pacts, do not provide the grounds for sustainable security and development unless they are followed by the development of legitimate state and societal institutions. As is the case for other forms of corruption in Afghanistan, the drug profits are used in a near regulatory manner to conclude power deals, patronage, and forge alliances thereby further weakening the efficiency of the state to deliver its services to those most in need, furthering the interest of few, thereby alienating the wider population and weakening the resistance against the insurgency. The perceived lack of transparency and accountability in the formal justice system has opened a space for anti government elements, such as the Taliban, to challenge the legitimacy of government of Afghanistan in the provision of justice.

⁵ «Agence France-Presse», 2 July 2011.

Many Afghans are disillusioned by violence, social injustices and the lack of provision of services or economic opportunity. In a 2009 Oxfam study (as well as, the Asian Development Bank's Afghanistan report of 2010), over 70 per cent of respondents identified poverty and unemployment as the major driving factors of conflict, with 48 per cent considering corruption and the ineffectiveness and weakness of government as critical factors. The study further notes that a prevailing culture of impunity and lack of rule of law were similarly identified as major contributing factors. Whereas the annual opium income by farmers amounted to an average US\$ 2,433 by household, a staggering 1.4 billion, equivalent to 11 per cent of GDP, went to higher-level traffickers. And this if we don't account for the trade from the border of Afghanistan to the consumption markets, which is often handled by organized criminal groups with links in Afghanistan and neighboring countries, leading to a region which is dependent on drugs and impregnated with illicit profits and dynamics. These funds support local and fragmented power structures in the country's provinces and regions where the nexus of warlords, commanders, and large landowners resist attempts towards transparency and stability. The longer conflict persists, the more the disjointed Afghan society roots around the dividends of the illicit economy. The recruitment potential for the illicit and/or insurgent networks is currently again growing, given high unemployment rates, poverty, disenchantment with the central authority, displaced people and returning migrants.

Focus since the London Conference 2006

At least in strategic terms, Afghanistan has been serious about drugs for a few years and it has advocated for support to curb this plague for years. Multilateral and bilateral donors have engaged increasingly into policies furthering the mainstreaming of counter narcotics, yet the major military contingents have refused to undertake any counter narcotic operation for years after the intervention in 2001 as part of two different agendas (i.e. counter-terrorism and stabilization). It has been only in 2008 which NATO has accepted to include narcotics related targets into their daily missions. With the support of the president Hamid Karzai and other ministries, the new leadership of the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN) has developed important initiatives since the London Conference which was held in 2006. In particular, Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics, which remains very weak in terms of resources and weight in the cabinet, developed the National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) which is currently reviewing and updating. The NDCS run from 2006-2010 and represented the main strategic document, encompassing all aspects to tackle the threats posed by drugs in the country. This strategy included:

Interdiction – Seizures in Afghanistan are only a tiny proportion of Afghanistan's estimated production of opium and heroin. In 2008 approximately 7,676 tons of opium was produced, while 42.8 tons of opium was seized, yielding a seizure ration of 0.56%. With regard to heroin, an estimated 658 tons was produced in 2008 of which 2.8 tons was seized, leading to a seizure ratio of 0.43%⁶.

Criminal Justice – There have been some progresses in terms of conviction rate under the counter-narcotics law and the interagency Criminal Justice Task Force, however, in no case the conviction feature a prominent narco-traffickers or an organized group of large scale operations, whereas achievements have been mostly concentrating on carriers without sufficient protection.

Eradication Efforts – For years, before the USA changed their strategy (US special envoy for AF-PAK, Richard Holbrooke in 2009) eradication was done by governors as well as eradication forces, sponsored by the USA, with one billion US\$ a year. Eradication of poppy fields takes place on the provincial level and is led by provincial governors. In 2010 a total number of 2,316 hectares of poppy fields were eradicated in Afghanistan, equivalent to 1.9% of the cultivated area. Since 2005 eradication was never above 9% of the total cultivation, hence never representing a serious deterrent for farmers⁷. One of the most debated and controversial counter narcotics strategy has been the eradication. The USA has undertaken a policy which supported eradication forces in Afghanistan, dispatched from the central govern-

⁶ Reports compiled from Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan.

⁷ UNODC-MCN, *Eradication reports*, 2004-2010 (not published for wide dissemination).

ment (PEF). This program which costed the USA billions of dollars, yielded very scarce results and only in 2009, the special envoy Holbrooke made a U turn, and eliminated all funds going towards these efforts, and decided to invest in development and support to farmers.

Health & Livelihood – Providing alternative means of subsistence to poppy farmers is paramount to a successful counter narcotics strategy. Between the opium income of yesterday and the legal income of tomorrow, is today need to boost the quality of life of the farmers. This defines alternative livelihood (AL) versus the more long-term and indispensable notion of rural development. Therefore, it is critical that in order to prevent cultivation in opium poppy growing areas, or to sustain the ban on cultivation in opium free zones, alternate livelihoods measures are strengthened and coupled with government services provision.

Drug Demand Reduction – The inevitable consequence of an over supply is the spill over effect into the domestic market, where an increasing number of the addicts are recorded among youngsters amounting to more than one million⁸.

Regional Cooperation – Afghanistan cannot be dealt with in an isolated manner but as part of a complex regional theatre, where several intertwined scenarios and dynamics are strictly interplaying. There has been progress in recognizing this, by Afghanistan and major players which have appointed special envoys as of 2008 with an aim to view Afghanistan in connection to Pakistan and other neighbours. Nevertheless, still much political and diplomatic gimmick is necessary to tackle transnational organized crime with effective cooperation tools.

Counter Narcotics Public Awareness Campaign – These sensitization campaign have been conducted with growing commitment of the national institutions, with ministries and local administrations coordinating pre-planting campaign in order to convince farmers to renounce to sow opium seeds, with positive results.

Building the capacity of the MCN to coordinate and monitor – In spite of its limited resources and authority, the MCN is the coordinating ministry which should be able to operate at central and provincial and local level in order to pursue counter narcotics polices and programmes. The international community has been supporting this ministry which is shaping up a vision and a more respected position to function as a catalyst among ministries, local institutions and international stakeholders concerned by drugs.

The above is the multi-faceted and holistic approach to tackle narcotics, which are deemed to be, by most actors involved in Afghanistan, a cross-cutting problem. In particular, in order to secure sustainable development in Afghanistan it is crucial to tackle counter narcotics policies and as the drugs trade continues to be one of the most pressing issues facing the country. London 2010 and Kabul conferences, also in 2010, started the Kabul process and prompted the development of the Kabul *papers*, which are national strategic and planning document drafted by international community with the government counterparts (five clusters, see below). At the London Conference participants emphasized the links between narcotics, the insurgency and corruption. The Conference welcomed progress including the reduction in poppy cultivation and the increase in poppy free provinces; the plan to update the NDCS during 2010; the ongoing support by the international community; the continuation of the 'Paris-Moscow' process in countering illegal production, consumption and trafficking of narcotics; and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Plan of Action.

As reflected in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, the issue of narcotics is at the nexus of all five clusters established to accelerate development in Afghanistan. Below are recommendations put forward by the Afghan Ministry of Counter-Narcotics in connection to each programmatic cluster⁹.

⁸ http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/Afghan_Drug_Use_Report_2009_Executive_Summary.pdf.

⁹ Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Policy Paper, June 2010 (not published).

Agriculture & Rural Development: The cultivation of narcotics, and the powerful complex of patronage and profiteering that supports it, undercuts the development of a licit rural economy. Counter narcotics needs therefore be mainstreamed into the four national related programs: (i) National Water and National Resource Development; (ii) National Comprehensive Agriculture Production and Market Development; (iii) National Rural Access Program; and (iv) Strengthening Local Institutions. These programs will help to shift incentives for farmers away from illicit cultivation towards sustainable alternative livelihoods.

Economic and Infrastructure Development: Alternative livelihoods can only be developed with improved access to licit markets and trade. Counter narcotics approaches must therefore be incorporated into this sector, which in turn will support its objectives of increased national revenues, sustainable growth and substantially more days of labor in resource corridor related construction activity.

Governance: Governance structures are destabilized by the corruption associated with the narcotics trade. The government of Afghanistan needs to extend its reach, providing basic services and rule of law to effectively counter the narcotics economy. Within this cluster, more support should go to the delivery of credible and results-orientated governance reforms and to strengthen leadership at both central and local levels to enable service delivery, economic growth, justice, stabilization and security.

Human Resource Development: Problem drug use threatens to weaken the work force needed to rebuild the economy – a problem likely to only increase over time. Counter narcotics need to be incorporated into this cluster to ensure human resource capacity is protected and developed. Drug demand reduction, harm reduction and treatment provided at the provincial and local level are vital for the human development and social capital of Afghanistan.

Security: Rule of law mechanisms, particularly law enforcement are preoccupied by the consequences of the narcotics trade, and imposing a credible ban on narcotics will only be possible if the security forces can establish full control over all parts of the country.

During 2011, the government of Afghanistan, and in view of Bonn 2011, has undertaken a review of its priorities, including the development of strategic documents. Counter narcotics policies and activities clearly lie at the convergence of all these clusters. In order to ensure counter narcotics is truly cross-cutting, progress needs to be made on the incorporation of counter narcotics into the five clusters and the respective national priority programs. MCN, the government of Afghanistan at large and international community have a common denominator and enemy, drugs and organized crime, which may enhance partnership and synergy.

The need to reinstate the sense of urgency to address narcotics

Against the above situation, and regardless of (many) failed and (few) good policies, Afghanistan today faces a large issue pervasive its people, politics and economy. Both the absolute size of the narco economy and narco economy as a share of GDP have been declining since the peak year of 2007, leading to the false assumption within the international community that significant sustainable gains have been made in recent years, that Counter narcotics policy is on the right track and that counter narcotics is no longer a major issue. This matter is made more urgent by lack of recognition for counter narcotics within the *transition process* and the fact that international aid flows to Afghanistan will dwindle in the near future.

Despite almost ten years of national and international efforts and initiatives, the problems related to drugs and crime in Afghanistan remain an immense threat to national, regional and international stability, security and development. During this period, Afghanistan has remained the largest producer of illicit opium in the world, and has become a significant producer of cannabis resin. By now the illicit-drug economy permeates every aspect of Afghan society, ranging from politics, to the economy, the insurgency and the lives of individuals. Even at current levels of production, opium and cannabis prices are skyrocketing, providing farmers with an increased incentive to cultivate illicit crops.

At the same time rule of law issues in general and counter narcotics in particular, seems to have lost their appeal and have been marginalized within the policy agenda. When looking at the current situation and the links between drugs, corruption and lawlessness, it should be clear that we can no longer afford to continue along the same path and that increased impetus is required to safeguard the future of Afghanistan. The coming few years will be crucial for the future of Afghanistan for a number of reasons. Trends which will shape the future of counter narcotics in Afghanistan are currently underway and cannot be ignored.

First, the trend towards 'Afghanisation' means that the government of Afghanistan is increasingly assertive in taking on a leading role and responsibility in various fields, at the expense of the UN and other international actors. The London conference and the Kabul conference paved the way for the Kabul process and the National Priority Plans. Within this framework 'Afghanisation', that is to say Afghan ownership and Afghan leadership is promoted. Influential voices and vocal stakeholders within the government are increasingly demanding a more leading role and want to assume increased responsibility. Consequently, all stakeholders, bilateral agencies and particularly the United Nations are under pressure to transfer activities and funding to Afghanistan, while taking on a role in capacity building and coordination.

Second, ISAF/NATO and a large number of international actors are focusing on the '*transition process*' and a gradual disengagement from Afghanistan as of 2014. As such, they are looking at the UN to take on increased responsibilities in their absence, whereas diminishing international attention will entail a decrease in international resources for Afghanistan. This means on the one hand that the UN has to anticipate this reality and plan to work more efficiently, in order to do more with less. On the other hand, it is of paramount importance to ensure that sufficient resources remain available for counter narcotics, since the historical record shows that a decrease in attention might well lead to a resurgence in drug cultivation and a backlash which is just around the corner given the gains achieved so far are not entirely sustainable. With the upcoming withdrawal of the ISAF/NATO presence, a positive note is the closing of a gap between intervention, and a growing consensus and common stance on the scope of and the need for better civilian-military consistency of policies and strategies.

Third, countries neighbouring Afghanistan are increasingly aware of the cross border threats emanating from Afghanistan. Consequently, here is a trend towards increased assertiveness from regional partners and stakeholders. Countries in the wider region are increasingly aware of their responsibilities when it comes to organized crime, including drug and precursor trafficking, but are also demanding ownership in response to the destructive effects of Afghan narcotics on their respective societies.

The challenges posed by narcotics and organized crime in Afghanistan are immense and cannot be dealt with in the short term only. However, with the *transition process* and the *Afghanization process*, a window of opportunity to shape the future of counter narcotics and rule of law in Afghanistan is opening up, but it is of paramount importance that the narcotics lens is used to better target and to devise effective and feasible policies for development in Afghanistan.

The birth of a narco-state or sustainable licit economy?

Some start to admit that aid efforts in Afghanistan have failed¹⁰. Even so, the Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Afghanistan during 2011 are expected to be around 15 billion US\$ for the whole year – with over 40 billion received since 2001. Some suggest Afghanistan will collapse into chaos when ISAF/NATO pulls out in 2014. A huge proportion of the aid money being poured into the country now is going either to corruption or to prop up people and institutions in ways that are not sustainable once the massive and heavy financial and substantive support is interrupted¹¹. Given capacity is limited and Kabul is not excelling in governance, donors in Afghanistan must work hard to find ways to trust the Af-

¹⁰ US Senate debate on Afghanistan, BBC, May 2011.

¹¹ US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in «National Times», Australia, 10 June 2011.

ghan government with development funds and further Paris aid declaration principles¹². Transition planning should find the right balance between avoiding a sudden drop-off in aid, which could trigger a major economic recession, and a long-term phase-out from current levels of donor spending. Rebuilding faith in the state has in any case to start at the provincial and district levels, since local government is the only government most Afghans know.

This is all debatable, however, looking at the number, without speculation, the Afghan economy now runs on opium sales and foreign aid. In particular, research by World Bank and UNODC in possible scenarios of the post-2014 effect with the core assumption that external aid point at the expected dramatic reduction over the next years and the growing importance of narcotics within the national domestic product (licit and illicit). Questions raised relate to fiscal sustainability (the gap of government expenditure is currently paid for through external aid and while internal revenue is showing an upward trends, expenditures are moving up faster), the 'second civil service' (12,000 Afghan citizens do receive at least part of their salary through donor contributions), and economic growth (the main engine of growth is consumption fuelled by external aid and security expenditures with marginal investment in productivity or job creation). In analogy, looking at a post-2014 scenario dictates the analysis of the narco-dimension, a phenomenon far from being solved.

If the analysis provided by World Bank proves right, accepting that no corrective measures are to be taken and the variables remain unchanged, then the illicit 'shadow economy' (narcotics, smuggling, natural resources exploitation, timber, other forms of extraction fuelling the current conflict) will increase in importance both in real terms and in proportion to the Afghanistan gross domestic product. Current ODA pools already available within the country are only partially utilised in order to strengthen the counter-narcotic efforts. This in contrast to the current situation where counter-narcotics is verbally acknowledged but not translated in a sufficient tangible manner.

The present situation is mixed, with opposite scenarios, where the government of Afghanistan is in control, poppy cultivation is declining; where it is weak, cultivation is rising, yet the narco-industry still represents a big share of the Afghan economy, domestic product and daily lives for many Afghans. The link between narcotics and instability is established. While the impact of the narcotics economy is felt throughout Afghanistan, the driving forces are increasingly associated with areas dominated by the insurgency and organized criminal networks. By extension, the struggle for control is directly linked to narcotics interests.

Several dynamics related the narco-industry are undermining state building. The hindrance of governance by pervasive corruption limits the government reach and effectiveness, which is cited by the majority of Afghans¹³ as the predominant problem facing the country. This is further aggravated by the epidemic of problem drug use, which has a national and an international dimension, with 15 million illicit opiate users in the world. In Afghanistan alone, 8% of the adult population are problem drug users, twice the global average. Only 1% of drug users in Afghanistan however, has access to drug treatment services. Furthermore, the impact of counter narcotics policies on farmers, and the vulnerability of the economy, whereby it can severely impact farmers as they often rely on it as their sole source of income. Finally, the scourge of the drugs needs also to count on the international community working in tandem taking responsibility for dealing with drugs in their own countries.

The government and international community of donors should incorporate counter narcotics throughout government policies and plans, for it is not sufficiently represented in national priority programs and provincial and district plans. In order to ensure the revised government counter-narcotics plan, the NDCS, is effective, a better process needs to be established to ensure counter narcotics is incorporated into all levels and areas of government. The upcoming Bonn Conference are important appointment to

¹² The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness expresses the international community's consensus on the direction for reforming aid delivery and management to achieve improved effectiveness and results. They contain principles (ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability), commitments, indicators and targets.

¹³ Asia Development Bank Report on Afghanistan, 2009; Oxfam Report on Afghanistan, 2009.

reaffirm global commitment to overcoming the scourge of narcotics through effective national and international partnerships, and mobilize political will and lead effective efforts against narcotics, based on a more results-focused NDCS framework. Yet there is no silver bullet for Afghanistan, it is a long haul to assist a country to prevent the creation of a narco-state and to spearhead development and stability.

Restoring confidence and transforming security, justice, and economic institutions is possible within a generation, even in countries that have experienced severe conflict. But that requires determined national leadership and an international system 'refitted' to address 21st century risks: refocusing assistance on preventing criminal and political violence, reforming the procedures of international agencies, responding at a regional level, and renewing cooperative efforts among lower-, middle-, and higher-income countries¹⁴.

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¹⁴ World Bank, 2011 *World Development Report*.