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NOTE

From: French Chair of the Dublin Group
To: Dublin Group
Subject: Regional situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan

I. PLACE AND DATE OF MINI GROUP MEETINGS

France chairs the regional Dublin Group for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In Pakistan, a regional counter narcotics seminar was organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Islamabad on 27 and 28 January 2015. The mini Dublin Group subsequently met on two occasions, on 26 March and 14 October 2015 in Islamabad, on the premises of the French Embassy.

In Afghanistan, the mini Dublin Group convened on 11 June 2015 on the premises of the French Embassy to meet Ms Salamat Azimi, the new Minister for Counter Narcotics, accompanied by key officials from her ministry. This meeting was an opportunity for Ms Azimi to present her priorities for action in the framework of her 100-day plan and, in the longer term, her ministry's overall strategy. The discussion also touched on the support expected from the international community.

The Ambassador of Japan in Kabul also organised a dinner in honour of Ms Salamat Azimi on 21 July, to which the Ministers for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Deputy Ministers for Interior Affairs and Health were invited. The United States Ambassador and the Ambassador of France in his capacity as Chair of the mini Dublin Group attended from the donor side, in addition to the UNODC representative.

The Kabul mini group plans to meet again in late 2015 or early 2016 with Ms Salamat Azimi to receive clarifications on the Afghan ministerial strategy, the outline of which was presented by Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly.

II. MINI GROUPS' WORK

a. Regional situation as regards drug production

The regional situation as regards drug production has been the subject of two UNODC reports: the one published in June 2015 on heroin trafficking through the southern route (https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghan_opiate_trafficking_southern_route_web.pdf) was supplemented on 14 October 2015 by the annual report on opium production in Afghanistan (https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afg_Executive_summary_2015_final.pdf).

Afghanistan remains the world's leading producer of opium, and Pakistan, which has been declared 'poppy-free' (free of opium poppy cultivation areas), continues to be a major transit region for Afghan production.

Indicative map of the southern heroin trafficking route

(Source : https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghan_opiate_trafficking_southern_route_web.pdf)



b. National situations regarding production, consumption and trafficking of drugs, precursors and money laundering

In Afghanistan

Opium cultivation in Afghanistan

The overall picture of opium cultivation in Afghanistan corresponds to a range of situations in the country, where industrial monoculture production, entirely controlled by criminal organisations linked to the insurgency (the Taliban movement), in Helmand for example, co-exists with 'ancillary' production, for example to mark boundaries between cotton plots, which provides farmers with additional income that is all the more welcome because opium keeps well, helping them to counter the economic risks of legal crops.

In this context, the geographical distribution of opium crops has not changed much. In 2015, land dedicated to opium production was still mostly in the south (66 % of the total area, compared with 67 % in 2014) and west (24 % compared with 22 %). Helmand remained by far the main province harbouring opium crops, with 86 443 hectares, or nearly half of the total. The relative shares for the east (7 % of the total in 2015 compared with 9 % in 2014) and north-west (2 %, stable year-on-year) did not change much with regard to the total. The cultivated areas in the centre and north grew considerably in absolute terms but remained insignificant with regard to the national level (0.2 % of the total in 2015 compared with 0.1 % in 2014 for the centre and 1 % compared with 0.3 % for the north).

In 2015, eradication campaigns increased sharply (+ 40 % of cultivated areas destroyed, amounting to 3 760 hectares) but their impact remained modest, and the campaigns concerned only 2 % of the total land sown with opium poppy.

More concentrated than in 2014, eradication campaigns were conducted in 12 provinces (compared with 17 in 2014), in order to focus on the regions with high production.

1 747 hectares of opium poppy fields, or almost half of the national total, were eradicated in the province of Helmand alone (+ 122 % compared with 2014). In total, the UNODC reports a 19 % decrease in areas under opium poppy cultivation between 2014 and 2015. However, the fact that this was the first reduction in cultivated areas observed since 2009 should not obscure the fact that in 2015 the agricultural area dedicated to opium poppy production was still at its fourth highest level. The number of poppy-free provinces (with less than 100 cultivated hectares) dropped from 15 to 14, due to the province of Balkh (Mazar-e-Sharif) having exceeded the threshold.

The UNODC also notes a change in methodology which could partly explain the rise in eradications in 2015. Satellite observation technology has evolved, so it allows plots to be identified more selectively, consequently reducing the estimation of areas planted with opium poppy. However, the precise impact of this factor is not yet known and should be assessed separately and included in the UNODC's next full report.

The 2015 eradication campaign also caused fewer deaths than the one in 2014. Five members of the Afghan security forces were killed and 18 wounded, compared with 13 killed and 26 wounded in 2014. This can be attributed to improved coordination between the Ministry of Counter Narcotics and the Ministry of Defence. Eradication campaigns in Helmand and Kandahar were thus conducted in the immediate proximity of military operations, increasing the protection of agents in charge of eradication.

Opium production in Afghanistan

Based on crop mapping, the geographical distribution of production shows that most crops remained concentrated in the south (58 % of the total in 2015 compared with 69 % in 2014), despite the drop in the yield per hectare (- 45 % between 2015 and 2014). The west, also affected by the decrease in yields (- 20 %), saw its share in potential national production fall from 22 % in 2014 to 16 % in 2015. The east, where areas under cultivation decreased, but the yield per hectare stabilised (- 8 %), continued to account for 13 % of decreasing total national production. In the north, where the yield per hectare increased slightly (+ 11 %) and where there was an increase in cultivated areas, potential production rose sharply (+ 264 %), although remaining modest with regard to the national level (increasing from 0.3 % of the total in 2014 to 2 % in 2015). Similarly, by maintaining its potential production in a context of national decreases, the north-east's share increased from 3 % to 5 % of the total at national level.

Overall, between 2014 (6 400 tonnes) and 2015 (3 300 tonnes), the UNODC assesses the fall in opium production at 48 %. This net decrease is the result of a drop in the yield per hectare, which fell from 28.7 kg in 2014 to 18.3 kg in 2015, a decrease of – 36 %. This seems to be more closely linked to external factors that could be mitigated or reversed from next year (water shortage, fungi affecting harvests, soil depletion after several years of record production) and to the scale of fighting in the north of Helmand (which will certainly have disrupted work in the fields and the organisation of irrigated areas) than to any real impact from the eradication campaigns and the intervention of the Afghan authorities.

Finally, it is very likely that the reduced harvest will not have a significant impact on the market, as the level of reserves, built up after years of record production, is thought to be high and so should largely offset this sudden fall in national production. Once opium has been harvested and properly packaged and stored, it can be conserved for several years.

In addition, it is interesting to note an increase in the number of laboratories for the production of heroine observed in Afghanistan. This proves Afghanistan is moving further up the value chain, with criminal organisations linked to opium cultivation knowing they can make even higher profits by processing their product themselves locally rather than simply exporting the primary material.

Cultivation and production of other drugs in Afghanistan

In addition to opium, Afghanistan is also the world's leading producer of cannabis, along with Morocco. Production of the drug feeds into local consumption as well as regional and international trafficking. Synthetic drugs are also produced in Afghanistan.

Drug consumption in Afghanistan

The figures provided by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (United States), and confirmed by the Afghan authorities, paint a bleak picture of drug consumption. According to those figures there are 3.5 million drug users in Afghanistan, of whom one million are young children and a high percentage are women. In total, 11 % of the Afghan population is believed to consume drugs.

National strategy

The Afghan authorities' alarming report on drug use highlighted the need for a holistic approach to combating the problem and for close coordination among the various Afghan ministries concerned. President Ghani asked all his government ministries to include counter-narcotics in their respective 100-day plans. He intends to hold several annual meetings on the drugs issue, either at presidential or vice-presidential (Rachid Dostum) level.

On two recent occasions, the parliament was addressed by Ms Salamat Azimi, the new Minister for Counter Narcotics, and appeared highly critical of the government's inability to shrink the illicit opium economy.

The strategy presented to the Kabul mini group by Azimi is based on a holistic approach and involves establishing effective coordination at national level between donors and the ministries concerned, while also ensuring coordination at regional level.

It comprises a significant health and social support component, in the form of a demand reduction plan, the establishment of appropriate care and treatment for drug addicts, among whom the relapse rate is high, post-treatment services and reintegration assistance (job search). Another significant component of the strategy focuses on communication, prevention and awareness-raising among the public. The country's economic development – without which there can be no sustainable solution – is also mentioned, based on the agricultural chain as a whole (support for alternative crop development, social support for populations, development of markets for legal crops, etc.).

At regional level, the strategy also focuses on cooperation with the 14 neighbouring countries in the region and the need to increase border controls. In that context, it calls on the international community to support Afghan liaison officers deployed at regional level (CARICC, Iran and Tajikistan).

The minister also decided to include a gender programme in the national strategy, in the hope of increasing the involvement and taking more account of women in the fight against the use of drugs. The programme will be developed and implemented in the ministry's 34 provincial directorates. A woman responsible for the programme has joined the minister's cabinet.

Action plan

The minister's action plan is to focus on the 132 opium-producing districts, in coordination not only with the various ministries concerned but also with the IDLG (Independent Directorate of Local Governance). The latter should help to combine the efforts of provincial governors, their offices in every district, provincial councils and municipalities. The ministry is currently lobbying the National Security Council to have the action plan implemented. However, the minister highlighted the major drawback of her plan, in that the Ministry of Counter Narcotics is only represented at provincial level, not at district level (a specific programme for districts is under consideration).

In practice, in accordance with President Ghani's instructions, the Minister for Counter Narcotics developed and implemented a 100-day plan focusing on the following points:

1. Development and implementation of counter-narcotics policies and strategies.

The final draft of the Afghan national drug action plan was presented to the National Security Council.

A number of contradictions were found in Afghan law, in particular as regards the freezing of financial assets and the seizure of real estate in the context of drug-related cases, and a draft rectification was drawn up in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice. A draft national programme for the districts is also under consideration and will require the support of the international community. The final versions of the gender programme for involving women and the communication, prevention and awareness-raising strategy are awaiting approval.

Afghanistan does not really have a specific policy dedicated to providing treatment and social support to drug addicts. The Afghan Ministry of Health's lack of commitment in this regard explains the absence of drug treatment services offered and paid for by the State. The Ministry of Counter Narcotics and the Ministry of Health have drafted a joint project to that end, which will soon be presented to the Minister for Health.

2. The matter of care and treatment is to be institutionalised at academic level. With the support of the INL and in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, a department and degree course dedicated to treatment and care for drug addicts and risk reduction are to be set up in universities.
3. The ever-increasing number of homeless drug addicts in the country's major urban centres is giving the cities a bad reputation and leading to an increase in petty crime. It is also becoming less and less acceptable to the public. The Ministry of Health plans to create large accommodation, reception and rehabilitation centres for drug addicts in the country's four largest cities.

4. At the ministry's initiative, the media will shortly launch a public information and awareness-raising campaign on the various studies and research on drug addiction treatment and care.
5. The plan also provides for cooperation and closer partnership with the main Afghan ministries concerned and the international community, as well as regular coordination meetings at presidential level. A national counter-narcotics commission will be set up under the action plan, to be chaired at least three times per year by President Ghani.

The fight against trafficking in Afghanistan

While the Afghan authorities are working to strengthen counter-narcotics legislation, they have taken no steps towards really scaling up their eradication policy, and have yet to secure a shift in the balance of power between them and actors in the drug economy. Details of the ministerial strategy – which was outlined by Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah in the margins of the UN General Assembly – have been slow to emerge.

The Ministry of Counter Narcotics has been working to strengthen the 2010 law on drug trafficking. Its proposed amendments, which were recently approved by the Ministry of Justice, should soon be presented to the parliament for adoption:

- from now on, any illicit opium poppy crop covering more than 10 hectares will come under the exclusive competence of the Counter-Narcotics Justice Centre (CNJC), aka the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF). That amendment should have a positive impact, as it should make it possible to carry out in-depth investigations to identify the proprietors of such opium poppy fields. Such investigations will also benefit from increased funding, due to more frequent use by the CNJC of options available under the July 2014 law on money laundering.

- the methods used to calculate sentences for possession of chemical precursors are to be amended so that sentences are more proportionate to the seriousness of the offence and harsher for aggravated offences. Sentences will thus change from a maximum of 3 years for possession of 50 litres to 1 to 10 years for possession of 1 to 8 litres. For possession of more than 8 litres of chemical precursors, sentences will be calculated as follows: one day of prison for every 5 centilitres of precursors held. In that context, the maximum sentence cannot exceed 20 years. The amendments should be supported by the international community, so as to be approved without delay by the Afghan parliament. It should also be noted that, as requested by international experts, the amendment providing for a halving of the quantity of seized narcotics leading to a referral to the CNJC has been abandoned. Implementing that amendment risked inundating the CNJC with minor cases, which would have blocked the system before long. That would have slowed down the prosecution of larger-scale traffickers and, in particular, would have reduced the likelihood of imprisonment and even pre-trial detention.

International cooperation in Afghanistan

1. New UNODC anti-money laundering programme

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Kabul recently presented its new programme for tackling the illegal economy. This project is part of the office's wider restructuring of its 'country strategy', which should gradually become more diverse and cover a greater share of the fight against crime. Until now the UNODC's work has focused on monitoring anti-drug policies.

The programme presented by the UNODC is designed to:

- help Afghanistan meet its international commitments in the implementation of the anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) package. As a reminder, this legislative package was adopted in June 2014 at the very last minute, just in time to avoid Afghanistan being included on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) blacklist. Afghanistan must now provide the FATF with evidence of the practical implementation of these measures, or it will once again risk being blacklisted. At this stage Afghanistan has made little progress and, in the absence of new efforts, risks being added to the blacklist at the FATF plenary meeting in February 2016.
- initiate a fundamental reform aimed at closing off the funding channels in the country's illegal economy. According to the UNODC, the most effective way to weaken the illegal economy, much more effective than actions on the ground (such as drug seizures, arresting traffickers or freezing their assets), is to target its funding channels (comment: for example, if a drug trafficker can no longer move their cash around, they no longer have any means of getting money locally in order to pay growers, nor can they retrieve local profits in order to send them abroad).

The programme focuses on providing high-level technical assistance. Two experts will act as 'mentors', helping the Afghan authorities to implement the AML/CFT regulations. These 'mentors' will work directly from the UNODC, and will cost a total of USD 1.5 million per year. Each expert will generally be deployed for two years, but the programme itself, once launched, should be renewed annually for a fairly long period, given the amount of time needed to achieve results in this area.

The main objective of FinTRACA is to block access to Afghanistan's financial system for those who have obtained money illegally and those who wish to use their money to fund terrorist activities.

The mentors' mission will be to strengthen the capacities of the Afghan authorities responsible for combating money laundering, and particularly FinTRACA. The UNODC hopes this will improve information sharing between FinTRACA and the other authorities responsible for justice, financial regulation and tackling corruption. It also wishes to promote international cooperation between FinTRACA and the other financial investigation units from around the world which are members of the Egmont Group (<http://www.egmontgroup.org/>).

In addition, the UN office plans to train staff within the different institutions and provide appropriate software. The mentors will also help launch the work of the interministerial Economic Crimes Task Force, which was established by decree in 2013 but is yet to meet.

Given that the Afghan institutions have since evolved (creation of the post of Chief Executive, development of the Office of the President), it may be worth reviewing the composition and positioning of this task force. The two technical assistance experts will join the team of four mentors that the UNODC has already deployed as part of its GPML (Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism). Each of those mentors is responsible for one of four regions (West Africa, South Africa, Central Asia and the Mekong area).

The work of the two other mentors will be linked to another of the UNODC's projects in Afghanistan which aims to create and support a team to tackle the movement of dirty money (the Counter Cash Courier Task Force). The team's task will be to monitor the cross-border transportation of currency and bearer-negotiable instruments. A major target will be money mules, especially at the country's airports and border posts. A training programme is being developed which may include techniques for profiling and identifying money mules, the introduction of new procedures for declaring and seizing currency, and an overhaul of the investigation methods used for money laundering and terrorist financing. Measures are also envisaged to improve source-management and intelligence techniques, as well as to professionalise information sharing and exchange between services. Finally, the role of the financial investigation units may be reviewed and new arrangements for cross-border cooperation (regional and international) will be considered.

2. Ministerial meeting on reconstruction and regional cooperation in Afghanistan in the margins of the 70th UNGA (26 September 2015)

Afghanistan, the United States and China co-chaired a ministerial meeting on Afghanistan in the margins of the 70th United Nations General Assembly in order to commend the efforts of the national unity government one year after President Ghani came to power, and to reiterate the support of the international community.

Those who spoke at the meeting particularly emphasised that it was important for the international community to base its support to Afghanistan on respect for the country's sovereignty and independence. This support should also be directed towards the development of infrastructure and training.

The European Union, which already provides EUR 1 billion per year to Afghanistan and will host an international donor conference in Brussels in 2016, reiterated its support. The conference will be an opportunity not only to confirm pledges of international aid but also to take stock of the implementation of the announced reforms and of regional cooperation.

At a second meeting which followed the high-level meeting, the Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah presented the new Afghan National Drug Action Plan.

In Pakistan

Pakistan's national drug control strategy

As far as the mini Dublin Group is aware, Pakistan's anti-drugs strategy has not been modified recently.

The moratorium on the death penalty was lifted at the beginning of 2015, originally for convictions in terrorism cases; in practice, however, the lifting of the moratorium applies to ordinary criminal cases, meaning that people could potentially be sentenced to death for drug trafficking.

Although the fight against drug trafficking is an essential factor in the stability of the country and the wider region and is one of the government's priorities, it cannot compete with the fight against terrorism in the Pakistani security agenda.

Pakistan's national strategy has a distinct focus on reducing supply, dismantling large trafficking networks and arresting drug barons, and minimising the harmful effects arising from the consumption of narcotic or psychotropic substances. Reducing demand appears to be less of a priority.

Moreover, high-profile action is often taken at national level by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), such as drug-burning ceremonies or operations aimed at civil society (e.g. the 'Drug-free society' campaign).

With regard to the services responsible for combating drug trafficking, the authorities' genuine commitment to facilitating and streamlining inter-agency information exchange is demonstrated by the existence since February 2010 of an Inter Agency Task Force (IATF), which brings together a number of services and agencies dealing with drug-trafficking cases. Within the IATF, the ANF is responsible for combating drug trafficking and coordinating anti-drugs operations in Pakistan.

At international level, the agencies which combat drug trafficking, in particular the ANF, show a willingness to work together with foreign drug liaison officers and they participate in relevant international seminars. Pakistan has signed extradition treaties with 29 countries worldwide.

The fight against trafficking in Pakistan

Pakistan remains primarily a transit country for drugs from Afghanistan. According to available information, around 40 % of Afghan production transits through Pakistan. The authorities experience major difficulties in controlling drug trafficking, especially in the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan (provinces of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), because the borders are extremely porous and the security situation there has seriously deteriorated.

The main routes used by traffickers converge on the port of Karachi (Sindh) and the ports of Jiwani, Gwadar and Pasni (Baluchistan), where drugs are exported by sea to the countries of the Persian Gulf and East Africa.

Drugs are also transported illegally by air, by having passengers conceal small quantities in their luggage, on their person, or even inside their bodies. The Persian Gulf is a destination of choice for this type of trafficking, particularly Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, countries in which demand has been steadily growing for several years. The African continent, especially West Africa, is also a leading destination for drug mules, as is Europe (the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands), but to a lesser extent this year.

Before moving on to the figures, it should be noted that while the information that has been gathered and cited below (seizures, arrests, etc.) was published officially by the ANF, the facts may have been distorted in some cases. For example, the quantities seized may include operations carried out abroad acting on Pakistani intelligence. The figures in this document should therefore be regarded as general context and not as a consolidated report.

On the basis of official announcements by the anti-trafficking authorities, drugs seizures increased in 2015 (reference period: January to September 2015 compared with the same period in 2014), especially heroin (+205 %) and cannabis resin (+108 %). Seizures of cocaine, which is an imported product, rose 500 % from 2014 to 2015. As a reminder, in 2014 the ANF seized 106 tonnes of cannabis resin, 40 tonnes of opium and 5.4 tonnes of heroin. Adding the seizures made by the other members of the Inter Agency Task Force to these figures (124 tonnes of cannabis resin, 7.76 tonnes of opium and 3.78 tonnes of heroin in 2014) brings the total of seizures declared by the ANF and IATF in 2014 to 230 tonnes of cannabis resin, 47.7 tonnes of opium and 9.1 tonnes of heroin.

The amount of precursor products seized also rose between 2008 (17 tonnes declared) and 2014 (101 tonnes declared, a figure which seems to derive mainly from two major seizures amounting to more than 100 tonnes of precursor products). However, according to the information provided, only five tonnes of precursors were seized in Pakistan between 1 January and 30 September 2015.

As impressive as these figures may be, seizures of drugs in Pakistan amount to only a proportion of the illegal flows of narcotics from Afghanistan, where production of opiates currently outstrips global demand.

In 2015 (between January and September), 53 foreign nationals were arrested in Pakistan for drug trafficking (27 Nigerians, eight Afghans, six Zambians, three Filipinos, two Nepalese, two Britons and one Bosnian).

As regards the fight against financial flows linked to trafficking, the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has stated that in the course of its investigations it has seized PKR 1 875 million (around EUR 17 million) and frozen PKR 5 517 million (around EUR 50 million) since 1995.

Drug consumption in Pakistan

A proportion of the narcotics are sold on in Pakistan, contributing to the consumption of these products as well as to the spread of diseases linked to drug use in an often disadvantaged population.

The Pakistani anti-drug authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimate that between 6.4 and 6.7 million people consume drugs and non-prescription medicines in Pakistan, around 6 % of whom do so relatively regularly. This figure is higher in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (10.9 %), a Pakistani province on the border with Afghanistan, and in Sindh (6 %), but lower in Baluchistan (5 %) and Punjab (4.7 %).

It is very likely that cocaine use is growing in the large urban centres of Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore among very privileged young people and socio-economic groups who reject cultural and religious constraints. The ANF denies the existence of this phenomenon. Seizures by the ANF (4.75 kg declared in 2014) probably reflect only a small proportion of illegal flows, as is the case for all drugs circulating in Pakistan.

International cooperation in Pakistan

According to the information gathered, the anti-drug authorities are developing a four-year plan which will be implemented alongside the UNODC's next anti-drugs programme (along the lines of the ANF's Drug Control Master Plan 2010-2014 and the UNODC's Pakistan Country Programme 2010-2014).

Together with the UNODC, Canada is to provide a three-week training-for-instructors session for federal agencies (primarily the Federal Investigation Agency and Anti-Narcotics Force) in November 2015, focusing on criminal financial investigation.

As part of its 2016 security cooperation programme, France is planning a one-week training mission on combating drugs, for the benefit of the Anti-Narcotics Force.

On 27 and 28 January 2015, Pakistan hosted a Regional Counter Narcotics Seminar, bringing together the Triangular Initiative countries (Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran), a number of European, African and Gulf states, the United States, and several relevant international and regional organisations (UNODC, INTERPOL, ASEANPOL, etc.).

The seminar provided the opportunity to follow up efforts made in the region, particularly in the context of international cooperation. It also resulted in a number of recommendations, focusing primarily on exchanging information – including in the field of money laundering – as well as on combating trafficking in chemical precursors, reviewing eradication policies, developing mutual operational cooperation and exchanging best practices.

c. Key points followed up by the mini groups

In Afghanistan

The absence of results for the past few years has led to a significant drop in the funds provided by donors: not only does the ISAF, which allocated funds of USD 400 million per annum to the fight against drugs, no longer exist, but American-provided funds have decreased by nearly half (dropping from USD 400 million to USD 250 million).

A change of strategy is urgently needed. Although an integrated approach is essential, it should be differentiated according to region. As vouchsafed by the Deputy Minister for Counter Narcotics, 40 districts (out of more than 350) are alone responsible for producing 92 % of drugs in Afghanistan (10 districts, primarily in Helmand, produce 56 %). The Afghan authorities consider that the population in these districts moreover supports the Taliban. In the light of this, a much stronger commitment to eradication is an essential precondition for alternative development programmes, which are expected to be much more successful in provinces declared 'poppy-free' (i.e. free of opium cultivation) or those close to achieving that status.

While the issue of drugs was completely taboo when President Karzai was in power, it is now regarded as a government priority. The dialogue between the mini Dublin Group and Ms Salamat Azimi, which was very open and addressed almost all aspects, would have been unthinkable under the previous government. Once again, the minister stressed the Afghan President's wish to chair in person a quarterly committee on this issue and to set up a permanent committee of key ministers.

In a departure from the usual rhetoric about sharing responsibilities between producer and consumer countries, in their discussions with the mini group the Afghan authorities presented the problem of drug trafficking primarily as a threat to their own country; moreover, they viewed it more in terms of public health than in terms of the criminalisation of society.

As long advocated by the UNODC, the Afghan authorities plan to adopt a global approach, comprising eradication as well as law enforcement measures targeting key traffickers, alternative development (in the broader sense, with the focus on irrigation, market access, product preservation, etc. rather than on particularly high-revenue sectors such as saffron), healthcare (prevention and provision of care), etc. The authorities call on the donors to follow suit by including this approach systematically in their projects and flagging it up, particularly in healthcare programmes. The presence of representatives from the relevant key ministries and the fact that they showed no hesitation in discussing this subject attested to this new approach.

In Pakistan

The mini Dublin Group is specifically monitoring the activities of the Anti Narcotics Force (ANF), which is responsible for tackling drug trafficking, especially across borders and internationally. It gathers all national data and exercises control over the other State agencies involved in intercepting the flow of drugs at national level. All these services are known collectively as the IATF (Inter Agency Task Force).

Despite the efforts made by the Anti Narcotics Force to communicate with the international community, some things remain unclear, particularly as regards the quantities of drugs seized and the dismantling of trafficking networks.

Similarly, in addition to certain shortcomings in the training and organisation of the services responsible for combating drug trafficking, a climate that is conducive to corruption, and weaknesses in the judicial system, the strategy chosen by the Pakistani authorities in the fight against drug trafficking has been to increase drug seizures without, however, establishing a systematic approach to investigation that would enable international traffickers' networks to be dismantled and those responsible for the trafficking to be arrested. Consequently, the cases that do get dealt with only rarely result in the arrest of network leaders and the seizure of their assets, with anti-narcotics forces usually settling for the arrest of drug couriers.

III. THE NATURE OF THE REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL PROBLEMS

The security situation in Afghanistan is not conducive to a reduction in the production of opium, heroin and cannabis resin. The coexistence in the region of security problems (instability, terrorism), large-scale opium production and the huge financial assets it generates are a major source of instability. This situation, which explains or compounds the phenomena described earlier (porous borders, corruption, lack of police resources), means that trafficking in drugs originating in Afghanistan and passing through or bound for Pakistan is unlikely to lessen in the near future. The situation is also leading to a significant increase in local drug consumption and, at the same time, to the spread of diseases linked to drug use, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS, among often disadvantaged population groups.

Lastly, the existence of a thriving illicit economy in Afghanistan based on drugs has grave political and economic consequences:

- 20 % of the population is involved in one way or another in this illicit economy.
- Drugs are fuelling corruption and, moreover, distort the economy. The property bubble that burst in 2014 was definitely linked, in part, to the laundering of drug money; the collapse of the construction industry has been a major factor in the stunting of economic growth and in the current crisis, which induces thousands of people to leave for Europe every month.
- All this helps to explain the surprising level – for an LDC and one of the poorest countries in the world – of the financial flows and assets abroad (which also limits the effectiveness of legislation against money laundering, since funds are rapidly transferred abroad).

- Drugs are funding the insurgency. Some even believe that the Taliban movement has become primarily a criminal organisation, since its strategy is no longer governed by its declared political objectives but rather by its interests as a producer, refiner and exporter. As an example they cite the Taliban's fierce military struggle in Helmand this year to control the territory between the production area and its export route to the south.

In Pakistan, the significant increase in the consumption of 'recreational drugs' is a growing phenomenon that affects all strata of civil society, both disadvantaged social groups (heroin, opium) and prosperous and urban population groups (cocaine, cannabis resin, ecstasy/MDMA, etc.). This domestic consumption encourages increasing trafficking of these products imported into Pakistan.

IV. ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED BY THE DUBLIN GROUP AT CENTRAL LEVEL

At regional level, good coordination of initiatives must be a priority for donors. The Paris Pact serves as a framework for dialogue and the coordination of measures at both technical and political level. The mobilisation of donors in this partnership must remain stable.

In Afghanistan, major challenges remain in the political domain (electoral reform and governance), the economic domain (corruption) and the security domain (Taliban threat, Da'esh-affiliated individuals); however, some progress has been made. The guidelines adopted at the instigation of President Ghani are sound, even if it remains unclear whether they will be implemented, both for reasons of inefficiency and because of the rot caused by corruption and drug trafficking within the administration and Afghan society.

The situation in Afghanistan must remain one of the international community's political priorities. It would be paradoxical if, having mobilised for the fight against drugs at a time when Afghan political will was lacking, the donors were to pull out just as such political will is being demonstrated for the first time.

The donors must ensure that they do not destroy, in the space of a few months, the outcome of several years' work. As an example, funds invested in training and providing equipment to the Counter Narcotics Police have led to a degree of efficiency today that is rare in the Afghan police force. However, in the face of the violent Taliban offensive, which is stretching the special forces to breaking point, there is talk of sending these police forces into battle; some observers consider that it would take less than one season of fighting to completely undo several years' efforts.

The donors must lend their support to the implementation of Minister Azimi's strategy. A draft national programme for the districts is also under consideration and will require the support of the international community.

In Pakistan, international aid is a necessity, to provide support for the development of national strategies and also in such areas as further training, provision of equipment or operational cooperation.

Within the framework of the national anti-drug policy, the international community could provide greater support to the Pakistani authorities to help set up a programme which would include training for all actors involved in the fight against drugs (judges, judicial services, medical staff and educators).

It could also promote efforts to step up financial investigations into the laundering of money originating from drug trafficking, in a spirit of conformity with existing international law. Dismantling traffickers' national and international networks, and in particular arresting the leaders of those networks, should be given priority over seizing drugs.

In order for anti-drug policies to be evidence-based, an independent body with responsibility for monitoring seizures of drugs (quantity/quality) needs to be created. The current system, which is managed by the ANF, does not allow representatives of foreign anti-drug agencies to make a reliable assessment based on the real statistics in this field.

A training initiative (training for instructors) could also be useful with regard to database input and management.

Lastly, the Pakistani investigative services are seeking equipment suited to drug trafficking investigations (test kits, etc.) or to field operations, such as infra-red glasses, which are essential for night-time anti-drug operations (particularly in mountainous and remote areas).

V. **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE REGIONAL GROUP**

a. **Political initiatives**

In Afghanistan

The contacts made with Ms Salamat Azimi, the new Minister for Counter Narcotics, need to be maintained so as to monitor and support the progress made in the implementation of her 100-day plan and, in the longer term, the overall strategy of her ministry.

The Kabul mini group needs to support the overall approach of the Afghan anti-drugs strategy in the context of shared responsibility between producer and consumer countries, and by combining the parallel work carried out in the fight against drug trafficking, in alternative development and in the treatment of consumers. It needs to ensure the involvement of all the relevant authorities and donors so that the fight against drugs is systematically taken into account in programmes and projects.

It could help support the establishment of genuine national coordination between the relevant ministries and donors (by being involved, together with donors, the UNAMA and the UNODC, in meetings convened for that purpose by President Ghani), while also ensuring coordination at regional level.

At a multilateral level, the members of the Dublin Group and the other donors are encouraged to support the UNODC programmes in the country and the region. Their attention is drawn in particular to the Afghanistan donor partners' meeting to be held in Vienna by the UNODC Regional Programme for Central Asia on 14 December.

This meeting will be followed by the Paris Pact Consultative Group meeting which will also be held in Vienna on 15 and 16 December. These meetings, in which donors are invited to take part, should make it possible to reaffirm the international community's commitment to tackling the issue of the production, consumption and trafficking of opiates from Afghanistan and identify specific operational projects that need to be financed.

Lastly, the United Nations, together with the major donors and the Afghan government, has carried out in Afghanistan a tripartite review on the role of the United Nations and the support it can give in this new stage of the 'transformation decade'. The report proposes, for instance, strengthening the role of the United Nations in the fight against drugs in order to address the regional dimension of the problem. Given the importance of the illicit economy in the funding of criminal and terrorist activities, the United Nations Sanctions Committee should include this aspect in its mandate. In the shorter term, the United Nations should encourage "all the relevant Afghan authorities" to cooperate more closely. The report was presented to the United Nations Security Council in September and the recommendations it contains will be discussed at the beginning of 2016.

In Pakistan

The international community, in the context of Pakistan's overall strategy in the fight against drugs, could support the implementation of a training programme for all those involved in combating drug trafficking (the judiciary, police, health personnel and the education sector) and promote the application of laws compatible with international rules with regard to the fight against drug money laundering.

The international community could also develop links between the authorities, those involved in the fight against drugs in Pakistan and their counterparts, with a view to sharing expertise and experience in this area.

The international anti-drug agencies, represented by their drug liaison officers in Pakistan, work in the operational context by exchanging intelligence that can help to dismantle international trafficking networks and by carrying out controlled delivery operations: strengthening operational cooperation and ensuring that it works smoothly are crucial in order to achieve the best possible results in dismantling networks and arresting international traffickers.

b. Priorities for donors

In Afghanistan

Donors need to maintain their commitment in Afghanistan in order not to destroy the outcome of several years of work.

It is important for donors that they support the implementation of Minister Azimi's strategy. A draft district-based national programme is also under consideration and will require the support of the international community.

Lastly, the programmes conducted by the UNODC alone or jointly with other international or regional organisations, both in Afghanistan and in the wider region, require financial support from donors. The fight against money laundering and illicit financial flows from drug trafficking is a priority of both the UNODC and the Paris Pact, which need to be supported in their coordination and capacity-building measures.

In Pakistan

The Pakistani anti-drug agencies particularly need the support of the international community in investigations targeting the ringleaders of drug-trafficking networks, and in particular cross-border networks.

As regards training, the Anti-Narcotics Force has an academy which was recently awarded ISO 9001:2008 certification. Based in Islamabad, it trains its staff in combating trafficking in drugs and drug-related products. Its activities need to be supported by the international community so as to develop continuous professional training for police investigation agencies and other agencies tasked with investigating and handling drug-related cases.

Lastly, the Pakistani investigative services are still greatly lacking in equipment suited to drug-related investigations (test kits, etc.) as well as equipment for field operations, including infra-red glasses, which are essential for night-time anti-drug operations (particularly in mountainous and remote areas). Donors can help to address these needs.

VI. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED IN 2014

In 2014, the recommendations set out by the Dublin Group on Afghanistan focused on alternative development in production regions, the launch of a comprehensive health policy on drugs, further confiscation and seizure of criminal assets, the adoption of new penal measures and the creation of an inter-ministerial mechanism to coordinate the efforts of all those involved in the fight against drugs.

These recommendations were largely taken into account in the national strategy and the action plan drawn up under the leadership of President Ghani and Minister Salamat Azimi, which reflect the essentially global nature of anti-drugs policy and the need to pay particular attention to the situation of women in the light of this scourge. Alternative development programmes remain a priority in the region and will be accorded particular attention in the preparation for the Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 2016 on the World Drug Problem. The fight against illicit financial flows generated by drug trafficking is the priority of the second pillar of the ongoing Paris Pact and will be supported by a new UNODC programme.

As mentioned before, the effective and efficient implementation of these provisions must continue to be the main focus of attention of the Dublin Group.
