



Ministry of Counter Narcotics
Of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



UNAMA

AFGHAN GOVERNMENT AND UNITED NATIONS ANTICIPATE A REDUCTION IN OPIUM CULTIVATION IN 2009

1 February 2009, KABUL – 2009 looks set to witness a further decrease in opium cultivation in Afghanistan, according to a joint report of the Ministry of Counter Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

None of Afghanistan's provinces are showing an upward trend in opium cultivation, the 18 provinces that were poppy free in 2008 are likely to remain so and 7 others are likely to reduce cultivation.

At a press conference in Kabul today, the Afghan Minister of Counter Narcotics, H.E. General Khodaidad, the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Kai Eide and the Country Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Jean-Luc Lemahieu, announced findings from the Opium Rapid Assessment Survey.

Similar to previous years, opium cultivation in 2009 is virtually confined to the seven most unstable provinces in the south and south west. In the north, centre, and east of the country, pressure from government authorities, food scarcity and effective pre-planting information campaigns appear to have contributed to the decline in poppy cultivation. In the south and south-west, reduced opium cultivation is due to high wheat prices, low opium prices and a lack of water in the face of severe drought.

General Khodaidad expressed appreciation for US and UK efforts in introducing and contributing to the Good Performance Initiative and called on other countries to contribute, saying that "this is the window towards a poppy free Afghanistan" and that "tackling narcotics in Afghanistan is a joint fight, we must stand side by side to remove this evil and dangerous phenomena from this region".

UN Special Representative Kai Eide said: "The report released today shows that we may be facing an important turning point in our efforts to reduce poppy cultivation. But it will depend on our ability to make full use of the next two years to consolidate these positive developments."

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Representative, Jean-Luc Lemahieu, congratulated the Ministry of Counter Narcotics for its efforts in countering opium cultivation and emphasised that "this potential market-correction is an opportunity to consolidate the progress which started in the north and needs to be continued in the southern provinces. The forecasted reduction is less a gain than a very welcome invitation for action, coordination and consolidation".

Mr. Lemahieu urged the Government of Afghanistan, neighbouring countries and the international community to strengthen regional cooperation, such as to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals, to cut drug-related financial flows and to intensify the destruction of drug laboratories.
