

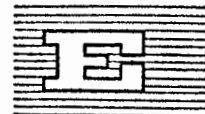
UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL

UN LIBRARY

APR 29 1977



UN/SA COLLECTION



Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.7/SR.825
22 February 1977

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

Twenty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 825th MEETING*

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 17 February 1977, at 2.50 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BABAIAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

CONTENTS

World requirements of opiates for medical and scientific purposes and the position in regard to their supply (agenda item 8)

* No summary record was prepared for the 824th meeting.

This record is subject to correction.

Participants wishing to make corrections should submit them in writing to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva, within one week of receiving the record in their working language.

Corrections to the records of the meetings of the Commission at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

WORLD REQUIREMENTS OF OPIATES FOR MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES AND THE POSITION IN REGARD TO THEIR SUPPLY (agenda item 8) (E/CN.4/592 and E/INCB/33, paras. 31-40; MNAR/14/1976)

1. Mr. MOLL (Secretary of the Commission) drew attention to the documents relating to the agenda item, namely a note by the secretariat entitled "Scientific research to ensure adequate supplies of codeine for medical and scientific purposes" (E/CN.7/592), and part of the report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 1976 (E/INCB/33, paras. 31-40).

2. The CHAIRMAN invited the President of INCB to introduce that part of the Board's report.

3. Professor REUTER (President, International Narcotics Control Board) said that the Commission, at its twenty-sixth session, had expressed the wish that the Board should continue to deal with the question. In paragraphs 31 to 40 of its report (E/INCB/33), the Board had presented a short analysis of information received from Governments on the subject, together with a table. The figures shown in the table each had a different value, since the information furnished to the Board under the treaties covered a limited period of time and was intended for purposes of control of licit movement. The Board had had to adapt that information for long-term forecasting purposes, filling certain gaps with information furnished by the Governments and, in certain cases, having to restrict itself to simplified hypotheses.

4. The degree of accuracy of the figures was not the same for supply and for demand, nor for the short and for the medium term. Forecasting was easier in the case of demand, since the opiate consumption of countries developed slowly according to medical traditions. Projections published in earlier reports indicated the likelihood of a gradual increase to 200 tons of morphine by 1980. In the case of supply the forecasts were less reliable, as it depended on decisions taken by the producing countries which were dependent on a large number of factors, both domestic and international, as well as on natural phenomena.

5. In recent years, the producing countries had made praiseworthy efforts to facilitate the supply of medicines. In 1976 the quantity of raw materials produced had been considerable and undoubtedly in excess of the probable consumption. Higher yields and greater areas sown during the 1977 season indicated that a strengthening of that trend could be foreseen. Despite the regulatory role of stocks, there would be some risk if harvests after 1977 were abundant.

6. The Board had not wished to make forecasts beyond 1977 as they could prove unreliable. Instead, it had tried to prepare an inventory of production potential. The figures in the bottom row of the table were therefore not projections. They indicated what could be produced with the means available. Factors which would lead to a future increase in production capacity included expansion of crop areas, better yields, and the introduction of new alkaloid extraction units using the most modern morphine recovery techniques. It was desirable that Governments should use that increased production capacity in accordance with the needs of the international community, for the balance of narcotic drug supply and demand was an important factor in effective control.

7. Dr. LING (Director, Division of Narcotic Drugs), said that the continuing concern regarding licit international trade in opiates and world requirements for medical and scientific purposes emphasized the importance of the item under consideration. Document E/CN.7/592 represented a synthesis of various aspects of the research work being done by the Narcotics Laboratory to maximize the yield of phenanthrene alkaloids per unit of cultivated land. He also drew the attention of members of the Commission to the working paper which had been submitted by Canada and distributed at the previous meeting, entitled "Supply and demand in the licit international trade in opiates and their raw materials" (MNAR/14/1976).
8. The CHAIRMAN invited the Director of the Narcotics Laboratory to give a progress report on the research programme carried out by the Laboratory to ensure adequate supplies of codeine for medical and scientific purposes.
9. Dr. BRAENDEN (Director, Narcotics Laboratory) said that during the period under review, the United Nations Laboratory had given high priority in its international scientific research programme to maximizing the output of phenanthrene alkaloids per unit of cultivated land. Research on Papaver somniferum and Papaver bracteatum fell into the following seven specific areas: better methods for alkaloid determination; world collection of poppy seed and maintenance of the germplasm bank; plant selection and breeding; development of improved cultural, harvesting and storage practices; use of anti-oxidants to reduce loss of morphine in opium; investigation of the biosynthesis of phenanthrene alkaloids; and studies of laticifer cells and latex vessels.
10. With regard to the determination of phenanthrene alkaloids, a new thin-layer chromatographic procedure was currently in wide-scale use for the evaluation and selection of plants with superior alkaloid content. Methods for the determination of morphine, codeine and thebaine, using gas chromatography and high-pressure liquid chromatography were at present being perfected. To facilitate the comparison of data obtained by different analytical procedures, the United Nations Laboratory prepared reference samples of Papaver somniferum and Papaver bracteatum which it distributed to scientific bodies throughout the world. In addition, the United Nations Laboratory was continuing to make extensive germplasm collections. It had received 121 samples of opium poppy seed from 23 countries and those samples had been sent to other scientific laboratories where they were being evaluated for desirable characteristics to develop new varieties. One of the most promising species in that regard was the indigenous opium poppy growing wild in Spain, which had a morphine content of up to 1.8 per cent in the capsules. Research was taking place at present to determine the environmental and genetic factors responsible for that high content.
11. In addition, efforts were also being made to select plants with high alkaloid content, winter hardiness, resistance to insects and diseases, and uniformity of capsule height and maturity. Research was also being carried out on a variety of Papaver somniferum with a grooved capsule which made lancing impossible and would avoid the risk of illicit traffic.

12. The United Nations Laboratory, in co-operation with many countries, was also carrying out research to improve cultivation practices, particularly fertilization, sowing, plant spacing, irrigation, weed control, harvesting and storage practices, with the aim of increasing codeine yield per unit of cultivated area. Considerable progress had been reported, particularly in France, where green capsules were being harvested which produced a higher yield of morphine than the mature capsules. However, the harvesting of green capsules required a drying process which could result in the degradation of the alkaloids.

13. The use of anti-oxidants and enzyme de-activators offered encouraging prospects for reducing the loss of morphine in opium immediately following harvesting. Preliminary research in India had shown that the addition of certain of those compounds would arrest the decomposition of morphine. In the Netherlands and Norway, preliminary findings from experiments indicated that the application of certain precursors to the plant, at certain stages of its development, would increase the yield of alkaloids. Research under way in the United States of America on laticifers and latex vessels would aid understanding of the formation of alkaloids in both Papaver bracteatum and Papaver somniferum.

14. Important scientific meetings held in 1976 on Papaver bracteatum and research to increase codeine production had enabled reports to be drawn up (ST/SOA/SER/J/23 and MNAR/9/1976) which contained useful information.

15. The codeine research programme had already been in existence for three years and the achievements had exceeded the goals, but there were still many unanswered questions. He hoped that the establishment of adequate scientific data and technology would make possible the production of sufficient quantities of phenanthrene alkaloids from a significantly smaller crop area, in order to satisfy the licit world demand for codeine.

16. Dr. SMITH (Canada), introducing his delegation's working paper (MNAR/14/1976), said that he wished first to thank all those concerned around the world for the information they had provided on supply and demand in licit international trade in opiates and their raw materials, which had made it possible to present as reasonable estimates as possible in that document. As the President of the Board had already pointed out, the supply of those substances depended on various factors, such as the weather and governmental decisions. The question had already been considered at past meetings, but without any conclusions or any agreement having been reached. His delegation believed it was necessary to work out a medium- to long-term extrapolation of existing trends. The Board had rightly been unwilling to take on such a task, which it did not consider to be within its mandate. However, the Board's report and its President's remarks contained some helpful information. The extrapolation would enable long-term decisions to be made regarding licit international trade in opiates on the basis of the best possible sources of information.

17. The working paper covered those countries which grew opiates for other than domestic use and were not "neutral" vis-à-vis the international trade in opiates, as indicated in paragraph 2. The data should include all possible sources

of compounds capable of being converted to opiates, when they were grown for that purpose, as indicated in paragraph 3. The demand situation was discussed in paragraph 4 and the supply situation in paragraphs 5 and 6, the latter indicating in detail the reason for the assumption of the increases indicated in figure 2. As had been pointed out in paragraph 7, since those two graphs were on the same scale, it could be seen, by superimposing them, that there was already a state of over-supply. If decisions already taken remained in effect, the accumulated excess production by 1980 could reach as much as 300 tons of morphine equivalent, equal to at least one year's supply. Members of the Commission, who were familiar with the situation in their respective countries, could perhaps correct those estimates.

18. Part B of the document, presented some opinions, concerns and suggestions of his delegation and paragraph 8 indicated its principal reason for concern which was that the disturbance of the international licit trade could have an effect on the illicit trade. That problem had been one of the Commission's main concerns for the past 20 years. In that connexion, he expressed his thanks to the major exporters: to Turkey for having changed its procedures at the request of the international community, to India for equitably sharing its limited resources in a time of shortage, to all producers for the way in which they were applying the stringent provisions of the Single Convention, and also to those producers who over the past 25 years had voluntarily withdrawn from international trade in accordance with the policies laid down by the Commission. The international community, for its part, should take good note of the effects that its decisions could have on countries which had voluntarily met the Commission's requirements in the past.

19. The working paper then went on to examine possible courses of action, in the first place those needed to guarantee the completeness of information. Appropriate measures were listed in sub-paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of paragraph 10. He pointed out that the view expressed in sub-paragraph (b), with respect to poppy straw, should be corrected, as it had been pointed out to him that the estimates provided for under the 1972 Protocol were adequate for estimating production of opiates. However, the requirements mentioned for Papaver bracteatum remained. In that connexion, it would be necessary to determine whether article 2, paragraphs 4 and 5, of the Protocol could be interpreted as applying to Papaver bracteatum straw as a source of the drugs. It would be useful to have a legal opinion on that point. If it was not agreed that those paragraphs applied, it would be necessary to consider other means of putting those new species under international control, and the Commission should perhaps consider amendments to the Single Convention to that effect. Interested Governments should be asked to send proposed amendments to the Secretariat by the end of June 1977. The Secretariat could then synthesise the proposals, which could be discussed at the fifth special session of the Commission in February 1978. The agreed amendments could then be considered formally in accordance with the procedure laid down in article 47 of the Single Convention.

20. There was an absolute need for a study of the economic and social effects of the cultivation of Papaver bracteatum for codeine production. According to all reports, a technological development had been initiated which would produce opiates at a fraction of their present cost. For further information it would be necessary to await the completion of the work in progress, particularly at the United Nations Narcotics Laboratory. The history of technology showed clearly that a cheaper technique always replaced a more expensive one. That development had to be accepted, steps being taken to see that the changeover from Papaver somniferum to Papaver bracteatum took place gradually, and that its effects on world markets were cushioned. Rough calculations indicated that about 10,000 tons of Papaver bracteatum straw, yielding 2.5 per cent thebaine, grown on perhaps as little as 20,000 hectares, would meet the entire demand for codeine in international trade. In view of that prospect, his delegation strongly recommended an international study to clearly determine the consequences of that situation, so that damage was done to as few people as possible.

21. Paragraph 11 of the working paper proposed certain practical steps which might be taken affecting supply, such as production restriction (subparagraph (a)), stockpiling (subparagraph (b)), and an international commodity agreement similar to those concluded for other agricultural products (subparagraph (c)). He hoped that members of the Commission would be able to suggest other possibilities. It was necessary to ensure that the possibilities proposed were considered acceptable and timely by the Governments concerned with the international narcotics trade. In subparagraph (a), the words "for production for domestic needs only" should be added at the end of the first sentence. Producers and consumers should indicate whether they wished to consider production restriction and the allocation of markets as indicated in subparagraph (a). On stockpiling (subparagraph (b)), he said that Canada had not stockpiled opium or its derivatives in the past and even if it did form a stockpile it would not have any significant influence on prices or production. Moreover, in view of the apparent decline in market prices, under present circumstances, the only countries which might have to stockpile were those producers which were not able to sell at suitable prices. That was an unfortunate situation. To draw up an international commodity agreement, it would be necessary to balance the rights and obligations and include provisions to take into account new technological advances, such as production and processing of Papaver bracteatum.

22. Countries could perhaps envisage measures to reduce opiate demand as mentioned in paragraph 12. A resolution recommending such an approach to Governments could be put before the Commission.

23. In conclusion, he requested that statements made by members of the Commission on those issues should be recorded in detail in the summary records, so that positions would be abundantly clear. His delegation asked members of the Commission to give their comments on the general picture of the supply and demand situation (dealt with in Part A of working paper MNAR/14/1976), but not on the detailed estimates. If there was agreement on the prospect of over-supply, they should indicate whether, in their opinion, INCB should be given the task of undertaking a study as suggested in paragraph 10, subparagraph (c). The members of the Commission should also give their views on the problem of Papaver bracteatum and on ways of bringing that species under the same control as Papaver somniferum. It would also be necessary to have a legal opinion and the views of members of the

Commission on the feasibility of the various measures envisaged for the future, such as production quotas, stockpiling or an international commodity agreement. At the conclusion of the discussion on the agenda item, his delegation would reply to any questions put to it and would try to determine at that point whether there was agreement on how to proceed.

24. Mr. de SOUZA (Australia) said that demand for opiates could be expected to increase by about 25 per cent between 1975 and 1980.

25. He agreed that "while the emergency situation in terms of codeine supply which existed in 1973/74 seemed to be over, caution should still be exercised, since stocks were depleted both at the consumer and producer level" (E/CN.7/587, para.209). As to whether there was a possibility of an oversupply of opiates by 1980, his delegation believed, in view of the importance of the matter, that the balance of supply and demand should be carefully monitored, and agreed with the Canadian delegation that the first priority was to ensure completeness of information on all sources of opiates and then to consider ways and means of stabilizing supply relative to demand (MNAR/14/1976, para. 9).

26. INCB was the appropriate body to carry out that task, as it had the power to request data from both producing and consuming countries and the facilities to process them. The Commission should therefore recommend to INCB, first, to request countries to furnish more complete information on the cultivation, production and manufacture of opiates from poppy straw as well as opium; secondly, to carry out a thorough economic and technical study of the effect of possible changes in the structure of opium production (the cultivation of straw from Papaver somniferum and Papaver bracteatum), with reference to all the relevant factors involved; thirdly, to advise the Commission concerning the desirability of controlling the cultivation of P. bracteatum and the form such control might take; fourthly, to prepare contingency plans for a possible oversupply situation.

27. Mr. EL HAKIM (Egypt) said that he had noted with great interest the progress made by the United Nations Laboratory's programme to maximize the yield of phenanthrene alkaloids per unit of cultivated land, in which his country was participating.

28. In Egypt, the codeine research programme had been organized so as to support plant selection and variety development in other collaborating countries. Studies had been initiated to determine the best sowing dates and the number of plant generations that could be grown in 12 months. Seeds of useful opium poppy plant material could be multiplied in Egypt during certain months when it was not possible to grow that crop in the country of origin. The selection and development of new varieties would be greatly accelerated if the plan proved feasible. Similar plans had been made for other crops in order to increase the seed supply for growers in the shortest possible time. In addition, plants of eight different genetic stocks had been evaluated for morphine, codeine and thebaine content. Seeds of plants with a high alkaloid content would be distributed by the United Nations Laboratory to collaborating scientists for use in research. The distribution of that superior germplasm would provide a very good opportunity to increase the yield of phenanthrene alkaloids per unit of cultivated land.

29. Mr. BARONA LOBATO (Mexico) stressed the dangers that might arise if Papaver bracteatum was widely cultivated since, instead of solving the problem of the balance between licit supply and demand, it could lead to oversupply with a whole series of adverse consequences, such as a drop in price, damage to traditional suppliers of opium, such as India and Turkey, and to those producing opium for their domestic requirements, such as Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and the Soviet Union; greater possibilities of diversion into the illicit traffic, and growth of clandestine cultivation, since illicit producers were even more knowledgeable about the situation than scientists.

30. His delegation endorsed the methods used by Turkey which had apparently given excellent results for control and production. It shared the fears of the Canadian delegation, however, that the United States, in its anxiety to ensure that a sufficient supply of opiates would be available for medical purposes, might, even in the case of controlled cultivation, create an unfavourable international situation, and one that would be particularly prejudicial to its neighbours. Mexico already had enough problems with Papaver somniferum and cannabis, and had no wish to become involved in the cultivation of Papaver bracteatum. The question had legal implications as well. Thebaine was subject to control (Schedule I) but Papaver bracteatum was not so that if it began to be cultivated, certain articles of the 1961 Single Convention would have to be amended.

31. In view of the many drawbacks and few advantages of Papaver bracteatum, its cultivation seemed likely to worsen rather than improve the situation. The Commission should take a decision on the matter. It might be better to seek a solution of another kind; the producing countries supplying the international trade might, for example, make use of modern techniques to increase the yield of Papaver somniferum and extract the raw opium from the straw instead of lancing the poppy capsules.

32. If every country began to produce alkaloids to meet its medical needs, in exercise of its rights under the Single Convention, the result would be complete chaos.

33. His delegation viewed as of great importance the measures proposed in paragraph 12 of the Canadian working paper (MNAR/14/1976).

34. It supported the suggestion made by the Canadian delegation, and taken up by the Australian delegation, that INCB should be asked to carry out studies on the subject.

35. Mr. VAILLIE (France) said that, at the fourth special session of the Commission, conflicting views had been expressed, some delegations fearing a shortage of medicaments based on morphine derivatives for the sick, while others had thought that there was every reason to expect an overproduction of opiates (E/CN.7/587, paras. 188 and 189).

36. The report of INCB for 1976 provided some new information: in 1975, consumption had been only 148 tonnes instead of the 1960-1970 tonnes estimated in the INCB report for 1975. The 1976 report forecast that consumption would be about 173 tonnes.

37. On the production side, there were grounds for satisfaction at the good harvest in India, the extraordinary yield (0.56 per cent) obtained in 1975 by the extraction of morphine from poppy straw in Australia, and the first industrial extraction of thebaine in Israel from Papaver bracteatum.

38. The Board had concluded that production could easily reach or even exceed the level of 250 tonnes of morphine a year as against an anticipated consumption of 190 tonnes in 1979-1980. That would seem to bear out the arguments of those who had thought as early as 1976 that overproduction was likely to occur. For that reason, the Canadian delegation's working paper was extremely interesting.

39. On the basis of the consumption figures published by INCB, it would seem that curve I in figure 1 of the Canadian document should be taken as a guideline for the time being, unless consumption began to increase more rapidly in some of the developed countries, as had been expected at one time because of the preference of the medical profession for natural products in view of the failure of synthetic cough medicines.

40. On the supply side, the problem of an increase in the use of straw was less important than the case of transport. The Turkish Government's efforts to check the illicit traffic had been justly commended. Nevertheless Turkey, which had supplied 200-400 tonnes of opium when it was producing it, was planning to process 20,000 tonnes of capsules, in other words 70 tonnes of morphine or about 600 tonnes of opium equivalent. That was a marked increase. It was important to know about Iran's intentions in the future. His delegation agreed with the Canadian delegation that world production was probably already exceeding current maximum demand (INBAR/14/1976, para. 7).

41. As far as stocks were concerned, stocks of opium had increased for the first time since 1972, reaching 665 tonnes in 1975 compared with 616 tons in 1974. The trend in fact was turning. While it was true, as INCB had pointed out, that the level of stocks did not give a sufficient margin of security, the figures did not allow for the depletion of strategic stockpiles in certain countries (e.g. the United States of America). Moreover, stocks of morphine had fallen to 15 tonnes in 1975 from 20 tonnes in 1973. That reflected the shortage which had continued through 1975 and 1976 and even 1977, to judge by demand in the consumer countries which was still very high. It could be deduced from that situation that if essential stock replenishment (100-150 tonnes in terms of morphine) was added to normal consumption, real overproduction might not appear for two or three years.

42. The views, concerns and suggestions of the Canadian delegation in part B of its paper INBAR/14/1976 were worthy of attention. Changes could take place with great rapidity, and the efforts made by the United Nations for the last three decades must not be wiped out by inadequate knowledge of the situation. The persons responsible for taking decisions in each of the countries concerned should be informed as soon as possible of the risk of overproduction. As a step towards solution of the problem, it was necessary first to be sure that full information was available on all sources of opiates. (That was, moreover, an obligation under the 1961 Convention, as amended by the 1972 Protocol.)

43. The Board was continuing to discharge its functions and at the appropriate time it would naturally apply article 9 of the 1961 Convention, as amended. It should continue, as in the past, to devote a chapter of its report to the question.

43 bis. With regard to poppy straw, articles 20 and 25 of the 1961 Convention enabled INCB to play its rôle, the former dealing with statistics on the use of poppy straw for the manufacture of narcotic drugs and imports and exports of drugs and poppy straw, while the latter was concerned with the control of poppy straw.

44. Papaver bracteatum was not explicitly covered by the 1961 Convention but he wondered whether it should not be. Quite considerable quantities of thebaine were prepared from that plant and codeine could be produced from thebaine industrially. That was why the 1961 Convention expressly referred to that substance in Schedule I, thereby making it subject to the provisions of the Convention as far as evaluation, statistics and national and international trade were concerned.

45. The main value of Papaver bracteatum was that it could not itself readily be a source of supply for the illicit traffic. It would be premature again to amend on that point the 1961 Convention, already amended by the 1972 Protocol, before sufficient time had elapsed for it to be certain that those assumptions were confirmed.

46. As the Canadian working paper emphasized, the economic consequences of an excessive expansion of opiate production should also be given careful thought.

47. In order to control supplies, INCB might apply article 21 of the 1961 Convention, as it had already done in certain circumstances.

48. With regard to the suggested adoption of an international commodity agreement similar to those concluded for certain agricultural products, his delegation thought that such a measure would in any event come too late and would pose insoluble financial problems. However, action to affect the demand for opiates could be taken along the lines suggested in paragraph 12 of the Canadian working paper.

49. Mr. KUSEVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the Canadian paper clearly indicated that there would soon be overproduction of opiates for the licit market, without taking into account production in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia, which was by no means negligible.

50. In proposing that research be undertaken on Papaver bracteatum, the United Nations had hoped that that plant would replace the opium poppy in the producing countries. The goal had been to replace a dangerous raw material by one that was much less so, in order to simplify the problem of control and reduce the chances of illicit trafficking. The research had yielded significant results, but, unfortunately, some wealthy developed countries now intended to grow Papaver bracteatum, thereby robbing the developing countries of a portion of their income. If a Western country which had not hitherto cultivated the poppy started to grow it, the others would follow suit, and that might lead to a dangerous situation in the near future. The poor countries, which were making great sacrifices to combat the illicit traffic, had so far been able to cover part of their expenditure by selling the opium seized. If, however, the number of producing countries increased, the poor countries might not find a market for the seized opium and would suffer considerably as a result.

51. The argument that the developed countries would be cultivating Papaver bracteatum to achieve self-sufficiency did not hold good. Opium seeds could easily be stored for many years and all that those countries had to do to become independent was to increase their stocks. It was true that if a developed country wished to grow Papaver bracteatum, there was nothing in any international treaty to prevent it from doing so, but such a decision would be incompatible with international co-operation and solidarity and the moral principle that the rich should help the poor.

52. His delegation therefore proposed that the Commission should recommend that countries which had not hitherto engaged in poppy cultivation should refrain from doing so, while countries where Papaver bracteatum was already being grown should use it only as a replacement crop.

53. Mr. SCHRODER (Federal Republic of Germany) thanked the President of the International Narcotics Control Board, the Director of the Division of Narcotic Drugs and the Director of the United Nations Laboratory for the interesting documents they had submitted. With regard to the Canadian working paper, he had been particularly struck by its indication of the possibility of an over-supply of opiates and he wished to make some comments on that point. His delegation could confirm the statement in paragraph 4 of the document that codeine consumption was on the increase. With reference to the curve mentioned in paragraph 6, he pointed out that production could be much less in 1980 if certain Governments took steps to cut back their output. His delegation agreed with the Canadian delegation that it was necessary to have complete information on the trend of licit opiate manufacture, as indicated in paragraph 10, and to balance and stabilize the relationship between supply and demand in accordance with the suggestions made in paragraphs 11 and 12. INCB undoubtedly had an important role to play in both those tasks.

54. With regard to the possibility of increasing stocks, he agreed with the Canadian representative that such a measure would be of no value to the consuming countries and would in any case not prevent overproduction.

55. The only really effective way of limiting production was indicated in paragraph 11. The Commission should appeal to Governments intending to increase their production beyond the forecast demand level to make them understand that, in view of the heroin situation in a number of regions, opiates were too dangerous a substance for countries to pursue their national economic objectives without heed to the damage those drugs might do to public health in other countries or even in their own territory and that they should therefore, in consultation with INCB, look into the possibility of restricting their production of Papaver somniferum, Papaver bracteatum and poppy straw. His Government had no intention of starting opium poppy cultivation. Any change in the present production pattern could have a disastrous effect on prices, employment and the export income of producing countries such as India and Turkey, and would inevitably have an adverse effect on their economy. The countries producing opium should refrain from raising their prices when there was a shortage of opium because any price increase would naturally encourage the importing countries to start cultivating the poppy.

56. Lastly, it might be asked why the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control was spending a considerable amount on research on Papaver bracteatum if the latter was not intended to replace Papaver somniferum in the producing countries but to complement the resources of countries whose climate was suitable for its cultivation.

57. The scourge of drug dependence and illicit trafficking recognized no frontiers. It was an international problem, which could be solved only with the co-operation of all countries and, in particular, by keeping licit opiate production within limits that were compatible with the evolution of world demand.

58. Mr. de DENEY (United Kingdom) associated himself with the preceding speakers in congratulating the President of the International Narcotics Control Board, the Director of the Division and the Director of the United Nations Narcotics Laboratory, as well as the representative of Canada, for the excellent information they had placed before the Commission which contained long-term forecasts of the supply of and demand for opiates. Although short-term estimates might in practice be inaccurate because of meteorological or other unknown factors, on a long-term basis the errors could be corrected and the analysis could be refined with a view to formulating guidelines for action to be taken by producers.

59. The opiates market was a small one which, in the absence of regulation, was governed by the laws of free competition. As the representative of Yugoslavia had pointed out, legal measures were not sufficient to solve the problem of licit supply and demand and the international community would have to show a spirit of co-operation which, for some States, should consist in refraining from participating in the market, and, for others, in controlling their production with a view to preventing it from being diverted to illicit purposes. In that connexion, the Commission should acknowledge in particular the efforts being made by India.

60. However, in view of the time lag between sowing and harvesting, it was difficult for the producing countries to take decisions concerning the scale of their production, in the absence of timely information on supply and demand. The International Narcotics Control Board encountered the same difficulty in seeking to make valid forecasts. Nevertheless, he believed that it was possible to make projections which would become increasingly reliable in the long term.

61. The Commission therefore had to take two decisions: first whether a system of projection should be prepared for the future; and, secondly, what body should be given that task. It would not do to entrust it directly to the International Narcotics Control Board, as the forecasts might prove inaccurate during the first few years; but the work should certainly be carried out in close co-operation with the Board, since it was very closely linked to the latter's functions.

62. If the Commission did not decide to introduce a system of long-term forecasting, as the representative of Canada had suggested, associated together with restrictions in certain producing countries, the only alternative was the overproduction of opiates. Such overproduction would lead to the free play of market forces, with its concomitant price fluctuations and instability, and there was a danger that that situation might continue over the years.

63. Mr. SVIRIDOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) expressed his delegation's satisfaction with the documents on licit production of opiates which had been submitted to the Commission. He also acknowledged the usefulness of the document submitted by the delegation of Canada, whose concern he appreciated. He regretted, however, that that document, dated 30 December 1976, had been circulated only at the present meeting, which limited the time available for its consideration. The important proposals in paragraph 11 on limitation of production, stockpiling and the conclusion of agreements similar to the commodity agreements, could not be properly studied in one day.

64. Several speakers had pointed to the danger of an overproduction of opiates and had proposed, in order to avert that danger, that the 1961 Single Convention should be amended. His view was that action on those lines would be premature at present. If such a danger did exist, measures should be taken first of all at the national level, as the representative of Yugoslavia had pointed out. His own country had taken important measures to reduce or exclude certain codeine-based medicaments or preparations and to replace morphine by synthetic narcotic drugs.

65. He associated himself with those speakers who had said that INCB should pursue its studies, informing the Commission regularly thereon in its annual report.

66. Mr. SHADANDEH (Iran) said that he had taken note of the assurances provided by INCB (E/INCB/33, paras. 30-41), as well as of the working paper submitted by the representative of Canada. He pointed out that, after having banned and eradicated cultivation of the opium poppy, pursuant to the Commission's recommendations, in the mid-1950s, his Government had, in the late 1960s, once again authorized the controlled cultivation of that product in order to meet the licit demand for opium. However, with the constantly deteriorating drug abuse situation, it was necessary to establish a balance between the licit supply of and demand for opiates, while exercising caution to avoid a position of oversupply which might be detrimental to the efforts of the international community to control drug abuse.

67. Mr. DI GENNARO (Italy) said that it had once again been demonstrated that a well-prepared study gave rise to a fruitful discussion. All delegations seemed to be in agreement on the essential points, but it was necessary to reach irrefutable conclusions.

68. The discussion had shown that legal obligations did not take precedence over moral obligations. In that connexion, and with particular reference to the possible cultivation of Papaver bracteatum, he expressed his agreement with the representative of Yugoslavia, who had proposed recommending to all States parties to the Convention, as well as to other States, that they should not undertake such cultivation, even, under the existing instruments, if they were not legally obliged to refrain from doing so. Such a recommendation would not only be consistent with the spirit of the Commission's work, but would also create an awareness of the detrimental side effects such production might have on countries which, while acting in good faith, might not realize its consequences.

69. Mr. TAMPRATEEP (Thailand), referring to paragraph 10 of document E/CN.7/592, said that his country would like to have research continued on anti-oxidant compounds and enzyme inhibitors, with a view to increasing the yield of alkaloids from opium, and also on the bio-synthesis, translocation and metabolism of phenanthrene alkaloids. That research might eventually make it possible to solve the problem of the conversion of those alkaloids into other compounds, for medical purposes only.

70. Mr. DAGBEGNIKIN (Togo) said that great care should be exercised in forecasting opiate production, as it was very difficult to make accurate crop forecasts, because of many uncertain factors, including climate. There were therefore two solutions: either to face a shortage of opiates for licit consumption and, in that case, be forced to appeal to Governments to increase their production, or to have production surpluses which would be stockpiled and subject to control. Further studies might be carried out, particularly by INCB, with a view to determining a maximum and a minimum level which would make it possible to avoid the occurrence of extreme situations.

71. It appeared that certain countries were planning to engage in the cultivation of Papaver bracteatum, and, if that was really the case, his delegation urgently appealed to them to await the results of the studies undertaken by the competent bodies before taking any steps which might jeopardize all the work which had been accomplished by the United Nations over many years.

72. The CHAIRMAN invited the representative of Canada to give his summing up of the discussion on the item under consideration.

73. Dr. SMITH (Canada) said that it appeared from the discussion that the conclusions of the Commission were along the following lines:

74. The Commission took note of the report of the International Narcotics Control Board (E/INCB/33, paras. 31 to 40) and of the Working Paper submitted by Canada (MNAR/14/76). It observed that the current trend pointed towards a world over-production of narcotic drugs for medical and scientific purposes, which might have adverse consequences for the economy and encourage the illicit traffic. The Commission invited the Control Board to follow the situation carefully and to endeavour, with the full co-operation of all Governments, to establish a balance between the world demand for and supply of opiates and, for that purpose, to consider the establishment of long-term forecasts within the framework of the existing international instruments.

75. The majority of the members of the Commission recommended that the Control Board, the Division of Narcotic Drugs and UNFDAC should carry out a thorough economic and technical study on the effects of the various systems of cultivation and production of raw materials for the manufacture of opiates (change-over from the use of poppy straw to the cultivation of Papaver bracteatum). It would also be necessary to consider the question of control of the production of Papaver bracteatum, and to draw up plans for action to be taken in the event of the overproduction of opiates.

76. The Commission took note of the report of the United Nations Narcotics Laboratory and invited it to complete its work on codeine, certain aspects of which were incomplete. It noted that the research work undertaken under the auspices of the Laboratory involved, inter alia Papaver bracteatum and that thebaine, a substance subject to control under the 1961 Single Convention, could be extracted from that product, which was not itself subject to international control. Several delegations had expressed the view that the absence of information on the cultivation of Papaver bracteatum and on the quantities used to produce codeine might constitute an obstacle to the assessment of licit thebaine and codeine production, an assessment which the Control Board needed in order to estimate the world production of narcotic drugs and limit their production. In that connexion, referring to the fact that some Governments were considering the use of Papaver bracteatum for commercial purposes in order to meet part of their medical requirements, several delegations had expressed reservations concerning the desirability of such action and had requested that their views on that subject should be communicated to the Governments in question and recorded in the summary records of the Commission's deliberations.

77. Lastly, some delegations had been of the opinion that the Commission should recommend that Governments of countries not at present cultivating poppies for the production of opiates should continue to refrain from cultivating them. Papaver bracteatum should be cultivated only as a replacement crop for Papaver somniferum.

76. Mr. SVIRIDOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), referring to the remarks of the representative of Togo, suggested that the Commission could not express any

opinion on the basis of rumours. It was only after the necessary research work had been carried out that the Commission could take action and pursue its work on the basis of official information.

79. Mr. VAILLE (France) supported by Mr. DI GENNARO (Italy) moved, under rule 45 of the rules of procedure, that the meeting be adjourned.

80. The CHAIRMAN said he still had two speakers on his list.

81. Dr. KUSEVIC (Yugoslavia), referring to the remarks of the representative of the Soviet Union, said that trials with Papaver bracteatum were being carried out to determine whether it was practical to use that species. As a guiding body, the Commission could express its opinion concerning the use of Papaver bracteatum either as a substitute crop or as a new crop.

82. Mr. EL HAKIM (Egypt) said that in his opinion it would be dangerous for the Commission to pay attention to rumours; it should not take any action in the absence of reliable information.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.