

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SIXTH MEETING

held on Wednesday, 26 February 1975, at 9.40 a.m.

Chairman:

Dr. JASJIT SINGH

India

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD FOR 1974 (agenda item 5)  
(concluded) (E/INC/25)

Dr. BABAIAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his country held the International Narcotics Control Board in high regard and recalled the fruitful exchanges of views which had been held during a visit paid to Moscow in 1974 by the former President of the Board, Sir Harry Greenfield, and Mr. Dittert, Secretary of the Board. In view of the importance of the report of the Board for 1974 (E/INC/25), it would have seemed advisable for the Commission to have considered it at the beginning of the session. In addition, he agreed with the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany (745th meeting) that the report should have been distributed earlier, in order to give members of the Commission an opportunity of studying it carefully, and that it should be somewhat abridged in order to comply with decision 65 (ORG-75) on the rationalization of the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies, which the Economic and Social Council had adopted on 15 January 1975, to the effect that the Council would consider no report exceeding 32 pages in length.

He wished to make a number of observations concerning specific paragraphs in the report. With regard to paragraphs 185 to 193, in which the Board outlined the responsibilities which would be incumbent upon it as a result of the entry into force of the 1972 Protocol amending the 1961 Convention, it was not for the Board to enumerate or comment on its own responsibilities. That was the task of the signatory States. Paragraph 109 contained the observation that "it is some years since the European countries became aware of the gravity of the drug addiction problem". It should be specified whether that observation referred to the countries of Western or Eastern Europe: the Soviet Union for its part could not agree to be included among countries which had only recently become aware of the gravity of the drug addiction problem. He wondered what the reaction of the other European countries would be to that point. He next referred to paragraph 53 concerning the receipt of returns, in which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam were expressly mentioned as having failed to send data to the Board. Since those countries were not parties to the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, they were free, in the exercise of their sovereign rights, not to communicate data to the Board. The fact that they were mentioned by name gave the impression that the Board was trying to exert a certain pressure on them. Similarly, the sovereign rights of States could be invoked in connexion with paragraph 63, which stated that "opium production in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan should be gradually curtailed to the point of complete elimination". He would observe that the 1961 Convention did not prohibit production intended for domestic consumption. In paragraph 7 also, it was stated that "Nepal should become a party to the international treaties on narcotics control". That was a wish shared by many countries, but the wording used should

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be qualified, for a country could well, again in the exercise of its sovereign rights, decide not to accede to an international instrument. Reference should also be made to paragraph 176, in which the Board seemed excessively pessimistic about the implementation of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances. It was admittedly difficult at present to discern any trends on the sole basis of the data on psychotropic substances communicated to the Board so far, but his delegation could not subscribe to the view that "it will ... be several years before we are able to obtain a more accurate picture of the real situation". As in the case of any other instrument, there would undoubtedly be a certain time lag before that instrument could be implemented, but there seemed to be no grounds for believing that it would be a matter of years.

Turning to the question of the evaluation of the results achieved with regard to treatment through the use of specific substances, he wished once again to advocate caution; he was thinking in particular of the observations made in paragraph 20 concerning the use of methadone in North America for the treatment of drug addicts. Perhaps the versions in the other languages were better phrased than the Russian text, but in any event great care should be exercised on that question.

He had been surprised to hear the President of the Board state (705th meeting) that the report under consideration was not intended for the Commission. The 1961 Convention very clearly stipulated, in article 15, that the reports of the Board should be submitted to the Economic and Social Council through the Commission, which might make such comments as it saw fit. The statement by the President of the Board might give rise to uncertainty, which the Commission should dispel. It was precisely because his delegation considered that the Board was called upon to play a decisive role and because the Board's report had important repercussions that he wished to make matters clear to those who might think that the report did not call for any comments by the Commission.

Mr. BARON LOBATO (Mexico) said that he shared the views of a number of speakers concerning the distribution of the report of the Board, which his delegation also would have welcomed at an earlier date. In that connexion, he referred to rule 5 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, which stipulated that "the basic documents relating to each item appearing on the provisional agenda of a session shall be transmitted not less than forty-two days before the opening of the session, provided that in exceptional cases the Secretary-General may, for reasons to be stated in writing, transmit such documents not less than twenty-eight days before the opening of the session". It had to be recognized that that rule was not often observed.

His delegation had listened with great interest to the statement made at the 705th meeting by the President of the Board, who had described the spirit in which the Board intended to carry out its activities and to supervise the implementation of the international instruments relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. He nevertheless wished to make a few observations concerning some specific points in the ICB report. Paragraph 113 stated that "most liquid cannabis reportedly originates in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Mexico and Nepal". It must be

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pointed out, however, that it had not proved possible to determine the origin of the liquid cannabis seized in Mexico and that so far the authorities had no grounds for believing that the substance had been manufactured in Mexico itself. In paragraph 134, in the conclusions relating to North America, it was stated that "legislative measures designed to control psychotropic substances should be reviewed and where necessary improved". As far as Mexico was concerned, the relevant measures had been adopted as early as 1970, and those provisions had been included in the Health Code in 1973, with a view to strengthening the control of psychotropic substances. Paragraph 120, which related specifically to Mexico, stated that "still more must be done, particularly as regards the provision of equipment and trained staff". His delegation wished to point out in that connexion that the authorities responsible for combating drug production, illicit traffic and drug abuse were giving constant attention to that essential aspect of the question.

In conclusion, he associated himself with those speakers who had congratulated Professeur Reuter on his election as President of the Board and he expressed his satisfaction at the fact that Professor Ramón de la Fuente-Luiz, former President of the National Academy of Medicine of Mexico, was able to place his experience at the disposal of the Board.

Mr. REUTER (President, International Narcotics Control Board) said that he had taken due note of the comments that had been made, but wished to dispel a misunderstanding. When, in his statement at the 705th meeting, he had said that the report of the Board was not intended only for the Commission, he had meant that the Board must, in the presentation of the report, take account of the fact that it was also intended for other persons who did not all have the same technical knowledge as the members of the Commission. It was obviously essential that the Commission should consider the report of the Board, criticize it and comment on it before it was transmitted to the Economic and Social Council. The Board was so fully convinced of that fact that, contrary to the wishes of certain Governments, it had supported the principle of an annual session of the Commission in order that it might consider the report every year and not every two years. The Board had adopted that position because it was fully aware of the importance of such an examination, in conformity with the provisions of the relevant treaties.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the President of the Board for his explanation. Before closing the discussion on agenda item 5, he pointed out that the Commission had not given consideration to the responsibilities of the Board upon the entry into force of the 1972 Protocol amending the 1953 Convention, as outlined in paragraphs 105 to 193 of the report of the Board; he desired the fact to be recorded in the report of the Commission.

POPPY CULTIVATION UNDER PROPERLY CONTROLLED CONDITIONS SO AS TO MEET THE WORLD'S REQUIREMENTS OF OPIUM FOR MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES (agenda item 11)  
(E/CN.7/571, E/CN.7/572 and Add.1, E/INC/25).

Dr. MARTENS (Director, Division of Narcotic Drugs) outlined the new developments since the publication of the note by the Secretary-General on poppy cultivation under properly controlled conditions so as to meet the world's

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requirements of opium for medical and scientific purposes (E/CM.7/572 and Add.1). At the request of the Government of Turkey, a mission, again led by Sir Harry Greenfield, had visited Ankara in January 1975. The Turkish Government had asked for advice on the construction of a factory to produce concentrate of poppy straw and alkaloids, and on determining the financial consequences for farmers of the change to the production of poppy straw. United Nations assistance had been envisaged in the development of controls, enforcement and training. In the meantime, emergency assistance was being provided by the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control to help the Government in its plans for the strict control of the forthcoming harvest.

Mr. REUTER (President, International Narcotics Control Board) wished to state that it was clear that it was for States themselves, in the exercise of their sovereignty, to decide freely on the conditions in which supply should be adapted to demand. That sovereignty was undeniable and acknowledged. Nevertheless, Governments appeared to consider that exchanges of views such as that which was about to take place in the Commission were useful. Matching supply to demand raised problems which were not solely economic and which involved the interests of the international community as a whole. As States were free to take the decisions, the Board could only hope that they would react to market conditions in a prudent and moderate way, since it was difficult to anticipate future developments in that field and there was a danger of passing from one extreme to another.

The Board itself had been concerned for a long time with gearing supply to demand. It regarded it as its duty to make available to Governments the information it collected through the normal exercise of the supervisory functions conferred upon it under the treaties. Since 1973, the Board had accordingly placed before Governments all the data at its disposal, to use as they wished. That initiative, which had been generally approved by Governments, might receive more detailed consideration when the 1972 Protocol entered into force, but the Board would not depart from its prudent line of conduct.

In conclusion, he referred to an observation made in the report of the Board, that while States exercised full sovereignty, it was not desirable to improvise; international experience had, in fact, shown that measures of control could not be improvised.

Mr. VALICE (United States of America) said that when the Commission had examined the item under consideration at its third special session early in 1974, the Board's projections had indicated that, after a shortfall in 1973, the supply of raw materials for the manufacture of narcotic drugs would meet medical requirements in 1974. His Government's own analysis had supported that conclusion; hence, it had decided to release a substantial quantity of opium from its stockpile in the belief that United States commercial inventories could be maintained at a safe level for several years at least. In 1974, unfortunately, production had fallen below expectations and raw material supplies were again insufficient to meet medical demand. Consequently, stocks were being further reduced in some countries, and the United States of America, which traditionally relied on the

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importation of opium for medical requirements, had had to use the opium released from its stockpile at an unexpectedly accelerated pace. Over two thirds of the total amount authorized for release had been delivered to the manufacturers by 31 December 1974.

World demand for codeine was expected to rise further, partly because of population growth but also and significantly because of improved health care throughout the world. That was the case in the United States, where the use of codeine had increased on an average by 3,000 kilos annually in the last few years. The efforts made to develop synthetics to replace natural narcotic drugs seemed unlikely to achieve concrete results in the next few years. Nevertheless, that type of research should be actively pursued and the United States hoped that WHO would monitor the progress made in such research and report regularly on it.

The international community was likely to be faced with a substantial need for narcotic raw materials in the foreseeable future. In addition to continuing medicinal needs, stocks had to be built up again from their current low levels. At the same time, it was essential to exercise careful control over all production of raw materials to prevent their diversion for illicit use. The efforts to find a solution to the temporary shortage of narcotic drugs should not lead to action which might be regressive in terms of international control. Supplies should be increased in such a way as not to enhance the risk of diversion for illicit purposes, a policy which India had been following consistently for years.

In order that existing producers of the poppy should meet the growing world need for raw materials for medical purposes without significantly extending the production area and thereby increasing the problem of control, efforts had been made to maximize morphine yield per hectare under opium poppy. Research undertaken to date indicated that higher yields could be achieved, particularly through the processing of primary and secondary straw. His country therefore believed that the research undertaken by the United Nations Laboratory into ways of maximizing the yield from the straw process and through the selection of high-yield varieties of poppy should be pursued and accelerated. The research should focus on methods of improving morphine content, on harvesting techniques and production yields. The straw process of harvesting was more susceptible to effective control under certain conditions, but it was not a foolproof system and required complex policing, particularly during the period when incision was possible. Methods of improving control techniques should be developed as soon as possible.

In order to take advantage of the expected increase in the supply of poppy straw, which could do much to balance world codeine supply and demand, his Government had authorized the importation of poppy straw concentrate. It intended to continue to rely on imports of narcotic raw materials for domestic consumption.

As indicated in the report entitled "Scientific research" (E/CH.7/751), considerable progress has been made in research on Papaver bracteatum and the United Nations Laboratory had made a noteworthy contribution in that area. As Papaver bracteatum was a species of poppy that produced thebaine rather than opium, it was to be hoped that the world community would shift to production of a raw material that was more easily controllable than the products of Papaver

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somiferum. His Government recommended that the United Nations Laboratory should continue to give high priority to the required research, so that it could be concluded promptly.

Turning to a matter of procedure, he said that in his opinion, the most appropriate way for the Commission to conclude its debate on agenda item 11 would be to arrange for the main points discussed to be summarized in its report. INCB and the United Nations Laboratory should be asked to report on the subject at the next session of the Commission. In the meantime, the Board could keep the situation with respect to supply and demand under close review, and the United Nations Laboratory should speed up its research on the more controllable raw materials.

Mr. VAILLE (France) referred to a passage in paragraph 162 of the report of the Board for 1974 (E/INCB/25), which stated that the present situation "should not lead to exaggerated initiatives or warrant resumption of production by countries lacking the facilities for ensuring production control". The adjustment between production and consumption should be obtained by medium-term commitments between the countries producing and using the poppy and the opium.

He asked the representative of the United Nations Laboratory whether progress had been made with regard to the sowing of Papaver bracteatum. The report of the Consultant Group which had met at Geneva in July 1974, entitled "Research to increase codeine production", raised the question of green poppies (INCB/7/1974, para.14). Progress had been made with semi-industrial research into that technique in France, but it had the disadvantage of requiring heavy investment. Paragraph 15 of the same report stated that it would be interesting to know the minimum morphine content which would make the extraction of morphine an economic proposition. That was only one aspect of the problem, however, because the cost of transporting the straw, as well as the technical process used, was also a factor in assessing industrial profitability. In paragraph 17, reference was made to the disadvantage of the straw's bulkiness, but that had its advantages in combating illicit traffic.

Lastly, he asked whether further progress had been made by the Bulgarian researchers since the findings which they had published in the Bulletin on Narcotics on the morphine content of the dry poppy capsule according to variety.<sup>11/</sup>

Mr. KAROOFI (Observer for Afghanistan) speaking at the invitation of the Chairman, said that, as the methods used by international traffickers were increasingly successful in foiling the authorities responsible for controlling the trade in narcotics, security measures should be improved. The small developing nations alone could not carry the burden of combating the traffic in narcotic drugs. The responsibility should be shared by the developed countries, which to a large extent determined the licit and illicit demand for drugs. The developing countries,

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<sup>11/</sup> P. Popov et al, "Indigenous and Foreign poppy varieties characterized by the morphine content of their dry capsules", Bulletin on Narcotics, vol. XXV, No. 3, July-September 1973, p.51.

and particularly the least developed among them, had their own needs and priorities and gave preference to the sectors aimed exclusively at development. That was why the developed countries should contribute financially to a substantial extent to strengthening the international control machinery for combating the abuse of narcotic drugs in all its forms. The problems of Afghanistan in that respect were well known, namely, the need to replace opium poppy cultivation in the areas where it was the people's only means of livelihood, and the inadequate means available to the Government to combat the illicit traffic effectively. Before a large-scale programme was embarked upon, a number of factors, such as the lack of qualified personnel and equipment, the scarcity of financial and technical means, the ruggedness of the territory and the length of the frontier, should be taken into consideration. However, despite the numerous difficulties involved, the endeavours made by Afghanistan had not been fruitless.

He gave an account of the progress made by the Afghan police with the co-operation of the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control. His Government had concluded an agreement with the Fund under which the latter had agreed to provide a sum of \$192,000 to help to strengthen law enforcement activities against drug abuse in Afghanistan. The counterpart assistance provided by the Afghan Government amounted to \$100,000. The project was already ahead of schedule and, according to the latest statistics, it was giving satisfactory results and had considerably reduced the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs. The quantity of opium seized was 9 tons more than in the previous year (11 tons). In view of those impressive achievements, the Afghan Government had requested the extension of the original agreement of 1973 and an expansion of the scope of the present law-enforcement activities to cover certain provincial centres. Negotiations were under way with the relevant authorities of the Fund and the Government felt confident of further success.

With regard to the two regions of Badakhshan and Langrahar, where the poppy was traditionally cultivated and was the people's only means of livelihood, he pointed out that, before embarking on any programme, the interests of the people of the region had to be taken into account. That could be done through an over-all development project for Badakhshan, which necessitated, as the first step, a broad study of water, land and human resources. His Government had already asked the Fund and UNDP to assist it in undertaking a survey of that kind. The project would obviously be costly and the Afghan Government, whose present resources were very limited, could not itself meet all the expense involved. Any progress in that respect would therefore depend on financial and technical aid from the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the international community as a whole.

The views of the Government of Afghanistan on the matter were reflected in the first report of the Sub-Commission on Illicit Traffic in the Near and Middle East, 1973-1974 (E/CH.7/566, paras.20-28). In the recommendations in chapter V of the report, it had been stated that financial and technical assistance should be given to the Government of Afghanistan as a matter of priority to assist it in eliminating illicit opium production and trafficking, taking due account of the fact that the problem was one of general development in the regions concerned,

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in particular in Badakshan and Mangrahar, and of improving the economic well-being of their people. His Delegation attached great importance to the work of the Sub-Commission and sincerely hoped that its recommendations would be implemented in their entirety.

The Afghan Government was planning to take new legislative measures concerning drug abuse control. A draft law had been prepared with the advice of specialists from the United Nations Division of Narcotic Drugs and was currently being considered by the relevant government agencies before being finalized for enactment. Lastly, he referred to an important new development in the Middle East with regard to narcotic drugs, namely the decision of the Turkish Government to authorize resumption of poppy cultivation under a suitable system of control. The decision was justified, in view of the increasing international demand for codeine for medical purposes. His delegation supported the decision of the Turkish Government on humanitarian grounds and hoped that the measure would serve its purpose. The representative of Turkey had stated that his Government was taking all necessary measures of control and security to prevent diversion to the illicit market, and it was to be hoped that the poppy straw technique would, in a sense, be a testing ground for other countries in the region which were traditional cultivators of the poppy and might, were able to do so, take a similar decision.

In conclusion, he said that his country was fully aware of its obligations under the international Convention and would not fail to fulfil them.

Mr. SCHROEDER (Federal Republic of Germany) said that since poppy cultivation had been resumed in Turkey, what was at issue was no longer the possibility of an adequate level of opium production without expansion of the cultivated areas, but to what extent cultivation in Turkey could fill the supply gap and possibly result in a surplus. He drew attention to paragraphs 160 to 174 of the ILCB report for 1974 and to the USSR representative's statement referring to the possibility of over-production of the opium poppy. There was a risk that the future problem might well be that of reducing opium production to ensure that excessive supply did not find its way into illicit channels. Under article 24 of the 1961 Convention and article 11 of the 1972 Protocol, ILCB would therefore have to examine the possibilities of reducing the production of opium intended for international trade.

His country viewed the resumption of poppy cultivation in Turkey with some concern, but very much appreciated the close co-operation built up between the Turkish Government and the Division of Narcotic Drugs on control measures. Positive results could be expected from that co-operation. His delegation wished to stress that production should be carried out in a manner allowing for the maximum control. Lastly, the United Nations Laboratory should continue research on Papaver bracteatum as a matter of high priority.

In conclusion, his delegation hoped that the main points raised during the current debate would be reflected in the Commission's report.

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Mr. CHANLA (India) said that on the whole his delegation agreed with the Board's assessment of the current situation concerning the supply of raw materials for the licit manufacture of opiates (E/INCB/25, paras.164-174). Undeniably, the world-wide shortage of codeine for medical purposes was continuing, to the detriment of public health and the welfare of mankind. The Board had estimated world opium requirements for 1975 at 1,182 tons, but to judge by the trend of the period 1969-1974, the real figure would no doubt be higher.

A new fact had, however, intervened since the Commission's third special session: it was hoped that additional quantities of unincised poppy straw would be available in 1975 to narrow the gap between supply and demand. His country did not share the view of the Federal Republic of Germany that production should be reduced. India was trying to increase its production of morphine by using the straw of the incised poppy, which had in the past been discarded as waste. In 1974, India had exported 7,000 tons of incised poppy straw, and for the 1975 harvest it had increased the price payable to farmers, so as to enable them to buy more fertilizers and to improve the yield.

Research schemes had also been initiated in India to improve the yield of codeine per hectare, to develop new high-yield strains of poppy and to arrest the process of deterioration of morphine in the process of collection of latex from the capsules. Indian scientists were also associated with various projects of the United Nations Narcotics Laboratory for obtaining codeine from Papaver bracteatum.

His delegation desired to draw attention to a press release of 8 October 1974, published by the United Nations Information Service at Geneva, on the relative merits of the poppy straw and opium as sources of morphine. The release stated that the poppy straw method permitted a higher rate of morphine extraction. His delegation was aware that the poppy straw method was employed successfully in certain European countries, but it was not suitable for all countries; conditions in India did not lend themselves to its adoption and India did not accept the idea that the method was less risky. In his view, the publication of the opinion expressed in that document was therefore somewhat unfortunate. The Commission might wish to ensure that such unauthorized expressions of opinion were not issued for public consumption before it had had time to examine them.

There was a great shortage of opium; the question of research was one of supreme importance, and more resources should be made available for research purposes.

Lastly, he submitted five points for consideration. First, countries exporting opium or poppy straw might plan their production so as to meet legitimate needs to the extent possible, subject to adequate control and safeguards. India attached particular importance to controls, even for poppy straw, especially in areas where climatic conditions were favourable for the extraction of the latex from ripe capsules and where farmers had the expertise required to incise the capsules. Secondly, countries manufacturing morphine from poppy straw might endeavour to step up their production. Thirdly, efforts might be directed

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towards extracting technical morphine from incised poppy straw. Fourthly, research into the possibility of obtaining codeine from Papaver bracteatum should continue to be actively pursued. Fifthly, member States and the United Nations Laboratory should intensify research to improve the average yield of opium straw per hectare of area planted with poppy, and also the morphine content of the poppy.

Dr. BRANDEN (Chief, United Nations Narcotics Laboratory), replying to a question put by the representative of France, said that Papaver bracteatum had been grown successfully in the United States of America. Similar experiments had been made in France, particularly at Rennes and at Versailles, but owing to the shortage of seed, plantation methods were more commonly employed. The Laboratory's research on the subject was described in paragraphs 22-31 of the document entitled "Scientific research" (E/ON.7/571).

The third Working Group on Papaver bracteatum, which had met in October 1974 at Beltsville in the United States, had made a number of recommendations concerning the need to concentrate research on certain well-defined aspects such as weed control and ecological and other factors, in order to maximize thebaine production from Papaver bracteatum in geographical areas of potential commercial interest, and also to investigate the biosynthesis and metabolism of thebaine in the plant. The Working Group had gone on to draw attention to the need for further information on plant improvement, harvesting methods, disease and pest control, seed oil and protein evaluation and methods for the determination of thebaine. It had also noted that plants grown from Arya II seed, supplied by the University of Teheran, gave consistently higher values for the thebaine content. The Group had decided that a further meeting would be necessary and was grateful to Mr. Morice, the Director of the Station d'amélioration des plantes at Rennes, for his invitation to hold that meeting in France.

The research projects on Papaver somniferum carried out by the United Nations Laboratory were in conformity with the recommendations aimed at increased codeine production made by the Consultant Groups of Experts which had met in July 1974 (E/ON.7/571, para.23). The specific object was to improve the yield of phenanthrene alkaloids from the opium poppy and from poppy straw. Other research projects concerned the determination of high-alkaloid strains, better growth habits and heavy seed-producing strains. Studies would be carried out on breeding and selection, on harvesting methods and also on the preservation of morphine. In order to obtain results as soon as possible, priority should be given to the development of fertilizers and cultivation practices which would increase the yield of phenanthrene alkaloids from the opium poppy. During the coming months, consultations would be held with several States on various research projects. An effort was also being made to develop a uniform method for determining the phenanthrene alkaloid content of poppy straw. The United Nations Laboratory had already undertaken research along those lines for Papaver bracteatum and had obtained good results.

Dr. MAYER (Hungary) said that from the administrative point of view there was no need for any control over the production of poppy straw, since that substance was not very dangerous in itself and could not readily be diverted to illicit purposes. The manufacture of opium from poppy straw required considerable

quantities of raw material and very bulky installations, which could not be easily disguised. That fact had already been noted by the League of Nations in 1934 and had been confirmed by many countries in 1961, during the debates which had preceded the drafting of the Single Convention. It should be remembered, as the Indian representative had pointed out, that the production of morphine from poppy straw was particularly advantageous in countries where poppy seeds were used for consumption and where poppy straw was only of secondary value.

As for research, Hungary co-operated in all opium poppy projects, and particularly those of the United Nations Laboratory. He agreed with the United States representative that in the space of a few years it would not be possible to develop synthetic products capable of replacing natural drugs. In Hungary, research was proceeding in two directions: on the one hand, work was in hand to develop pain-killers of a type other than morphine, in order to avoid drug dependence; and on the other, morphine derivatives (azido-morphine and azido-codeine) had been found which were 50 times more effective than morphine, so that the prescribed dose could be considerably reduced. Experiments with those derivatives were in progress in Hungary and in the United States of America and the results justified the hope that it would be possible to solve the problem of the codeine and morphine shortage.

Dr. EL HAKIM (Egypt) noted with satisfaction that progress had been made with research on Papaver bracteatum. He congratulated both Mr. Quentin-Jones, who had presided over the Working Group at Beltsville in the United States, and the United Nations Laboratory, which had organized the meeting. The Working Group had clearly defined the areas where research was still needed and he was glad to note that the United Nations Laboratory was endeavouring to follow up the Group's recommendations. It was to be hoped that investigations on suitable methods for the determination of the alkaloid content in poppy straw would be as effective as the study on the chemical elements of Papaver bracteatum. That study, conducted on a world-wide basis by the United Nations Laboratory, was important for the solution of many problems. His Government was ready to participate in research to obtain strains of Papaver somniferum and Papaver bracteatum with a higher alkaloid content. Egypt, owing to its climate, was able to harvest the poppy twice or even three times a year.

In conclusion, he hoped that the United Nations Laboratory would be provided with the staff and other resources needed to carry out the projects entrusted to it by the Commission.

Dr. de SOUSA (Australia) wished to express strong support for the recommendation of the United States representative that the United Nations Laboratory should continue research into ways of maximizing the morphine yield of the opium poppy, while giving priority to the study of Papaver bracteatum.

His delegation feared that the current world shortage of raw materials for the manufacture of drugs for medical use might over-stimulate the cultivation of the opium poppy and thus increase the risk of diversion of the resulting products for illicit use.

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There were still a number of problems to be solved concerning the selection and cultivation of suitable strains of Papaver bracteatum, and although in the long term that plant might constitute the main source for the supply of drugs, his delegation took the view that in the short term research should continue to be directed towards increasing the morphine yield of unincised poppy straw. Apart from commercial considerations, that method would lead to a reduction of the area under poppy cultivation and thus to easier supervision. In Australia, it had proved possible, after many years of exhaustive research, to develop strains of Papaver somniferum with a high morphine content. By working in that direction, the United Nations Laboratory might make a very significant contribution to the common goal of reducing the availability of raw materials capable of being readily converted into narcotics for non-medical purposes.

Mr. BARONA LOBATO (Mexico) associated himself with the observations of the United States representative.

His delegation had noted the Turkish Government's decision to resume the cultivation of the poppy in order to make good the serious shortage of morphine and codeine but did not think that the establishment of a State monopoly and the adoption of strict supervision were sufficient to avoid all diversion to illicit use. The experience gained by Turkey in the extraction of alkaloids from poppy straw, and the comparisons which might be made with opium from the angle of profitability, cost of transport, techniques, and so on, might be useful to other countries, and he hoped that at the Commission's next session the Turkish representative would give particulars of the results obtained.

It would be desirable for the United Nations Laboratory to continue co-ordinated research on Papaver bracteatum and on replacements for codeine and morphine.

Mr. NICOLIĆ (Yugoslavia) noted that the policy of suppressing the licit production of opium had led to a disastrous shortage of opium products for medical and scientific use and had contributed to the increase in illicit traffic and drug abuse. He had always opposed that policy, which required States to make economic sacrifices when it was enough to strengthen supervision. The best means of suppressing illicit traffic was supervision, as the example of India had shown - a country which, despite its large territory and the size of its production, was able to exercise effective control.

He welcomed the efforts made to improve the morphine yield of non-incised poppy capsules, but agreed with the United States representative that that method did not offer sufficient guarantees of safety; a very intensive system of supervision should be set up, particularly during the period when incision was possible. The United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control should help Governments to organize methods of supervision as a matter of urgency.

Dr. BABAIAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) stressed the important role played in medicine by products extracted from the poppy (morphine, codeine); even if it should be found possible to manufacture synthetic drugs, the natural product would continue to occupy a preponderant place in medicine. In his country,

the opium poppy was cultivated only in the Khirgiz SSR; it was the subject of very strict control and the Ministry of Public Health ensured that it was used only for medical and scientific purposes. Cases of opium addiction were therefore rare and illicit traffic in opium did not exist. The example of India also showed that a system of strict control was a sufficient safeguard.

A great deal of research had been carried out in order to increase the unit output of morphine and codeine from the opium poppy. In 1974, the Soviet Government had taken steps to reduce the area under opium poppy in the Khirgiz SSR and had prohibited its cultivation throughout the other parts of the Soviet Union. The decisions made in the matter would also determine the concentration of the oil poppy in the State farms and were intended to increase farm productivity. Measures were being considered to reinforce control of the harvesting and transport of poppy straw. Research also continued to be aimed at increasing the unit content of codeine and morphine and thus to achieving a better economic return. In that way, it would be possible to meet all medical and scientific requirements and at the same time to avoid extending the areas under cultivation with the oil-bearing poppy.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.