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COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

Eighth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND FOURTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Thursday, 9 April 1953, at 2.30 p.m.

CONTENTS

Annual Reports of Governments made pursuant to article 21 of the  
1931 Convention, as amended by the 1946 Protocol (E/NR.1951/110-112,  
E/NR.1951/Summary) (continued)

PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. RABASA	Mexico
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mr. NIKOLIC	Yugoslavia
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. SHARMAN	Canada
	Mr. LIANG	China
	Mr. EZZAT	Egypt
	Mr. VAILLE	France
	Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY	India
	Mr. ESFANDIARY	Iran
	Mr. KRUYSSSE	Netherlands
	Mrs. KOWALCZYK	Poland
	Mr. OR	Turkey
	Mr. ZONOV	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mr. WALKER	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mr. MORLOCK	United States of America

Also present: Mr. MAY Permanent Central Opium Board

Representative of a specialized agency:

	Mr. WOLFF	World Health Organization (WHO)
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mr. HUANG	Division of Narcotic Drugs
	Mr. CELINSKI	Secretary of the Commission

ANNUAL REPORTS OF GOVERNMENTS MADE PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 21 OF THE 1931 CONVENTION,  
AS AMENDED BY THE 1946 PROTOCOL (E/NR.1951/110-112, E/NR.1951/Summary)(continued)

The CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Commission to continue consideration of the Summary of Annual Reports of Governments for 1951 (E/NR.1951/Summary).

Control of international trade (continued)

There were no comments.

International co-operation

Mr. OR (Turkey) asked for information from the Netherlands representative on the activities of the Narcotics Sub-Committee set up within the framework of Benelux. It was stated on page 23 of the Summary that that Sub-Committee had not met during 1951.

Mr. KRUYSSSE (Netherlands) recalled that a note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.7/253) on the subject had been circulated. It was to be discussed under the agenda item "Other questions".

The Sub-Committee's task was to co-ordinate the application of narcotics legislation in the three Benelux countries. It had held meetings in 1943, 1949 and 1950. Its contacts had been extremely fruitful; they had already enabled participating countries to introduce certain improvements in their national systems. It was precisely because of its success that meetings of the Sub-Committee in 1951 and 1952 had not been necessary.

Mr. SHARMAN (Canada) asked the Egyptian representative to give the Commission some information on the work of the Anti-Narcotics Bureau of the Arab League.

Mr. EZZAT (Egypt) said he would make a statement on that subject when the Commission took up its agenda item on illicit traffic.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Commission, at its previous meeting, had decided to postpone consideration of the following chapter in the Summary of Annual Reports, which dealt with illicit traffic.

Other information

At the request of Mr. VAILLE (France), the CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of Mexico, gave some information concerning a case of traffic in novocaine which had been discovered in Mexico (page 54). An employee in a pharmaceutical firm had stolen an ampoule of novocaine and diverted it into the illicit market.

Raw materials

Raw opium

Mr. WALKER (United Kingdom) noted with surprise that, according to the Summary relating to Iran (page 59), the Iranian Government decree prohibiting the cultivation of the opium poppy had never been enforced because it had been issued during the Parliamentary recess and the Parliament had not been able to examine it when it had reopened.

In addition, he did not see how Iran could restrict the cultivation of the opium poppy to the quantities needed for export, when the number of growers was so large that it was impossible to compile a list of them.

Mr. ESFANDIARY (Iran) explained that, according to Parliamentary procedure in his country, any Government decree which was not passed by Parliament within a certain time could not enter into force.

The Iranian Government had delimited areas for opium poppy cultivation corresponding to the quantities of opium required for export and the opium poppy was not grown anywhere else. As the district was one where property was divided into very small lots, the number of cultivators was so large that it had not been possible to compile a complete list.

Mr. WOLFF (World Health Organization) asked the Iranian representative whether it was correct that in February 1953 the Iranian Parliament had unanimously adopted a law prohibiting the production and consumption of opium and the manufacture and consumption of alcoholic beverages throughout the whole territory.

Mr. ESFANDIARY (Iran) confirmed that that was so. As the bill had considerable financial and economic implications, the Government was allowed a period of six months in which to study the arrangements for its implementation. If it met with difficulties which seemed insurmountable, its duty was to report to the special Parliamentary committee.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of Mexico, asked for information on the consequences of the bill. Did the Iranian Government, one of the recognized exporters of opium for medical and scientific purposes, intend to cease exporting opium completely?

Mr. ESFANDIARY (Iran) replied in the affirmative. The Iranian Parliament had for humanitarian reasons, taken what might prove a momentous decision. Public opinion in the country was very much in favour of it. Once the bill in question was put into force, Iran would withdraw from the international opium trade.

Mr. SHARMAN (Canada) noted that in Turkey (page 57) anyone could cultivate the poppy in the authorized areas. As the licence system did not exist, he did not see what legal obligations could be imposed upon poppy cultivators.

Mr. OR (Turkey) explained that, in the areas where opium poppy cultivation was authorized, the law required cultivators to fill in forms indicating, inter alia, the area under cultivation.

Mr. SHARMAN (Canada) asked what steps the Turkish Government took to ensure that the law was enforced. What happened to cultivators who did not fill in the forms?

Mr. OR (Turkey) said that officials of the agricultural services and the police exercised strict supervision in the cultivation areas. They checked the statements of growers and saw to it that those who had not filled in the required forms were punished. For economic and social reasons it was very difficult to introduce the system of licences in Turkey. However, a stricter law governing the cultivation of the opium poppy was being drafted.

Mr. NIKOLIC (Yugoslavia) drew attention to the paradoxical situation in Thailand (page 60). Though cultivation of the opium poppy was not permitted, the country derived an annual revenue of over \$9,000,000 from opium.

Mr. HUANG (Secretariat) said that the Secretariat had no additional information on the matter. The observer for Thailand would be present when the Commission discussed the question of opium smoking and might be able to give some information on the point raised by the Yugoslav representative.

Mr. SHARMAN (Canada) recalled that, according to information given by the United States representative at the previous session, the amount of opium smuggled into Thailand and seized by the Government was more than enough for all the opium smoking dens in the country. The Thailand Government's revenue probably came from that contraband opium.

Mr. NIKOLIC (Yugoslavia) said he did not understand how the transactions in raw opium could yield a profit of \$30 for the Government of Aden (page 60 of the report) when the maximum retail price was only \$28 per seer.

Mr. WALKER (United Kingdom) presumed that the \$30 represented the total profit of the Government on the transactions.

Mr. HUANG (Secretariat), in answer to a question by the United Kingdom representative, said that the Secretariat was ready to write to governments asking for any information which the Commission considered important.

Mr. SHARMAN (Canada) asked for information concerning the nature of the ayurvedic medicines apparently manufactured in Pakistan from poppy capsules (page 60).

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY (India), without claiming to reply on behalf of Pakistan, explained that there were two well-appreciated systems of native medicine in India and Pakistan: ayurvedic and unani medicine.

Coca Leaf

Mr. OR (Turkey) noted that Bolivia and Peru did not figure in that section of the report. Moreover, footnote 54 appeared to indicate that the coca bush was not cultivated, or that its cultivation was not authorized, in the countries mentioned in the section in question. He asked for information on that contradiction.

Mr. HUANG (Secretariat) explained that the document before the Commission was a summary of annual reports submitted by governments which gave no information about countries, like Bolivia and Peru, that had not sent in a report.

Mr. OR (Turkey) regretted that, in 1953, those countries had not yet transmitted their 1951 reports.

Mr. WALKER (United Kingdom) was disturbed by the prolonged absence of the Peruvian representative.

Mr. CELINSKI (Secretary of the Commission) said that the Director of the Division of Narcotic Drugs was in constant touch with the permanent delegation of Peru to the United Nations on the subject.

Mr. MORLOCK (United States of America), in reply to a question raised by the Netherlands representative, said that since 1947 the United States had imported coca leaf solely for the manufacture of cocaine and no longer imported the substance for use in the preparation of flavoured extracts or beverages.

Indian hemp

No comments.

Manufactured drugs

Internal control of manufactured drugs

Mr. VAILLE (France) regretted that the observer for Italy was absent for he would have liked to ask the observer whether the firm of Schiapparelli, mentioned on page 69, was the one implicated during the preceding year in a case involving traffic in heroin. If it was the same firm, it would seem that the company should no longer be authorized to engage in the licit traffic in alkaloids of opium.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretary would inform the observer for Italy of the question raised by the French representative.

Mr. WALKER (United Kingdom) regretted that in the form in which it was presented now the report would not permit a reader to decide from which part of Ireland the information included under the heading "Ireland" came. He would like the Secretariat in future to adopt a clearer form of presentation.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would note the United Kingdom representative's suggestion.

Control Exercised over the Manufacture and Use of Diacetylmorphine

In reply to a question by Mr. OR (Turkey), Mr. WOLFF (World Health Organization) drew attention to the fact that the reports related to the year 1951. Subsequently Sweden and Switzerland had ceased manufacturing diacetylmorphine.

Mr. OR (Turkey) asked the representative of the World Health Organization whether he could inform the Commission of the results of the enquiry undertaken by WHO into the question of the manufacture and use of diacetylmorphine.



Mr. WOLFF (World Health Organization) said that he would prefer to reserve his comments until the Commission took up the question of illicit traffic.

Mr. VAILLE (France) said he would like to hear Mr. Wolff's statement forthwith for in his view, WHO's enquiry related to the licit use of the drug.

Mr. WOLFF (World Health Organization) said that for some time WHO had been studying the question of doing away entirely with the licit use of diacetylmorphine for therapeutic purposes. The question was on the agenda of the WHO Assembly which was to be held in May. In accordance with a resolution adopted by the Executive Board at its fifth session the Director General of WHO had sent a circular to governments asking them for their views on the matter. Eighty-two circulars had been sent out and sixty-three countries had replied. Fifty-four countries had reported that they were in favour, and nine had reported that they were not in favour, of doing away with the drug. It was assumed that eleven of the nineteen countries which had not replied, as well as Colombia and Yemen which were not as yet members of WHO, were in favour of suppressing the drug. Moreover, it had to be borne in mind that the question was still being studied in some of those countries which were not in favour of prohibiting the drug and that they might alter their viewpoint. The forthcoming WHO Assembly might reach important decisions on the subject.

Mr. OR (Turkey) pointed out that his country had been the first to prohibit the use of diacetylmorphine for medical purposes in 1947. Since that time several countries, following Turkey's example, had taken similar action.

Mr. WOLFF (World Health Organization) considered the case of Switzerland a typical one. At the 1931 conference for the limitation of the manufacture of narcotic drugs the Swiss representative had said that the Swiss medical profession could not agree to give up the use of diacetylmorphine for therapeutic purposes and particularly for the treatment of tuberculosis.

In 1952, however, Switzerland had promulgated a new law forbidding the import, manufacture and use of diacetylmorphine. That step had been taken in agreement with the Swiss medical profession which had thought that the use of that dangerous drug had become unnecessary.

Mr. VAILLE (France) agreed that the value of diacetylmorphine for cases of tuberculosis was steadily decreasing. On the other hand, for certain types of cancer no product had yet been found which gave the patient the same relief. In France, the authorities did not see why patients should be deprived of an irreplaceable medicament for the sake of combating the illicit traffic when the total prohibition of the use of the product would not prevent drug addicts from obtaining it as it could be easily derived from morphine. In his view the use of diacetylmorphine by drug addicts was at least as widespread in the countries which had prohibited its use for licit purposes as it was in those which authorized its use for therapeutic purposes.

Mr. WOLFF (World Health Organization) thought that at the present time there were certain products which could replace heroin. Furthermore the Expert Committee on Drugs Liable to Produce Addiction had expressed the opinion that the prohibition of the manufacture of diacetylmorphine throughout the world would greatly facilitate the struggle against the illicit use of the drug.

Mr. VAILLE (France) asked Mr. Wolff to mention any synthetic drugs which, given in comparable doses, worked more satisfactorily than heroin. If there were such products were they not likely to produce addiction just as heroin did? The use of synthetic narcotic drugs by drug addicts was constantly increasing throughout the world.

Mr. WOLFF (World Health Organization) said that among the synthetic narcotic drugs there were certainly one or two which could replace heroin as an analgesic. He would not mention them by name as they were special pharmaceutical preparations and it was WHO's custom never to mention trade names.

It was true that all analgesics could produce addiction but in varying degrees. The particularly harmful effects of diacetylmorphine, however, were known. In that connexion he mentioned the memorandum of Professor H. Fischer, published in the annex to the first report of the Expert Committee on Drugs Liable to Produce Addiction. WHO had long been studying the matter, as well-known experts and international bodies were convinced of the dangerous nature of the drug which could be easily prepared from morphine and which was the only opiate which could be taken as snuff.

Mr. VAILLE (France) thanked Dr. Wolff for the explanation he had just given but did not consider it altogether satisfactory. He understood that Dr. Wolff could not mention trade names but he could have given the non-proprietary names of the substances in question. Dr. Wolff had mentioned the ease with which heroin could be prepared from morphine. Should that also lead to a request for the elimination of morphine?

In his view the problem should be viewed as a whole. If new synthetic substances were likely to produce addiction, the danger was serious, for it was impossible to control the raw materials used in their manufacture. He wondered whether the Commission intended to make recommendations concerning certain synthetic narcotic drugs or whether the problem had not been considered.

The CHAIRMAN said that the permanent delegation of Peru to the United Nations had just informed the Secretariat that arrangements had been made for its representative to reach New York as soon as possible.

At the request of Mr. WALKER (United Kingdom), the CHAIRMAN proposed that the Commission should resume consideration of the draft single convention at its next meeting and that it should postpone the debate on the illicit traffic until the following Monday.

The proposal was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 2 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.

22/4 a.m.