

APA

Experts demand drastic reform in world drugs policies

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Vienna - The international drugs policy think-tank "Senils Council" called on Wednesday for a drastic reform of worldwide steps against illegal drugs.

Afghan farmers should be switched to legitimate opium production instead of having their crops destroyed, said spokesmen of Senlis, a network of political researchers and scientists, at a press conference.

There should also be programs for dean needles and opiate substitutes for drug addicts,

instead of the present ostracism and criminalization.

Spokesman Emmanuel Reinert said that there was a worldwide lack of morphium and codeine for pain treatment. The shortfall was equivalent to 10,000 tons of opium as the raw material.

At present, Afghanistan produced about 4,000 tons of opium per year. The entire crop could therefore be switched to legitimate purposes.

His organization would conduct a feasibilty study in Afghanistan for a licencing system for opium growing. At present the Afghan economy needed opium to survive. The Senhis solution would allow farmers to go on producing, but for the legal market instead of illegal heroin production.

Also at the press conference, Afghan Minister for Anti-Drug Measures Habibullah Qaderi said he was banking on aid from abroad for his country's development, which would also cut back drug production.

He said Afghan President Hamid Karzai was vehemently against U. S. plans for chemical destruction of the opium harvest by spraying from the air. "The Afghan government won't allow it - we've had decades of war."

The farmers were not to blame. The infrastructure was completely destroyed, and the country needed help to build it up again.

The minister also said that a proposal by head of the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa, to link aid funds with the extent of Afghan drug production was not helpful. "One can't correlate aid with the planting or not planting of poppies."

The opposition of the U.S. and other countries to clean needle and drug substitution programs for addicts was condemned by Massimo Barra, Vice-President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Organizations.

He said millions of people fell victim to HIV/ AIDS because of taking drugs. Giving addicts clean needles was not "complicity", but humanitarian help.

Barra, formerly founder of a drug addiction clinic in Rome, said that if he had learned anything from his 30,000 patients, it was that "stigmatization and criminalization do not help".