



## EUROPEAN CITIES AGAINST DRUGS

Head office  
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### PRESS RELEASE

#### **UN drugs chief warns European mayors about risk of overdoses from bumper Afghan opium crop**

VIENNA, 22 November 2006 (UNODC) - Europe's cities face the risk of a significant increase in the number of deaths from heroin overdoses because of the record opium crop in Afghanistan this year, the Executive Director of the United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime*, Antonio Maria Costa, said on Wednesday.

In a letter to 63 mayors of European cities, he repeated the warning he has made to the world's national health authorities that a sharp rise in the supply of heroin tended in the past to lead to an increase in the purity of the end product rather than lower street prices.

"I strongly encourage the mayors of Europe's cities and the community drug treatment centres in your country to take every possible measure in the period ahead and to alert practitioners to the possible risk increase," Mr Costa said in the letter.

At a meeting on Wednesday with Tomas Hallberg, Director of European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD), the UNODC chief discussed efforts by cities and municipalities to combat drug abuse more effectively.

"I welcome ECAD's efforts to get European cities united around the goal of reducing drug addiction," Mr Costa said. "Some cities take the problem more seriously than others. Illicit drugs are a serious threat to our young people and the very future of our societies. We need a robust and consistent response."

Mr Hallberg urged European politicians "to take responsibility for what is happening in their own backyards." "They cannot simply sit back and wait in the hope that their drug problem will disappear by itself or be solved by others," he said.

The two men agreed that rising cocaine use in Europe, especially in Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, was a cause for serious concern.

ECAD is the leading organization for promoting a drug-free Europe. Representing millions of European citizens, ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives against drug abuse and in support of the United Nations conventions to strengthen the international drug control system.

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