

TRAFFIC IN NARCOTIC DRUGS

In 1984, the United Nations General Assembly requested that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs begin preparation of a new draft convention on illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. In 1986, the Commission identified 14 items to be incorporated in a draft proposal that would be sent to governments for their comments. In February 1987, the Commission examined the draft convention and the governments' comments.

In May 1987, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations asked the Secretary-General to prepare a working paper combining the draft convention, the observations that had been submitted by governments and the results of the work done by the Commission on the draft proposal. The Council also decided that an intergovernmental group of experts of unrestricted composition would meet to examine the working paper, to reach an agreement on the articles of the convention whenever possible and to prepare a revised working paper.

The intergovernmental group of experts met three times in Vienna during 1987 and 1988, and presented a draft to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for consideration at a Plenipotentiary Conference held in Vienna, under the auspices of the United Nations, from November 25 to December 20, 1988. The Conference resulted in the adoption, on December 19, 1988, of a Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Canada signed the Convention on December 20, 1988 and the Government is now in the process of considering amendments to existing laws, regulations and practices, necessary to permit Canada to ratify the Convention.

Canada played a leading role in the elaboration of and negotiations on the Convention, including the co-authorship of drafts of key articles on identification, freezing, seizing and confiscation of proceeds and assets acquired from illicit drug traffic (Article 3) and mutual legal assistance (Article 5). The Convention as adopted allows the international community to employ new, innovative ways to suppress illicit traffic in narcotic drugs. These include enhanced means to follow the trail of money derived from illicit traffic and the seizure of assets acquired therefrom. Canada's early ratification of the Convention will serve as a reaffirmation of our resolve to tackle the grave problem of international drug trafficking.