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**TRANSNATIONAL DRUG CRIME AND TERRORISM CAN BE EFFECTIVELY
TACKLED ONLY BY WORKING TOGETHER: FS**

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Finance Secretary Shri R.S. Gujral has said that only by working together can we effectively tackle transnational drug crime and terrorism. Countries have to co-operate more closely with one another, by sharing intelligence, watching for international fugitives and conducting joint enforcement actions. He was delivering the key-note address at the inauguration of Thirty Fifth meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Asia & the Pacific (HONLEA) at Agra today.

The Finance Secretary said that the HONLEA has been meeting every year to examine issues which are facing all nations and the necessity of these meetings is underlined by the fact that today we all live in a globalised world. He stated that globalisation has brought untold benefits to countries worldwide but it has also created some difficult challenges. Crime too has become global and criminals can move around more easily and run transnational operations, he said. Shri Gujral said that they often direct crime from offshore bases and using modern communications tools, criminals can freely exchange information, coordinate their operations, even share “best crime practices”. Terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and cybercrime are all global in scale and transnational in nature. The same modern day technologies and techniques that improve our lives are as easily applied to more sinister ends, he said.

He stated that to deal with new crimes and more sophisticated criminals, it is necessary, but not sufficient, for drug law enforcement authorities to also become smarter and better equipped. Law enforcement officers must also learn about the latest technologies; understand how they might be abused by criminals, as well as how they could be deployed to enhance investigative work to always stay one step ahead of criminals.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Gujral stated that they were gathered there at a time of reports of increase in area under opium cultivation in Afghanistan. These developments have critical implications for the long term security of our region and of the world, for economies of our countries and the well-being of our people.

The Finance Secretary said that during recent years, routes from producing areas have multiplied, modes of transportation have diversified and several countries have become transit zones. Powerful networks of traffickers are seriously threatening the stability of several countries, he said. Shri Gujral stated that the drug problem is of great concern not only because it involves illegal actions/activities but also because it has implications on health and society. Particular attention needs to be paid to strengthen actions on prevention and treatment of heroin abuse, he said.

Shri Gujral reaffirmed India's commitment to fight drug trafficking and its proliferation at the cost of the health and safety of the global community. He said that India has been working consistently to strengthen its legal framework in compliance with international standards set by the United Nations Convention against Transnational crime and the international drug control conventions. The Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985 is a comprehensive legislation which covers financial investigation and forfeiture of drug related assets. India is a signatory to 1961, 1971 and 1988 UN conventions and is participating in the project for Strengthening Drug Law enforcement capacities in South Asia. The UNODC Computer Based Training Module is being used in law enforcement academies for capacity building of drug law enforcement officials.

The Finance Secretary said that India is a producer of precursor chemicals and has stringent control over precursor chemicals. Precursors are controlled under three different Acts namely the NDPS Act, 1985, the Customs Act, 1962 and the Foreign Trade Development & Regulation Act, 1992). Movement of precursor chemicals in India is controlled at two ways. For external movements, India adheres strictly to the Pre Export Notification (PEN) regime. For internal movements, controls are made under the provisions of national legislation i.e. Regulation to Controlled Substances Order 1993. India has also formulated Voluntary Code of Conduct to the manufactures of precursor chemicals which are being followed strictly, he said.

The Finance Secretary stated that the further tightening of control over precursor chemicals is under consideration of the Government. He said that the 35th session is going to review the implementation of the recommendations made by 33rd HONLEA Asia & the Pacific. From this HONLEA, he said, he looked forward to the ideas of the participants of the

meeting on how to play a role in the containing the problems of drug abuse and drug trafficking.

In his concluding remarks he urged the gathering to continue to identify areas where we can enhance regional drug law enforcement cooperation highlight new initiatives and best law enforcement practices and promote modern rights-based and evidence-based law enforcement approaches as well as practical procedures to combat illicit drug trafficking and cross-border crime. Finally he said that they must use this HONLEA meeting to build upon the achievements of international drug control which we have achieved so far.

Heads of National Drug Enforcement Agencies from 28 countries and representatives of international organizations were present at the meeting.

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