

**Question for written answer E-013214/2013
to the Commission
Rule 117
Marietta Giannakou (PPE)**

Subject: Record rise in opium cultivation in Afghanistan

According to the recently released annual report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the area of land given over to opium cultivation in Afghanistan hit record levels in 2013.

According to the report, the area given over to cultivation increased by 36 %, from 1 540 000 acres in 2012 to 2 090 000 acres in 2013, whilst the production of opium – one of the ingredients of heroin – rose in the end to 5 500 tonnes in 2013 (up 49 % on 2012).

According to the UNODC, growers increased production possibly in order to shore up their assets as insurance against an uncertain future that may follow the withdrawal of international forces in 2014, pointing out that 90 % of cultivation is concentrated in nine provinces regarded as Taliban strongholds.

Given that the EU is one of the most important providers of official development aid and humanitarian aid in Afghanistan, will the Commission say:

1. Does it agree with the findings of the UNODC report? What is its own assessment of the other provinces of the country which are under Afghan Government control?
2. What is its assessment of the Commission-funded programmes for combating the illicit trafficking and production of drugs in Afghanistan?
3. In view of the withdrawal of the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan, does it intend to take additional action to combat opium cultivation in Afghanistan, and in particular to suppress the channels of supply that are to a large extent funding the Taliban's bloody insurgency against Afghan Government forces?
4. Does it intend to extend its programmes to the southern provinces of the country?