Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

First of all, at the beginning I would like to congratulate all members of the bureau on their election and assure them of the full cooperation of my delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

It is the first time ever that my delegation takes the floor in this important body of the UN family. Historic, for Kyrgyzstan, this moment may be, it is seen in a realistic context — a rather saddening event. It reflects the fact that a world-wide evil, drugs, has passed the thresholds of our young country forcing it to face problems that had until recently been only of a theoretical nature to us.

The UNDCP, we know, concentrates on operational approaches to combat illicit production, trafficking and use of narcotic drugs and substances, it fights against the existence of drugs and its consequences. The political and socio-economic reasons for this world-wide problem are, first of all, to be dealt with by other bodies of the UN family.

Being a very young country to whom drug problems had basically been alien, Kyrgyzstan is still able to see the dramatic rise of illegal drugs in our country since independence, in correlation with the given historical and political environment surrounding us. The reasons for suddenly finding Kyrgyzstan in the "vanguard" of the world-wide fight against drugs, lie — in the opinion of our delegation — first of all in the unresolved political conflicts of our region, Afghanistan and Tadjikistan. Anybody will agree that the spillover effects of the internal disorder in these countries directly affect our poverty-ridden nation. Tens thousands of refugees to whom Kyrgyzstan has not closed its doors for humanitarian reasons have crossed from Tadjikistan over to our country, temporarily settling in an area in the Kyrgyz South West already stricken by tremendous economic problems and recent natural disasters. In their despair a considerable number of the people living in this part of our country turn to trafficking of narcotics coming from Afghanistan and to illicit production as the sole source to feed their children. In order to safeguard their interests in this profitable new business criminal structures have developed in and around our country. They bring in big amounts of weapons from outside posing a considerable threat to our national stability and security.
It is for these reasons the leadership of our country has repeatedly called on the world community to effectively find solutions to the Afghan and Tadjik conflicts, by means of establishing a realistic dialogue involving all key forces of the region.

Ever since its independence, Mr. Chairman, my country has paid paramount attention to the implementation of the Global Programme of Action adopted by the Seventeenth Special Session of the General Assembly in 1990 as well as of the different resolutions of the General Assembly relating to international drug control. My delegation would like to draw your attention, Mr. Chairman, to some main elements that – as we believe – reflect the seriousness of my country in living up to the standards put forward by United Nations to combat the drug menace.

All drug control activities in our country are implemented or monitored by the State Committee on Drug Control, established in April 1993, a Governmental coordinating body at ministerial level. Already in 1991 an independent unit to combat drug business was founded within the Ministry of Interior, the first body of this type within the former Soviet Union. Kyrgyzstan was the first Central Asian country to include drug control into the list of state policy priorities, by adopting a "National Programme to combat Drug Addiction and Illicit Drug Traffic" in 1993. (As amended in 1995 the implementation of this programme is well underway in our country.) In April 1994 Kyrgyzstan acceded to the 1961, 1971 and 1988 Conventions.

Climatic conditions, Mr. Chairman, are favorable for the growth of drugs in our country. Prior to an official ban in 1974 on the cultivation of opium poppy, Kyrgyzstan was supplying 16% of the total world legally produced opium. In the face of the big economic problems of our country internal lobbies pressed for the resumption of poppy cultivation. By a decree issued by the President of our country, Askar Akaev, this form of creating budget revenues was ruled out.

Kyrgyzstan has been actively promoting regional cooperation among the Central Asian countries. An Agreement between the Heads of Governments of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to fight illicit drug trafficking was adopted in April 1996. In May of the same year a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Tashkent by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all Central Asian states and the Executive Director of the UNDCP, which laid the basis for the further activities of the UNDCP in our region.

On several occasions Kyrgyzstan was the venue of international meetings and seminars on issues related to combating drugs in the Central Asian region. My delegation would like to particularly single out the Joint Seminar on "Drugs and Crime: New Challenges" held in Bishkek, the capital of our country, in June of last year. This meeting
was jointly organised by the Kyrgyz Government along with the UNDCP and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE). Kyrgyzstan warmly welcomes this common approach of the UNDCP and the OSCE as a means to broaden the international political awareness of the rising risk that the world-wide drug business poses to the security of all the OSCE-member states. From our point of view the UNDCP should try to further deepen the cooperation with the OSCE in this field. My delegation would also welcome a fruitful and close cooperation between the UNDCP and CPCJD. United efforts of these two UN-bodies could also be— in our view—an important factor for a successful struggle against drugs in our region.

Let me, Mr. Chairman, at this point express the profound gratitude of my country to the UNDCP and its dedicated staff headed by Mr. Giorgio Giakomelli for the most valuable and timely efforts undertaken in assisting my country to live up to the standards set forward in the Global Programme of Action and in the various General Assembly Resolutions on drug matters. Be it law enforcement on a local, regional and interregional level or monitoring illicit cultivation, be it the field of demand reduction or raising public awareness on drug issues, the UNDCP, often supported by UNDP, has been of great help to us. Certainly a lot has been achieved but a lot is still to be done, especially in the area of demand reduction, rehabilitation and reintegration of drug addicts where my country would appreciate international assistance. Help could also be more effective if more attention were paid to our numerous demands to provide the institutions in Central Asian countries cooperating with the UNDCP with materials in Russian language. My delegation particularly refers in this connection to the very open remarks made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan during the 1996 Tashkent meeting.

Our gratitude has also to be addressed to donor countries, especially to the United States of America and Great Britain, for decisive support to implement several UNDCP programmes. My country further appreciates the assistance rendered by Austria, Israel, and Sweden and Turkey in expert training.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation noted with great interest the proposal by President Chirac and Prime Minister Major to examine ways to assist Central Asian republics, utilizing the TACIS programme, to fight transit in and production of drugs. We warmly welcome the planned European Union mission to all five Central Asian countries. We would like to express our hope that this examination will base itself on the existing insights of the UNDCP into the realms of the situation in our region and that it will not confine itself to the elaboration of another study but will soon materialize in concrete assistance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.