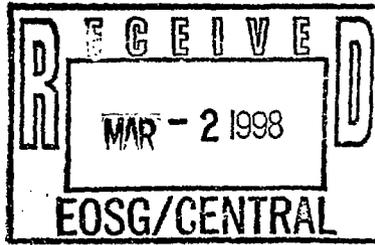




THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

ODCCP  
VIP/Aga Khan

cc: SG  
Central ✓  
Chron



18 February 1998

Dear Sadruddin,

I write to share with you my concern about one of the most vexing problems confronting the international community: the illicit production, trafficking and consumption of drugs. Drugs destroy lives, shatter families and undermine societies. No country is safe from their effects. Yet few other global challenges offer greater potential for reaping immediate benefits from international cooperation.

Over the years, the United Nations has accumulated a vast amount of expertise in the fight against drugs. I am determined to give these efforts even higher priority. Some of the most far-reaching reforms I have introduced since taking office as Secretary-General have been aimed at enhancing our work in this area.

The United Nations is preparing a global plan of action to eliminate the illicit cultivation of coca and opium poppy, the plants which provide the raw materials for cocaine and heroin. The plan will be implemented through a partnership involving national governments and multilateral agencies.

I also intend to launch a campaign to create greater public awareness of the staggering costs involved in dealing with the social and health consequences of drug abuse, so as to encourage governments and civil society groups to redouble their efforts to reduce demand for drugs.

These are bold initiatives, and important steps forward. They will be presented to the General Assembly Special Session on Drugs to be held next June at United Nations Headquarters in New York. If we are to make decisive progress, the political will of the world leaders is essential. The Special Session offers a unique opportunity to generate that momentum.

His Royal Highness  
Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan  
Collong-Bellerive  
Geneva

The fight against drugs requires vision and perseverance. In order to secure the necessary guidance and inspiration, I have decided to establish a *Comité des Sages*, composed of leading personalities committed to this cause. It is my honour to invite you to become a member of this eminent group.

The *Comité* is to consist of roughly ten members, to ensure focus and dynamism. Its deliberations will be assisted by experts specializing in the various aspects of the drug issue. It is expected that the *Comité* will meet twice in 1998, with the first meeting to take place during the early part of the year in order to consider an outline of the global initiative well in advance of the Special Session.

The substantive work related to this initiative is being carried out under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Pino Arlacchi, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, based in Vienna. I have asked Mr. Arlacchi to follow up as soon as possible on this letter to provide whatever further information you may require.

It is my sincere hope that it will be possible for you to join me in this vital undertaking, which has the potential to contribute significantly to the improvement of people's lives and the advancement of United Nations ideals. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Annan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kofi A. Annan