

332. A further issue related to reporting on precursors is the provision of information on the licit trade in and use of substances in Tables I and II of the 1988 Convention, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/20. In contrast to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, that information is submitted by Governments on a voluntary basis and enables the Board to assist Governments in preventing diversions by identifying unusual trade patterns and suspicious illicit activities.

333. **The Board wishes to remind Governments of their obligations to provide the information requested pursuant to article 12, paragraph 12, of the 1988 Convention and relevant resolutions to the Board in an accurate and timely manner.**

334. Competent national authorities play a key role in consolidating the information received from pharmaceutical companies, importers and exporters to ensure that reliable data are provided to the Board in a timely manner. The importance of the work of competent national authorities cannot be overstated: they are at the front line of their countries' efforts to facilitate licit trade and to prevent the diversion of controlled substances into illicit channels. They are also responsible for estimating their country's requirements for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in order to ensure that the medical needs of their populations, in terms of access to such drugs and substances, are met, while at the same time preventing misuse.

335. Reporting obligations can be best fulfilled if Governments provide for the training of staff. **The Board also encourages all Governments to take the necessary steps to maintain the knowledge base of the staff of competent national authorities at times of staff turnover.**

#### 4. New tools for old purposes: using modern technology to monitor international trade in scheduled substances

336. Ever since the creation of the international drug control system, monitoring international trade in scheduled substances has been one of the main pillars of the three drug control conventions. The ultimate purpose of monitoring the movement of scheduled substances at the global level has not changed: to strike a balance between ensuring the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes and

curbing illicit drug manufacture and trafficking, including by preventing the diversion from licit trade into illicit channels of precursors used in their manufacture. The idea of supporting competent national authorities in their efforts to effectively exchange information in that regard is thus not new. However, the rapid advancement of modern technology, especially information and communications technology, today offers unprecedented opportunities for more effective, direct and immediate communication among Governments on drug control matters.

337. To assist drug control authorities in that regard and to harness the potential of modern technology for drug control purposes, INCB has developed several electronic tools to facilitate the monitoring of the movement of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, offering new tools for old purposes.<sup>52</sup>

##### (a) International Import and Export Authorization System (I2ES)

338. A well-functioning import and export authorization system is instrumental in monitoring the international trade in controlled substances and preventing their diversion. The International Import and Export Authorization System (I2ES), a new tool developed by the Board in cooperation with UNODC and with the support of Member States, was launched in March 2015 to facilitate the effective implementation of import and export authorization systems for licit international trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

339. I2ES is a web-based application that allows importing and exporting countries to upload and exchange import and export authorizations in a secure environment and to generate and transmit those authorizations electronically, including with the help of a download and print function. I2ES is designed to complement, but not replace, existing national electronic drug control systems, and also provides countries without pre-existing electronic systems a viable tool to manage import and export authorization processes online.

340. Another key feature of I2ES is that it automatically checks the quantity of a narcotic drug or psychotropic substance to be imported and/or exported against the latest estimate or assessment of the importing country's requirements, and automatically displays warning

<sup>52</sup>Enquiries about the tools, including registration requests, can be sent to [i2es@incb.org](mailto:i2es@incb.org) for I2ES (narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances); [pen@incb.org](mailto:pen@incb.org) for PEN Online (precursors); [pics@incb.org](mailto:pics@incb.org) for PICS (precursor incidents); and [nps@incb.org](mailto:nps@incb.org) or [ionics@incb.org](mailto:ionics@incb.org) for Project Ion and IONICS (new psychoactive substances).

messages when it finds excess imports or exports. I2ES also guides the competent national authority through the steps required in such an eventuality. Furthermore, the system has an online endorsement function: after verifying that an arriving shipment matches the quantity authorized for export, the authorities of the importing country can endorse it by confirming receipt to the authorities of the exporting country as required by the 1961 Convention and the 1971 Convention, or alert them in real time if there is a discrepancy.

341. All of those features are designed to help Governments meet their obligations under the international drug control conventions. They are provided at zero cost to Governments and are fully compatible with any pre-existing national systems, to which I2ES can be linked. During a user group meeting on I2ES held in March 2016, initial feedback from competent national authorities using the system indicated that it had facilitated the real-time sharing of information between authorities and had expedited the authorization process.

342. As at 1 November 2016, the following 26 countries had registered for the system and had started using it: Afghanistan, Algeria, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey and Zambia. To realize its full potential, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in its resolution 58/10, again urged Member States to promote and facilitate the fullest possible use of I2ES. **The Board therefore encourages all Member States that have not yet done so to register for the system and to start using it.**

### (b) Pre-Export Notification Online (PEN Online)

343. In March 2006, the Board officially launched PEN Online to help importing and exporting Governments to securely communicate international trade in precursor chemicals, to verify the legitimacy of individual transactions and to identify suspicious shipments. Over time, the system has developed to become the backbone of precursor control at the international level and is the only tool of its kind globally.

344. In the 10 years since its launch, over 200,000 pre-export notifications have been sent by a total of 153 countries and territories, resulting in the prevention of numerous diversions of scheduled chemicals into illicit channels. In the last five years, the number of pre-export notifications sent through PEN Online has more than

tripled and provides further evidence that the system is now a firmly established pillar of the international mechanism for monitoring licit global trade in drug precursors.

345. Nevertheless, PEN Online is not always used to its full potential. For example, some countries register with the system but do not actively use it. Also, a number of Governments have not invoked article 12, subparagraph 10 (a), of the 1988 Convention, allowing them to be informed of all planned exports of precursors to their territories, and therefore may remain unaware of, and vulnerable to, shipments of concern destined for their countries.

346. **INCB strongly encourages all the remaining Governments to invoke article 12, subparagraph 10 (a), of the 1988 Convention and to register for and actively use PEN Online.**

### (c) Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS)

347. Complementing PEN Online, the Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS), launched in 2012, provides a secure online platform for sharing information in real time on chemical-related incidents with a potentially illicit dimension, such as seizures, shipments stopped in transit, diversion attempts or the dismantling of illicit laboratories. To provide the most comprehensive and up-to-date information possible to its users, PICS allows the communication of incidents involving not only internationally scheduled precursors, but also non-scheduled chemicals that countries have identified as having been used in illicit drug manufacture. Like all INCB electronic tools, PICS is provided to Governments free of charge. It is currently available in four languages: English, French, Russian and Spanish.

348. PICS is intended as an operational communications platform rather than as a tool for reporting. It complements the aggregated seizure data received annually from Governments through form D with real-time information on individual seizures and other incidents as and when they happen. The usefulness of PICS depends to a large extent on the timeliness of the information provided so that it can facilitate immediate follow-up and cooperation to identify those responsible for the diversion of and trafficking in precursors.

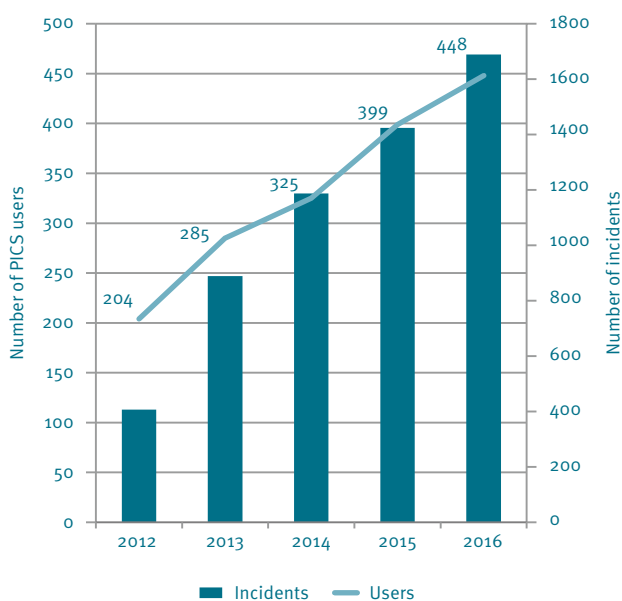
349. The system was primarily designed to connect and enable direct exchanges between the competent national authorities responsible for the control of precursors, in

particular law enforcement, customs or regulatory authorities that have relevant operational information to share on incidents they encounter in their daily work. By offering information of operational value in a secure environment, PICS has provided leads for national authorities to initiate backtracking investigations.

350. The Board is pleased to note that, on several occasions, the timely communication of details of precursor incidents has led to further seizures or prevented diversion attempts. In a recent case, a single incident communicated through PICS led to the detection of a diversion scheme of potentially global dimensions, in which an internationally non-scheduled substance was used to conceal smuggled acetic anhydride. The case now spans across three regions on two continents.

351. The user base of PICS has continually grown since 2012. As at 1 November 2016, PICS had nearly 450 registered users from 214 agencies in 100 countries, who had shared information about close to 1,700 incidents involving more than 90 countries (see figure below). To date, about one third of all incidents communicated through PICS contains immediately actionable information for investigators, such as on methods of concealment, container numbers, company details or shipping documents.

**Figure.** Number of users of the Precursors Incident Communication System and number of incidents communicated, 2012-2016



352. To maximize the value and quality of data shared through the system, the Board encourages registration by several authorities from the same country if they have

complementary responsibilities, and the communication of incidents as close as possible to the date they took place.

#### (d) Project Ion Incident Communication System (IONICS)

353. In December 2014, under its operational initiative on new psychoactive substances known as Project Ion, the Board launched its own incident communication system, the Project Ion Incident Communication System (IONICS). Its structure is similar to that of PICS. IONICS is dedicated to the exchange at the operational level of information on incidents involving new psychoactive substances. While by definition new psychoactive substances have not yet been placed under international control, there is growing concern about their reaching consumer markets. IONICS was created with a view to addressing that concern.

354. In the two years since its creation, 200 users from 79 countries have registered for IONICS and communicated some 800 incidents involving 155 new psychoactive substances. In 2016, a series of local incidents communicated through the system revealed the existence of an organized criminal group with links in Europe and Asia engaged in the distribution of large amounts of a synthetic cathinone.

#### Way forward

355. As with most online electronic systems set up to respond to real-life challenges, the effectiveness of the INCB online tools depends to a large extent on a number of common factors, such as their coverage, i.e. the number of registered countries and users contributing information; the quality and timeliness of the data shared; and the availability of sustained support, including financial support, to enable the continued operation and maintenance of the tools over time.

356. The Board wishes to express its appreciation to all Governments that have provided financial support and technical input for the development of all INCB electronic tools. Further funding is, however, required to enable the INCB secretariat to administer them in line with its mandate and to provide reliable, responsive and tailored user support to competent national authorities. The Board therefore invites all Governments to continue providing both political and financial support to sustain the range of new tools made available to them by INCB, so that it can improve them and develop new ones as the need arises.