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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The International Narcotics Control Board has released its Annual Report for 2019. As we continue to support Governments in ensuring availability of controlled drugs for medical and scientific uses while preventing diversion to illicit channels, we have, together with the international community, tackled many challenges over the decades. But new public-health challenges emerge, with the appearance of new psychoactive substances (NPS), non-medical synthetic opioids and non-scheduled precursors. The three international drug control conventions enjoy near-universal adherence and Governments have reiterated their commitment to their implementation at the 2016 special session of the General Assembly and in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.



This year's annual report examines the global drug control situation, with a focus on young people, and makes recommendations to help States take effective measures to address drug-related problems in full compliance with international human rights standards and norms.

While an increase in total global availability of controlled medicines has taken place, inequities in distribution remain evident, with serious health consequences for patients and their families. Challenges include the over-prescription of opioids in some countries, while in many other countries there is limited access to pain medications. This includes opioid analgesics and medicines used for substitution therapy as well as medication required for the treatment of mental illnesses. This year's annual report includes recommendations towards tackling these injustices. For example, the report addresses the affordability of medicines containing controlled substances; raising awareness among health personnel, their patients and families; and curbing promotional activities by the pharmaceutical industry that may lead to inappropriate use. Efforts to ensure adequate access to internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes must be boosted.

This year's thematic chapter is dedicated to young people. Under the title *Improving substance use prevention and treatment services for young people*, we point out that appropriate interventions to prevent drug use among youngsters currently exist. Article 38 of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 underscores the importance of preventive measures and, since then, advances in the field of drug use prevention and the treatment of drug dependence have enhanced our understanding of the drug problem and our capacity to develop and implement interventions for young people. Of internationally controlled substances, cannabis continues to play the most prominent role among both adolescents and adults. We pay special attention to this development in other parts of the report and highlight our concern over the situation in a few countries that have moved to permit the use of controlled substances, namely cannabis, for non-medical use contrary to the provisions of and their obligations under the drug control treaties.



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Chapter I is aimed at supporting Member States in finding the most suitable and evidence-based prevention, treatment and rehabilitation strategies.

Drug control is of fundamental importance for the health and welfare of humankind, as recognized in the preambles of the conventions. Two global issues in chapter III look at the linkages between the treaties and human rights, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community pledged to ensure healthy lives and well-being for all people at all ages (Goal 3), to promote peaceful and inclusive societies with access to justice for all (Goal 16), and to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Goal 11). In that regard, States were called upon to counter drug trafficking and related violence while ensuring that responses to drug-related criminal conduct are consistent with the principle of proportionality and founded upon respect for human rights and dignity, in line with the three international drug control conventions and the rule of law.

Grave human rights violations perpetrated in the context of national drug control policies continue to be reported. The 2019 INCB Annual Report includes recommendations on criminal justice responses to drug-related crime, with due respect for human rights. The right to life, the right to be free from torture and other inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, the right to be free from slavery or servitude and the right to be free from retroactive application of penal laws are non-derogable. The conventions provide States with the possibility of applying alternative measures to conviction, punishment and incarceration, including education, rehabilitation or social reintegration. It is of great importance to recall that, if drug-control measures by States violate internationally recognized human rights standards, they also violate the international drug control conventions.

The international community faces numerous and complex drug challenges and the drug control treaties remain the foundational stone to address those challenges. INCB is steadfastly committed to assisting Governments in achieving the full implementation of the drug control treaties. To do this, INCB relies on the cooperation of Governments so that, together, Governments can work towards this goal. I trust that Governments will closely study the INCB Annual Report for 2019 and work towards implementing its recommendations and achieving the universal aims of the drug control treaties of safeguarding the health and welfare of humankind.

Cornelis P. de Joncheere

President

International Narcotics Control Board