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**Statement by Dr. Zukiswa Zingela, Second Vice-President and Chair, Standing
Committee on Estimates,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

**Commission on Narcotic Drugs Thematic Discussions on the Implementation
of All International Drug Policy Commitments, Following-up to the 2019
Ministerial Declaration**

**Opening segment
4 December 2023**

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to join you for this second set of thematic discussions as we approach the mid-term review in March 2024.

The issues we are here to address are crucial to health and well-being of all and the International Narcotics Control Board devoted a significant portion of its time to these matters at its 138th Session which we concluded two weeks ago. Many of those discussions will be reflected in our annual report for 2023 which is due to be released on the 5th of March 2024.

As emphasised by the INCB President in the previous intersessional, the Board remains steadfast in supporting Member States to implement the three drug control conventions and meeting their commitments under international drug policy. Once again, I emphasise that our collective actions must focus on safeguarding the health and welfare of humankind.

As a health-care professional from Africa myself, I am acutely aware of the disparities that exist between not only regions and countries but also nationally, between rural and urban communities. The mid-point review of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, which is also at the midpoint of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, gives us the opportunity for an essential stock-take and honest evaluation of where more needs to be done to turn these documents into reality and to make a positive difference to the lives of so many.

This session also coincides with World AIDS Day which was observed last Friday. I am looking forward to participating in the side event under the theme “Let Communities Lead” this afternoon with UNODC’s Executive Director, Ms. Ghada Waly and Her Excellency, Ambassador Caroline Vermeulen of Belgium. I would urge those of you who can, to also attend this important event.

Moving to the task at hand, in identifying the progress made in addressing the challenges identified in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, over the coming days, I will be sharing INCB’s perspectives on “health and regulatory challenges posed by synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of synthetic drugs” as well as on the “low availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes”.

Regarding the synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, many of you participated in the Board’s briefing to Member States which occurred on the 8th of November when we outlined the INCB’s operational responses to address this public health threat. In tomorrow’s session, I will discuss the threat posed by the exploitation of legitimate manufacturing, marketing, movement, and monetization sectors by traffickers seeking to undermine the regulatory mechanisms put in place to protect society. Here I will touch upon the support provided to national authorities under the INCB GRIDS Programme; and the topic also has considerable overlap with the thematic chapter of the Board’s annual report which for 2023 focuses on the role of the Internet, including social media in drug trafficking and its use.

On Wednesday, I will provide INCB’S perspectives on the low availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. You will recall that this topic was the subject of a special supplement released with the Board’s Annual Report for 2022 and the Board has been working extensively on this matter with the previous Chair of CND, the theme being “No Patient Left Behind”.

Under this item, I will outline both the difficulties experienced by many countries in procuring medications containing morphine, even though sufficient quantities of opiate raw materials are reported to be available and I will also share the findings of the Board’s examination of the data available to it through Governments’ reporting which is done under the Conventions as well as from the responses to our questionnaire which was shared with both Governments and civil society, who are all essential partners when looking at this matter.

With that, I will conclude for now and I look forward to our discussions this week, and I assure you of the Board's continuing support during the mid-term review and beyond.

I thank you.