

**Statement by Jallal Toufiq, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

**Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Chair's special event to commemorate the International Day against Drug
Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and to launch the 2023 UNODC World Drug Report**

**Vienna, 26 June 2023
(Video message)**

Mr. Chair, Ms. Waly, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I congratulate UNODC on the 2023 World Drug Report and thank the Chair of the Commission for convening this special event. World Drug Day is not only a time to reflect on the world drug situation and its impact on people, but it is mainly an opportunity to deliberate on what still remains to be done.

As a medical doctor and psychiatrist myself, I welcome the elements of this year's theme: putting people first, stopping stigma and discrimination, and strengthening prevention. Over the last decades, I have seen first-hand how evidence-based prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services help patients overcome substance use and substance use disorders. However, access to these important programs and services is still hindered by stigmatization and discrimination.

INCB's 2022 Annual Report contains a global issue on this topic. It highlights that national drug control policies must be consistent with internationally recognized human rights standards, including equality of access to treatment and protection against discrimination. Governments should ensure that their national legislation, policies and practices do not discriminate those engaging in drug use or those suffering from drug use disorders, and that they offer protection against discrimination by third parties.

The drug control conventions require States parties to give special attention to, and take all practicable measures for, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration. Governments should ensure equality of access to these services and utilize the UNODC/WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention.

INCB invites governments to abolish policies that contribute to the stigmatization of drug use and drug use disorders.

In many countries, marginalized groups are disproportionately affected by overly punitive responses to drug-related conducts. INCB calls upon Governments to avail themselves of the possibility, provided for in the conventions, of applying alternative measures to conviction or punishment for offences committed by people who use drugs.

Putting people first, strengthening prevention and ensuring that treatment and rehabilitation services are evidence-based, and free of discrimination and stigma improves the wellbeing of people who use drugs, their families and communities. Drug policies free of discrimination and stigma support progress on SDG 3 on health and wellbeing and safeguard health and welfare, which is at the heart of the drug control conventions.

Thank you.