

Check against delivery

**Statement by Ms. Jagjit Pavadia, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

Sixty-sixth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

**Item 5(b) Challenges and future work of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs,
the World Health Organization and the International Narcotics Control Board in
the review of substances for possible scheduling recommendations**

Vienna, 15 March 2023

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Illicit manufacturing, trafficking and misuse of drugs and non-scheduled substances remain among the most pressing threats to international and national drug control efforts, and, ultimately, to the health and wellbeing of society. You will recall that one year ago, the Commission decided to include three precursors of fentanyl and related substances¹ in Table I of the 1988 Convention, as recommended by INCB. That decision came into effect on 23 November 2022 and brought the total number of substances included in Tables I and II of the 1988 Convention to 33.

Of those 33 substances, ten were added in the last eight years. This is an indication of the level innovation, sophistication and pace of traffickers in replacing controlled precursors with alternative chemicals not under international control.

The fact that a total of 67 countries worldwide have reported seizures of non-scheduled substances, including designer precursors, together with the fact that no drug or class of drugs except for cannabis has been spared from this phenomenon, aptly illustrates the scope of the problem as well as challenges related to international scheduling under the 1988 Convention.

¹ 4-AP, 1-boc-4-AP and norfentanyl

The challenges that non-scheduled chemicals, including designer precursors, pose to international drug control efforts have been widely recognized, as has been the need for global action. Many of the Member States have joined with the Board over the past two and a half years to identify concrete practical solutions.

These efforts culminated in March last year in resolution 65/3 of the Commission, which calls upon Member States to intensify efforts to address the diversion of non-scheduled chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and the proliferation of designer precursors. With regard to placing a chemical under domestic control, it encourages Member States to extend such domestic controls to entire groups of related precursors rather than individual chemicals.

INCB is pleased to note that such approaches have been implemented in several Member States and regions. Some of the concrete approaches, experiences and tools, as well as innovative ways of scheduling, were presented during a side event which was held on Tuesday the 14th.

However, a recent surge in incidents communicated through INCB's Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS) involving derivatives of P-2-P glycidic acid serve as a reminder of the need for global action. The case in point here is that these derivatives have been controlled in the European Union, the major destination region, since 2020. Yet these regional controls did not prevent the trafficking of these substances as evidenced by the recent surge in seizures.

Therefore, while some progress in addressing the evolution of illicit drug manufacture has been made, effective solutions to these challenges are yet to be found.

One option at the disposal of the Commission might lie in article 12, paragraph 13 of the 1988 Convention, which requires the Commission to periodically review the adequacy and propriety of Table I and Table II. Accordingly, there may be potential for the Commission to conduct such a review in order to explore options and to address new challenges posed by non-scheduled and designer chemicals that are not currently being satisfactorily addressed internationally, such as groups of chemicals related to

the substances in the tables of the 1988 Convention. INCB would be pleased to support the Commission should it pursue such an option.

On new psychoactive substances, in its latest annual report, INCB has warned of the increasing trafficking, misuse and deaths due to emerging non-fentanyl opioids, such as 'nitazene' group substances. Along with evolving fentanyl analogues, the growing threat of dangerous synthetic opioids with no known legitimate uses has been identified through the INCB Global OPIOIDS Project, monitoring of online platforms and through the INCB Project Ion real-time secure communications and targeting tools — IONICS and GRIDS Intelligence.

The Board's intelligence-led operational projects have supported timely and effective action by international partners, governments and their private sector partners for rapid and voluntary actions that prevent the marketing, sale and trafficking of emerging dangerous substances at their source. At the same time, the intelligence, special notices and alerts generated from these projects inform global policy discussions such as through the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

In closing, let me thank all of you who have contributed to the consensus-building process on non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors over the years. I reiterate the Board's readiness to continue working with the State Parties and partners to address challenges in the review of substances for possible scheduling.

Thank you for your attention.

* * * * *