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**Statement by Dr. César Arce, First Vice-President,  
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)  
Sixty-seventh session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

**Side-event:**

**Preventing the diversion of non-scheduled chemicals for illicit  
drug production: addressing a growing challenge to global  
drug control and governance**

**Vienna, 15 March 2024 from 09.00 to 10.30AM**

**Room M2**

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board, it is my pleasure to participate in today's side event organized by the Government of China on "Preventing the diversion of non-scheduled chemicals for illicit drug production: addressing a growing challenge to global drug control and governance", at this 67<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission of Narcotic Drugs.

The world precursor situation is characterized by a fast-changing pace of illicit drug manufacture.

Over the last years, we have been witnessing a surge in the illicit use of chemicals that are not under international control. Such chemicals are often close relatives of internationally controlled precursors that have been slightly modified by traffickers to circumvent the international mechanisms mandated by article 12 of the 1988 Convention. The criminals operating the new illicit synthetic

drug markets capitalize on the almost infinite possibilities offered by chemistry by increasingly designing and using either chemical substances with no known legitimate use or chemicals diverted from a broad range of licit industries. Similarly, drug traffickers divert essential equipment also used by licit industries to their increasingly sophisticated illicit drug laboratories. Criminal entrepreneurs have mastered the three elements of a successful market venture: capital, technology, and skilled human resources.

This continuously evolving scenario requires proactive approaches and tools complementing and strengthening the international scheduling system provided for by article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

The new approaches could combine normative initiatives like class scheduling with the development of mutually beneficial domestic and international partnerships between national control institutions and industrial sectors to prevent exploitation by drug traffickers.

INCB offers its full support to Member States, as well as regional and international organizations, in addressing the evolution of illicit drug manufacture whilst ensuring uninterrupted international licit trade in chemicals and essential equipment. INCB's recent scheduling proposal before CND and its initiative aimed at assisting member States in better engaging relevant national industries in preventing synthetic drug manufacturing are part of this proactive strategic approach.

To this end, 18 months ago INCB launched an upgrade of its Pre-Export Notification platform, PEN Online Light, designed to allow member states to pre-notify importing countries of the export of non-internationally scheduled substances. The new platform operates on a voluntary basis. Regular use of this platform could help to restrict traffickers' access to chemicals without further expanding the list of international scheduled substances. We wish to acknowledge the active use of the new platform by several governments, including the People's Republic of China, and encourage all national competent authorities that have been using the INCB's PEN Online to start using PEN Online Light.

INCB's technical support also includes online and in-person training, technical publications, and the provision of technical and operational expertise on key topics, such as equipment used in illicit drug manufacturing, partnerships with relevant industries, prevention of diversion through yearly estimates for legitimate use of amphetamine-type stimulant precursors and investigating the illicit marketing of chemicals and equipment on the surface web, social media, and the dark web.

The Board welcomes this side event and any other international fora that foster dialogue between countries. Only through dialogue between all the parties involved will we generate the synergies needed to address the evolution of illicit drug manufacture and preserve the health and wellbeing of people around the world, especially youth.

We thank the Government of the People's Republic of China for offering the opportunity to learn from each other by sharing best practices, common challenges and goals and we look forward to contributing with our expertise and informing the national and international responses to this challenge.

Thank you.