

Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria
Telephone: +43-1-26060, Telefax: +43-1-26060-5867 / 5868
E-Mail: secretariat@incb.org Internet Address: <http://www.incb.org/>

Check against delivery

**Statement by Dr. Viroj Sumyai, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

**Economic and Social Council
Coordination and Management Meeting**

Agenda item 19(d): Narcotic drugs

6 July 2017, New York

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my capacity as President of the International Narcotics Control Board, it is an honour to present to the Economic and Social Council the [Annual Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2016](#)¹.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President of the Council, H.E. Ambassador Frederick Makamure Shava, and the Bureau, on the successful organization and conduct of the work of the Council.

The International Narcotics Control Board is the independent and quasi-judicial body mandated to monitor and promote the implementation of the three international drug control conventions². The General Assembly, at its special session on the world drug problem in April 2016, reaffirmed the pivotal role of the three drug control conventions to international cooperation in drug control and reiterated its commitment to their implementation; the conventions form the cornerstone of the international drug control system and aim to promote the health and welfare of humankind.

INCB welcomed the results of the **2016 special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem**, and is contributing to the implementation of the outcome document. We are also preparing to contribute to the **2019 review by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action** on international cooperation towards an integrated and balanced strategy to counter the world drug problem.

INCB works with your Governments to improve implementation of the provisions of the conventions in order to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing diversion, illicit cultivation and production, trafficking and abuse.

The [INCB Annual Report](#) and [Precursors Report for 2016](#), launched in March 2017, present our findings and recommendations for action by the international community. Our technical publications on [narcotic drugs](#) and [psychotropic substances](#) for 2016 aid competent national authorities in their work towards ensuring adequate availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes. The two technical publications

¹ The INCB Annual Report 2016 is available in the six languages of the United Nations on the INCB web page: <http://www.incb.org/incb/en/publications/annual-reports/annual-report.html>

² The 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol; the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances; and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

provide details on estimates of the annual legitimate requirements of each country, as well as data on the licit production, manufacture, trade and consumption of drugs worldwide.

Women and drugs

In consideration of Sustainable Development Goal N°5, “achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls”, the thematic chapter of the INCB Annual Report for 2016 on “[Women and drugs](#)” calls upon governments to design and implement drug policies which are gender sensitive.

Although women represent *one third* of global drug users, they constitute only *one fifth* of drug treatment recipients. Women are being affected by a disproportionate increase in drug overdoses. The systemic, structural, social, cultural and personal barriers preventing women from accessing healthcare must be addressed and treatment programmes and facilities must be tailored to the specific needs of women.

Women are increasingly being arrested for drug-related offences, having a significant impact on their families, and particularly their children. In our Report, we remind policymakers and legislators of the importance of protecting the rights of women who use drugs or have committed drug-related offences, and remind all States of the possibility of utilizing the relevant provisions of the conventions, which allow for, in cases of a minor nature, alternatives to conviction or punishment, such as treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

INCB makes a number of recommendations to Governments on how to develop more gender-sensitive drug policies; including prevention programmes targeted specifically at women at risk - including pregnant women, prisoners, people living with HIV/AIDS and sex workers.

Such policies and programmes must be informed by gender disaggregated data. The stigma associated with drug abuse, particularly among women, must be taken into account and addressed and women’s access to prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes must be enhanced while ensuring their safety and privacy.

Availability of internationally controlled drugs

UNGASS 2016 represented a turning point with regard to the prominence accorded to the availability of internationally controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes, and recognition that availability of medicines in many countries of the world remains low to non-existent. The operational recommendations contained in the UNGASS outcome document provide a framework for action and include the recommendations contained in the [Board’s special report on availability](#) published in February 2016 and build upon other guidance by the Board³.

INCB is implementing the UNGASS “Operational recommendations on ensuring the availability of and access to controlled substances exclusively for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion”, including through the **INCB Learning Project**, through which INCB is holding training seminars and awareness-raising workshops and developing e-learning modules. Two regional training seminars were delivered in 2016 in East Africa and South and South East Asia and the Pacific. A seminar was held in Vienna earlier this week for European authorities, and seminars are planned for West Africa, Central America and Oceania. However, financial support is essential in order to continue and expand this much needed work to provide capacity building support to strengthen drug control administrations.

INCB is also contributing to the UNGASS outcome document goal of improving availability through the **INCB International Import and Export Authorization System (I2ES)** which facilitates and expedites the secure electronic exchange of import and export authorizations between Governments. I2ES safeguards against excess imports or exports, thereby helping to prevent diversion. I encourage your countries to join the system, which is

³ [INCB/WHO Guide on Estimating Requirements for Substances under International Control](#)

provided free of charge, and to ensure that the resources required for ongoing implementation of the system are available.

A further recommendation of UNGASS is that Member States address issues related to **affordability** of controlled medicines. Several countries have started initiatives such as national morphine production; importing morphine powder; and providing morphine free of charge to patients.

Efforts to improve availability must be balanced by efforts to prevent and address **over-consumption**, which has created an overdose crisis in some regions of the world. We must achieve the careful balance between availability of controlled substances to treat or manage various health conditions and symptoms, such as pain, and the potential negative effects that the same substances can cause if taken for non-medical purposes.

Functioning of the international drug control system

The effectiveness of the international drug control system depends upon the fulfilment by Governments of their treaty obligations to accurately and timely report to the Board. Regrettably many Governments fail to comply with this treaty obligation. We urge your Governments to provide data to INCB as required by the conventions and pursuant to related resolutions of the Council and Commission, and encourage your Governments to ensure that the staff of your competent national authorities are adequately trained.

INCB also works with governments in reviewing the functioning of the international drug control system, through country missions, through analysis of the treaty-based reporting, and through an ongoing dialogue, primarily through the competent national authorities and through your foreign ministers and your diplomatic representatives to the United Nations.

We particularly count on the support of your Governments in accepting proposed INCB missions, which are a valuable tool to gain a deeper understanding of country-specific drug control challenges and achievements, as well as civil society perspective. As a result, INCB is able to make targeted confidential recommendations aimed at improving the functioning of your national drug control systems.

International cooperation in precursor control

In addition to the above, supply reduction remains essential and the control of precursors is a form of preventing serious illicit activity which contributes to this aim. Article 12 of the 1988 Convention requires the promotion of international cooperation to prevent chemicals from being diverted for the illicit manufacture of substances of abuse. INCB provides tools such as PEN-Online and PICS, which enable Governments to exchange information in real time in order to enhance international control over precursor chemicals.

The INCB [Precursors report](#), on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention, emphasizes the importance of enhanced information-sharing, multilateral operational cooperation, domestic law enforcement, and the use of existing tools and cooperation mechanisms, in order to identify, disrupt and dismantle organized criminal groups involved in the diversion of precursors.

The increasing use of **non-scheduled precursors** in the illicit manufacture of drugs requires modern, flexible approaches and international cooperation. The Board has issued guidance to assist governments in the establishment of partnerships with the private sector for the control of precursor chemicals and to help counter the emergence of so-called "designer precursors".

Although not under international control, **new psychoactive substances (NPS)** pose a growing threat to the health and welfare of people worldwide. INCB is working with national authorities to facilitate the sharing of information on incidents involving these substances, particularly through INCB's **IONICS**, the Project Ion Incident Communication System.

In February, INCB and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) organized the third international conference on “Precursor Chemicals and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)” in Bangkok. The Conference adopted an [outcome document](#), which was noted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in its resolution 60/5, containing practical measures for Governments to implement in order to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals as well as address the use and related consequences of new psychoactive substances.

Analysis of the world drug situation

INCB’s regional analysis of the world drug situation is presented in Chapter III of the INCB Annual Report, which serves to identify emerging trends. As you have the report, I will not go into greater detail.

Afghanistan

The Board has reiterated its grave concern about the further deteriorating drug control and security situation in Afghanistan, which is closely linked to the prevailing levels of opium poppy and cannabis cultivation, and emerging illicit manufacture of methamphetamine, as well as the extensive problem of drug abuse and dependence in the country, and the dire need for adequate prevention and treatment services.

INCB remains in close dialogue with the Government of Afghanistan, in the context of Article 14 of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which the Board invoked in 2000. The 2016 INCB mission to Afghanistan was conducted as part of these consultations.

The situation continues to have a grave impact on the drug control situation in the country and beyond. INCB calls upon partner Governments and the international community to sustain their support for counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan, in the spirit of common and shared responsibility. The success of drug control efforts in Afghanistan is intrinsically linked to broader developmental and criminal justice challenges being adequately addressed. Action against drugs cannot be removed from the equation if sustainable development is to be achieved.

Regulation of the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes

The Parties to the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic made the decision to limit exclusively to medical and scientific purposes the production, manufacture, export, import, distribution of, trade in, use and possession of drugs.

In a number of countries, recent developments are not in conformity with the treaties, in particular developments concerning the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes. INCB remains engaged in a dialogue with the concerned governments towards ensuring compliance with the treaties, to which they are party.

INCB reminds State Parties that they themselves have decided to subject cannabis to the highest levels of control under the treaties, in recognition of the public health risks associated with its abuse. It is now up to State parties to determine how to respond to developments in some States in which the non-medical use of cannabis has been or is being legalized and regulated, which is in clear contravention of the conventions.

State responses to drug-related offences

While some have criticized the drug control conventions as being overly punitive, this is a misconception. The drug control conventions are founded upon **respect for human rights, a balanced approach and the principle of proportionality**.

The conventions do not require the imprisonment of people who use drugs or who commit minor drug-related offences. The conventions provide States with the flexibility to apply alternative measures to punishment for drug-related offences of a minor nature, for example through the provision of treatment and rehabilitation. However, these measures remain underutilized by many States, a fact that we highlighted [as a special topic in our Annual Report](#).

While States have discretion to determine the sanctions they apply for drug-related offences, INCB continues to encourage States that retain capital punishment to consider the abolition of the **death penalty** for drug-related offences.

INCB also reiterates, in the strongest possible terms, its condemnation of the **extrajudicial targeting** of people suspected of illicit drug-related activity. Such action is not only a breach of the drug control conventions, but also constitutes a serious breach of human rights, and is an affront to the most basic standards of human dignity. INCB has called upon all Governments concerned to put an immediate stop to such actions.

Drug consumption rooms

For the operation of “**drug consumption rooms**” to be consistent with the conventions, the ultimate objective of such facilities must be to reduce the adverse consequences of drug abuse through treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration measures *without* condoning or increasing drug abuse or encouraging drug trafficking. Also, “drug consumption rooms” must be operated within a framework that offers treatment, rehabilitation and social-reintegration services, either directly or by referral. Finally, they *must not* be a substitute for demand reduction programmes, particularly prevention and treatment.

INCB recommendations and cooperation with Governments

In closing, the final chapter of the INCB Annual Report contains recommendations made to Governments, the United Nations and other relevant international and national organizations, many of which I have touched upon briefly. I urge you to carefully review all of the Board’s recommendations, urge your Governments to ensure that they are taken into account in the development and implementation of your national policies.

As the international drug control community moves forward to the 2019 review of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action and the outcome document of UNGASS 2016, all Governments should step up their efforts to implement these instruments and the provisions of the conventions.

INCB stands ready to assist you, and to provide advice on treaty implementation, with a view to meeting the health and welfare aims of the international drug control system.

Over the last ten years INCB has launched four tailored online communication systems, all of which I have mentioned today and each of which focus on a different aspect of drug control: PEN Online, PICS, IONICS and I2ES. These systems are explained in the INCB Annual Report in a special topic on “*new tools for old purposes*”. The long-term sustainability of these systems and the INCB Learning project depends upon the ongoing support of Member States through voluntary extra-budgetary contributions. I would like to thank the donor Governments, and encourage you to continue supporting our work.

More broadly, INCB needs your support and cooperation on an ongoing basis, not only in our ongoing dialogue, meeting reporting obligations and in accepting INCB missions, but also in ensuring that the Board is adequately resourced to fulfil its treaty-based mandate.

In recent years, zero growth budgets and budget cuts have meant that the capacity of the Board to work with your Governments to monitor, analyse and promote compliance with the treaties, conduct consultations, provide training, and respond to States’ requests for advice have not kept pace with actual need given emerging challenges in treaty compliance.

In addition, some of the core work of the Board in monitoring the implementation of Article 12 of the 1988 Convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances is funded by extra-budgetary contributions, for which INCB is grateful.

Article 9, paragraph 2 of the 1961 Convention entrusts the Council, in consultation with the Board, with making “all arrangements necessary to ensure the full technical independence of the Board in carrying out its functions”. The Board would be grateful for the Council and its members’ advocacy and support, in the relevant organs of the United Nations, in order to

ensure that the Board's regular budget resources in the next biennium are set at a level that permits the Board to meet the evolving treaty implementation challenges and to provide practical advice to your Governments towards ensuring that the health and welfare aims of the conventions are met.

I look forward to strengthening our joint cooperation in contributing to the implementation of the sustainable development goals and UNGASS 2016 outcome document, and in the preparation for the 2019 review process.

Thank you.