

# FOCUS on international drug control

Newsletter initiated by the International Narcotics Control Board

July ~ September 2011 Issue 10

## INCB President meets with the Director-General of the World Health Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

On 2 September, the President of the Board, Prof. Hamid Ghodse, met with the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Margaret Chan, and with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, in Geneva.



Prof. Hamid Ghodse, President of INCB with Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO

The President of the Board and the Director-General of WHO discussed issues of mutual concern and cooperation between the two bodies, in particular the preparations for the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence and the rational use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

The President of the Board and the High Commissioner for Human Rights discussed human rights issues relating to the implementation of the international drug control treaties. Other topics discussed during their



Prof. Hamid Ghodse, President of INCB with Ms. Navanethem Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

meeting included the Convention on the Rights of the Child with regard to the protection of children from drug abuse and involvement in illicit drug production and trafficking; the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical purposes; and drug-facilitated crime.

## Board President addresses the Economic and Social Council during its general segment

On 28 July in Geneva, the President of the Board presented the Board's annual report for 2010 to the Economic and Social Council, during its general segment.

Speaking under the agenda item on narcotic drugs, the President emphasized that the challenges posed by corruption to international drug control efforts were so great that the Board had decided to devote the thematic chapter of its annual report for 2010 to the issue of drug-related corruption. The President commended the noble efforts of law enforcement officers working to stem drug-related problems but noted that their efforts risked being undermined by corruption. In that context, he

drew attention to the recommendations made by the Board in its annual report. The President referred to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 54/8, in which the Commission had invited Member States to promote voluntary codes of conduct for the chemical industry in order to prevent the diversion of chemicals for use in illicit drug manufacture.

Referring to the Board's grave concern about the drug control situation in Afghanistan, the President noted efforts being undertaken to strengthen cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, as well as the commitment of the Government of Afghanistan to improving the situation. However, he stressed that article 14 of the Single

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Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 would remain invoked until a marked improvement was noted.

During his statement, the President said that the Board had noted with regret the step taken by the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to denounce the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol. While noting that the intention of Bolivia to reaccede to the Convention with a reservation regarding specific treaty provisions was technically permitted under the Convention, the President emphasized the Board's concern that such a course of action

was contrary to the spirit of the Convention. He stated that if the international community was to adopt an approach whereby Governments could use the mechanism of denunciation and re-accession with reservations so that they would not have to implement specific treaty provisions to which they objected, it would undermine the integrity of the global drug control system. However, the President assured the Economic and Social Council of the Board's readiness to continue its dialogue with the Bolivian Government and recognized the commitment shown by the Government to address problems related to illicit drug

## Recent and upcoming events

### November 2011

#### • 24 October - 11 November

102nd session of the Board, Vienna.

### Forthcoming INCB missions

- Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Mexico, Serbia and Turkey.

crop cultivation and drug trafficking and abuse on its territory.

## High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases

On 19 and 20 September, the President of the Board participated in the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. Attended by Heads of State and ministers of health of Member States, the High-level Meeting resulted in a political declaration that emphasized the extent of the problem of non-communicable diseases and proposed solutions to it.

Addressing the round table on strengthening national capacities and appropriate policies, the President stressed that substance abuse disorders were a form of mental illness and that they could be a factor contributing to other non-communicable diseases. He highlighted the importance of ensuring the availability of internationally controlled substances for the treatment of non-communicable diseases and for the relief of pain. However, significant disparities existed in access to controlled substances. For example, developed countries accounted for 90 per cent of global consumption of analgesics, and overconsumption was of increasing concern in some countries, while 80 per cent of the world's population had little

or no access to those crucial medicines.

To address the problem, the President said that well-functioning regulatory systems within each country were essential to ensuring the availability of controlled medicines while preventing their diversion for illicit uses. Unfortunately, many countries did not have drug control regulatory systems in place.



*Prof. Hamid Ghodse (right), President of INCB, meets with Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly*

According to the President, the first steps that must be taken to establish a regulatory system are the development of a national drug control policy and the building of national capacity. Success in addressing the issue of non-communicable diseases will be limited if countries lack the capacity and policies to ensure

the availability of controlled substances, together with appropriate measures to prevent their diversion for illicit uses, for which the proper implementation of a regulatory mechanism is required.

The President emphasized the Board's commitment to working with Governments to improve the situation and outlined recent action taken by the Board, including the supplement on the availability of internationally controlled drugs that had been published with its annual report for 2010 and a joint letter from the President of the Board, the Director-General of WHO and the Chair of the United Nations Development Group calling on United Nations resident coordinators to integrate into health programmes the issue of access to controlled medicines.

The President concluded his address to the round table by calling for continued international cooperation and by stating that all people had the right to be free from the pain and suffering caused by non-communicable diseases; ideally, that should be achieved primarily through prevention, especially in the case of substance abuse.

## UNODC Executive Director Yuri Fedotov met the Presidents of Colombia and Mexico

During his recent missions to Colombia and Mexico in September 2011, UNODC Executive Director Mr. Yuri Fedotov met with the President of Colombia, Mr. Juan Manuel Santos, and the President of Mexico, Mr. Felipe Calderón, as well as key decision makers of these countries working in the areas of public safety and security. Discussions centred on measures to address challenges relating to public security and justice, the combat against transnational organized crime, human trafficking, and illicit drug production and drug trafficking.

In Colombia, Mr. Fedotov also visited key

areas where alternative development programmes are under implementation, including the country's Forest Warden Families Programme, which has succeeded in making more than 4 million hectares "drug-free". In Mexico, Mr. Fedotov inaugurated a Centre of Excellence for Crime Statistics on governance, Victims of Crime, Public Security and Justice. The new Centre will develop field surveys, share knowledge in the area of crime statistics, and provide policy makers in Mexico and in the region with tools to address challenges relating to public security and justice.



UNODC Executive Director Yuri Fedotov is planting a tree under Colombia's Forest Warden Families Programme, which has succeeded in making more than 4 million hectares "drug-free".

## Board participates in Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Africa, in Addis Ababa

At the Twenty-first Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Africa, held in Addis Ababa in September 2011, a representative of the Board gave a keynote presentation on the topic "Precursor control: Africa's developing challenge".

In his presentation, the representative described the state of the current regional situation with regard to the control of precursor chemicals, identified emerging trends in the diversion

and smuggling of such chemicals and detailed accomplishments under the various special operations developed under Project Cohesion and Project Prism. He described specific trafficking cases in Africa and provided an overview of the existing tools for the international control of precursors, highlighting the need for Governments to register for Pre-Export Notification Online (PEN Online) and also to invoke article 12, paragraph 10 (a), of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs

and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. Under this article, exporting countries have to notify the importing country of exports of chemical substances under



Twenty-first Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Africa, held in Addis Ababa in September 2011

### The current members of INCB:

- **Hamid Ghodse** (Islamic Republic of Iran)
- **Galina Aleksandrovna Korchagina** (Russian Federation)
- **Carola Lander** (Germany)
- **Melvyn Levitsky** (United States)
- **Marc Moinard** (France)
- **Jorge Montaño** (Mexico)
- **Lochan Naidoo** (South Africa)
- **Rajat Ray** (India)
- **Viroj Sumyai** (Thailand)
- **Sri Suryawati** (Indonesia)
- **Camilo Uribe Granja** (Colombia)
- **Raymond Yans** (Belgium)
- **Xin Yu** (China)

international control that are destined for the importing country in question. In view of the lack of reliable information on the licit trade flows of chemicals in Africa, monitoring the situation and proposing appropriate action remains a challenge.

Emphasis was placed on the results achieved under the special operations

developed by the Board in the framework of Project Cohesion and Project Prism, which demonstrated the speed of changes in the illicit manufacture of drugs. It was noted that the most recent of those operations was Operation Phenylacetic Acid and its Derivatives (PAAD). Phenylacetic acid and its derivatives are not currently under international control, but are used in the illicit

manufacture of methamphetamine. Under Operation PAAD, more than 600 tons of non-controlled substances have been seized in Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. Of key importance are the facilitation and rapid dissemination of information by the Board to the various regulatory and law enforcement agencies taking part in this special operation.

## Reference and test samples of controlled substances at drug-testing laboratories for scientific purposes

Test and reference samples of internationally controlled substances play a vital role in the analysis of controlled substances. However, national drug-testing laboratories often encounter difficulties in gaining access to such samples, especially when they are not available from domestic sources.



UNODC reference samples of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

The Board has repeatedly demonstrated its awareness of the important role played by drug-testing laboratories and of the need to ensure that they are granted adequate access to the test samples they require. As the Board noted in its annual report for 2005, without reference standards, laboratories cannot provide essential support services to national criminal justice systems and law enforcement and health authorities. In its role as custodian of the international drug control treaties, the Board has sought a balanced approach to the availability of test samples that complies with the treaty provisions relative to international trade.

In 2007, the Board issued its guidelines for the import and export of drug and precursor reference standards, in which it recognized the importance of forensic laboratories, as well as the need to ensure that such laboratories had access to the facilities and tools required to discharge their duties, including quality reference standards. The guidelines sought to identify some of the obstacles to obtaining reference samples in a timely manner that were encountered most frequently by laboratories, and to provide guidance as to how best to address them.

In the guidelines, the Board identified obstacles to the availability of reference samples, which it grouped into the following categories: inadequate awareness of procedural requirements for issuing import authorization; the length of time sometimes required for issuing authorization; legislation or other regulations that impede the import of controlled substances; and a lack of appropriate infrastructure for the shipment of controlled substances into or out of a country. In response to these continued obstacles to the availability of test and reference samples, the guidelines also sought to promote concrete courses of action to be undertaken by States to foster and facilitate availability.

Despite the progress already made, States have noted that many known

obstacles to the adequate availability of samples continue to plague the process, making it overly complex, time-consuming and financially onerous and having negative repercussions on the effectiveness of the work undertaken by drug-testing laboratories. These concerns were reiterated in Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 54/3, in which the Commission invited the Board and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to work closely on feasible mechanisms that would facilitate the provision of minimal but sufficient amounts of reference and test samples of controlled substances to drug-testing laboratories.

In the resolution, the Commission requested Member States to review national procedures governing access to test and reference samples of internationally controlled substances for scientific purposes; encouraged the Board to continue its efforts to ensure the adequate availability of such samples and encouraged UNODC to consider providing adequate specifications of their quality; and recommended that UNODC continue to support Member States in enhancing the analytical work of laboratories and the training of experts. The Board and UNODC will continue to work closely with Governments to improve access to test and reference samples, as requested by the Commission in its resolution 54/3.

## Update of Training Material: Control of Psychotropic Substances

Training Material: Control of Psychotropic Substances is prepared by the Board in order to help Governments better understand the provisions contained in the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and fulfil their treaty obligations. It consists of three main sections:

- I. Operation of the international control system for psychotropic substances
- II. Guidelines for the preparation of reports to the Board
- III. Guidelines for national drug control administrators on article 13 of the 1971 Convention

Prior to the update, the Training Material was last revised in 2003. Since 2003, additional data on the control of psychotropic substances have been required pursuant to relevant resolutions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. In 2010 and 2011, the Commission, in its resolutions 53/4 and 54/6, encouraged Member States to provide the Board with information relating to the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes. Therefore, it became necessary to include appropriate explanations and examples in the Training Material on collecting and preparing data on consumption of psychotropic substances. Another reason for updating the Training Material has been that some of the main countries manufacturing certain psychotropic substances may have experienced difficulties in collecting and reporting data on the manufacture of such substances, and therefore more clarification and guidance in this respect are needed in the Training Material. In addition, some information contained in the previous version of the Training Material was no longer up to date and needed to be revised to reflect the current situation.

In July 2011, the Training Material: Control of Psychotropic Substances was updated by the Secretariat. The main changes include:

- Inclusion of explanations and examples on the preparation of data on the consumption of psychotropic substances, pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 53/4 and 54/6
- More detailed guidance and examples on the preparation of annual assessments of psychotropic substances
- Further clarification and examples regarding the collection of and reporting on data relating to the manufacture of psychotropic substances
- Inclusion of the latest version of form P (Annual statistical report on substances listed in the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971) as an annex. The revised form P (2011 edition) included more detailed explanatory notes on the submission of data on the manufacture of psychotropic substances, and a reference to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 54/6, in which the Commission encouraged Member States to report to the Board data on the consumption of psychotropic substances.

The updated Training Material is available in all the official languages of the United Nations. It will be posted on the Board's website in due course.



Updated INCB training materials on psychotropic substances

## Ongoing dialogue with civil society organizations

The Board attaches great importance to promoting an effective dialogue with drug-related non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations. In this connection, the Board notes the receipt of a letter from the *International Centre for Science in Drug Policy*, an international network of scientists and academic physicians,

in July 2011, expressing the Centre's support for the denunciation by the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia in June 2011 of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961. The letter was signed by a few people including the editor of the *Lancet*.

## INCB missions

### Denmark

A Board mission visited Denmark from 27 to 29 September 2011. The mission was conducted by Carola Lander, member of the Board, who was accompanied by a member of the Board's secretariat. As Denmark is a party to the three international drug control conventions, the aim of the mission was to review the Government's efforts to comply with its obligations under those conventions. The last Board mission to Denmark took place in 2004.

The mission met senior officials from the Ministry of the Interior and Health, the Danish Medicines Agency, the National Board of Health, the Central Customs and Tax Administration, the Ministry of Social

Affairs and the Ministry of Justice. The mission also visited the heroin prescription clinic at the Copenhagen Drug Addiction Centre and a non-governmental organization, the Danish Drug Users Union.

Issues addressed during discussions with senior officials included those related to the legislative measures and administrative policies on drug control that have been introduced by the Government, as well as measures aimed at controlling the movement of precursors from, to and through Denmark. The situation of and achievements in the treatment of drug abuse, drug abuse prevention and combating drug trafficking were also discussed.

The findings of the mission will be reviewed by the Board at its session in November 2011 and will be reflected in its annual report for 2011, to be published in early 2012.



### Call for contributions

Readers are invited to submit comments and contributions:

**E-mail:** focus@incb.org

**Facsimile:** (+43-1) 26060 76948

Mail can be sent to the following address:

#### **Focus on international drug control**

Convention Evaluation Section (CES)

International Narcotics Control Board Secretariat

P.O. Box 500 | 1400 Vienna | Austria

The Focus Team reserves the right to edit and select articles depending on their relevance and the availability of space.

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### About Focus on international drug control

Focus on international drug control is a quarterly publication, initiated by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), that provides

insight into the activities and positions of the Board and information on other issues relevant to the Board's mandate. Focus also functions as a

forum in which interested parties may share their opinions. Focus on international drug control is prepared by the Vienna-based INCB Secretariat.