

2. Ensuring the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in emergency situations

331. During the period covered by the present report, the international community has been faced with a number of disasters, both natural and human-made. Those disasters, which have included earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, epidemics, conflicts and displacements of populations, have given rise to emergency situations. For example, emergency situations arose following the major earthquakes and aftershocks in Lombok, Indonesia, and the surrounding region in August 2018, and the devastating earthquake and tsunami in central Sulawesi, Indonesia, on 28 September 2018. The State of Kerala in India was also severely affected in August 2018 by the worst floods in nearly a century. In September 2017, the Secretary-General appealed to the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to persons displaced or affected by another major emergency in the Myanmar-Bangladesh border region, where refugee camps have been established for people in need of humanitarian assistance. According to United Nations estimates, 1.2 million people are in those camps. The need to provide medical treatment to the many victims in situations such as those has frequently resulted in acute shortages of essential medicines, leading to unnecessary human suffering.

332. In such acute situations, Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are actively involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including the provision of vital medical supplies such as narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, many of which are controlled under the international drug control treaties. However, they often face serious difficulties providing controlled medicines because of the regulatory requirements for their import and export.

333. The international drug control conventions established a control regime with the aim of preventing trafficking in and abuse of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Under normal circumstances, the import and transport of medicines containing such drugs and substances are subject to strict regulatory requirements. However, in catastrophic situations, those regulations may delay the urgent delivery of medicines for emergency humanitarian relief.

334. In the light of the need for expediency in the delivery of relief efforts, including in the provision of medicines containing controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, the Board reminds all Governments that, in emergencies, it is possible to apply simplified control procedures for the export, transportation and provision of controlled medicines. Urgent deliveries of essential medicines need not be included in the estimates of the receiving countries. Under such circumstances, competent authorities may, therefore, allow the export of medicines containing controlled narcotic drugs and/or psychotropic substances to affected countries, even in the absence of the corresponding import authorizations and/or estimates. Further information on this subject is available in the Model Guidelines for the International Provision of Controlled Medicines for Emergency Medical Care, developed by WHO in cooperation with INCB. The Guidelines are available on the INCB website (www.incb.org).