

Foreword

The thematic chapter of the INCB annual report for 2019 focuses on improving prevention and treatment services for young people. The year 2019 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In article 33 of that Convention, States parties committed to taking measures to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of drugs. Sadly, substance use and the associated health consequences are greatest among young people, especially those between the ages of 18 and 25. The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1954 as amended by the 1972 Protocol and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances set out requirements for parties to take all practicable measures to prevent and treat drug dependence. That obligation was reaffirmed in the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 and in numerous resolutions and declarations of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in its special sessions on the world drug problem. This year's thematic chapter is aimed at improving understanding of the complexity of the problem and provides a way forward for Member States and civil society to promote the safe and healthy development of children, young people, families and communities through the effective prevention and treatment of drug use. It is our shared duty to safeguard the well-being of young people.

INCB is committed to continuing to support Member States in achieving the health and welfare aims of the three drug control conventions and Sustainable Development Goal 3, on health and well-being. At its 126th session, in November 2019, the Board held an open dialogue with Member States to discuss their experiences in implementing measures to forge the way ahead as presented in the INCB report on availability of 2018.¹ Challenges remain: we see overprescription of controlled medicines in some countries on the one hand, and the ongoing lack of availability in very many countries and regions on the other. Despite the overall global increase in the availability of controlled medicines for consumption, global inequity and imbalance remain evident, which has serious health consequences for patients and their families. The present report contains a number of recommendations to address this imbalance, for example, with regard to the availability of affordable medicines containing controlled substances, raising awareness among health personnel and patients and their families, and curbing promotional activities by the pharmaceutical industry for high-cost formulations, including synthetic opioids. INCB is also supporting efforts to improve the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes through the International Import and Export Authorization System (I2ES), which is increasingly being used by Member States and which is facilitating international trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and INCB Learning, through which 237 officials from 88 countries and territories have received training. That training is resulting in improved reporting to the Board, which should in turn lead to improved access to hospitals and doctors and to the medicines that patients need.

Drug abuse, illicit manufacture, trafficking and the continued emergence of new psychoactive substances, non-medical synthetic opioids and non-scheduled precursors and their impact on public health are among the challenges highlighted in the global issues and regional analysis contained in chapter III. Of special concern is the growing trend in manufacture, trafficking and use of methamphetamine in many parts of the world. INCB is working to assist Governments in addressing these challenges through a number of initiatives.

¹*Progress in ensuring adequate access to internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes (E/INCB/2018/1/Supp.1).*

Our long-standing project to carry out activities mandated by article 12 of the 1988 Convention monitors the international trade in precursor chemicals in order to prevent illicit manufacture and supports international cooperation in precursor control through the Board's Pre-Export Notification Online (PEN Online) system and the Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS) system. A detailed analysis of the challenges faced in addressing designer precursors and pre-precursors is covered in the Board's report on precursors for 2019.² In November 2019, INCB decided to propose the international control of methyl *alpha*-phenylacetoacetate, a pre-precursor used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine and methamphetamine. The Board's Project Ion, the Project Ion Incident Communication System (IONICS) platform and the global Operational Partnerships to Interdict Opioids' Illicit Distribution and Sales (OPIOIDS) project are assisting national authorities in addressing the emergence of new psychoactive substances and non-medical synthetic opioids in order to safeguard public health.

Human rights are inalienable and can never be relinquished. In our examination of the global issue of human rights, in chapter III, we note with great concern the continued reports of grave human rights violations perpetrated in the name of drug control. The conventions provide States with the possibility of applying alternative measures to conviction, punishment and incarceration, including education, rehabilitation or social reintegration. If the drug control measures adopted by States violate internationally recognized human rights standards, they also violate the international drug control conventions. INCB once again calls for a halt to extrajudicial responses to drug-related offences and urges States that retain capital punishment for drug-related offences to consider its abolition.

INCB remains concerned at the legislative developments permitting the use of cannabis for "recreational" uses. Not only are these developments in contravention of the drug control conventions and the commitments made by States parties, the consequences for health and well-being, in particular of young people, are of serious concern.

We remain in dialogue with all countries for the full implementation of the three drug control conventions and to achieve their aims of safeguarding health and welfare. To that end, we count on the continued cooperation of Governments in meeting their reporting obligations to INCB, accepting INCB missions and participating in and supporting INCB activities and projects. Without the cooperation of Governments, the Board would be unable to fulfil its mandate of ensuring that the three international drug control conventions are implemented in accordance with the objectives and requirements that were established by States parties when they signed the conventions.

We stand at a challenging point in drug control. Much has been achieved, yet more remains to be done. States need to ensure that national policy and practice are directed towards full implementation of the three conventions, which enjoy almost universal adherence and to which Member States recently reaffirmed their commitment at the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, on the world drug problem, held in 2016, and in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration adopted at the sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. This year, the Board was pleased to welcome Palau as the newest State party to the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

²*Precursors and Chemicals Frequently Used in the Illicit Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances: Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2019 on the Implementation of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 (E/INCB/2019/4).*

The community of nations faces many challenges that have severe implications for the health and well-being of people. By fully implementing the drug control conventions, Member States, civil society and the international community as a whole can build upon the significant improvements achieved over the past years. I urge you to carefully study the Board's recommendations set out in this report and to implement them in good faith. INCB remains committed to monitoring and promoting compliance with the drug control treaties and to supporting Member States as they implement their drug control obligations, for the benefit of all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by several vertical strokes, all resting on a horizontal line.

Cornelis P. de Joncheere
President
International Narcotics Control Board