

INCB reviews availability of medicines and prevention of drug abuse worldwide

VIENNA, 2 June (UN Information Service) – During its 110th session the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) analysed the international drug control situation, and the production and availability of the raw materials used for the manufacture of medicines containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, while it also highlighted the need for renewed focus on drug abuse prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

The Board also reviewed the progress of Governments in implementing the international drug control conventions, and discussed and took measures to promote and facilitate the execution of drug control treaties.

During its two-week meeting, from 19 to 30 May, INCB also examined the movement of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals for licit purposes, particularly the supply of opiate raw materials and demand for opiates for medical and scientific purposes, and made recommendations to promote an adequate balance of supply so as to ensure that sufficient levels of medicines are available around the world whilst preventing their abuse.

The new President of the Board, Dr. Lochan Naidoo, emphasized that “authorities around the world bear the main responsibility for ensuring that they accurately estimate their licit requirements for medicines, that they communicate those needs to the Board, and that they train their health professionals to ensure that they have the required know-how to ensure rational prescribing of medicines for those in need of treatment”. The INCB President also noted that “Governments have means at their disposal to estimate their needs, for instance by making use of the [Guide on Estimating Requirements for Substances under International Control](#) jointly developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and INCB”.

INCB also discussed its cooperation with WHO and noted the recent adoption by the World Health Assembly of a resolution on “Strengthening of palliative care as a component of integrated treatment throughout the life course”. The INCB President congratulated Governments and the World Health Assembly on the adoption of the resolution, which acknowledged and was a follow up to the report of the Board on the [Availability of Internationally Controlled Drugs: Ensuring Adequate Access for Medical and Scientific Purposes](#), published in 2011.

Dr. Naidoo emphasized that “the resolution will constitute a milestone in promoting the rational use of medicines for the treatment of cancer and palliative care”, adding that “the international community must also pay attention to the rational use of medicines containing psychotropics to ensure adequate treatment of mental, neurological and other disorders while preventing overuse, misuse and abuse”.

Dr. Naidoo, who at the commencement of the 110th session on Monday 19 May noted that he intended to make the issues of drug abuse prevention and availability of controlled medicines the focus of his Presidency, said he was “encouraged by WHO’s work in the field of non-communicable diseases” and that “Governments had to take the next step now, moving from words to action”.

The INCB President said that the Board and he himself, given his medical background in prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, “look forward to working closely with WHO in this area of shared concerns and contributing to the forthcoming summit on non-communicable diseases at the General Assembly in July of this year”. According to Dr. Naidoo the meeting will provide the opportunity “to move into action and begin to reverse “the abysmal reality of limited access, where today’s use of medicines containing narcotic drugs for pain relief is concentrated primarily in North America, Western Europe and some countries of Oceania”.

Dr. Naidoo added that “92 per cent of the world’s licit medical use of morphine is consumed by 17 per cent of the world’s population while the rest of the world population (83 per cent) consumes just 8 per cent.” The imbalance was “most worrisome”, Dr. Naidoo said, “as latest data show that over 70 per cent of cancer deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.” Dr. Naidoo concluded that tackling the matter required the concerted action of the international community.

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The International Narcotics Control Board, which is based in Vienna, is an independent body, established by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs to monitor and support the compliance of Governments with the international drug control treaties. The 13 members of the Board are elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council to serve in an individual capacity for a five-year term.

The current president of the Board is Lochan Naidoo (South Africa) and the current members are: Wayne Hall (Australia), David T. Johnson (United States), Galina Aleksandrovna Korchagina (Russian Federation), Alejandro Mohar Betancourt (Mexico), Marc Moinard (France), Rajat Ray (India), Ahmed Kamal Eldin Samak (Egypt), Werner Sipp (Germany), Viroj Sumyai (Thailand), Sri Suryawati (Indonesia), Francisco E. Thoumi (Colombia) and Raymond Yans (Belgium).

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