

The International Narcotics Control Board opens its 111th session in Vienna

The availability of essential medicines in emergencies, licit opium poppy cultivation, initiatives on the non-medical use of cannabis and the application of international law to be discussed

VIENNA, 30 October 2014 (UN Information Service) – The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) opens its [111th session](#) in Vienna today, and will remain in session until 14 November 2014. At the opening, the President of the Board, Dr. Lochan Naidoo, reiterated his concerns about access to essential medicines containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances being still insufficient in many parts of the world.

He said this was due to a variety of factors such as limited material resources and the need for increased training among health care professionals. According to Dr. Naidoo, the capacity of governments to effectively estimate their needs for medicines and operate their regulatory systems also needed attention.

The Ebola health crisis has demonstrated the weakness of health care systems and the acute need to ensure the delivery of medical supplies at critical junctures, the INCB President said. He also referred to the availability of medicines in other emergency situations, such as those caused by armed conflict. He noted the obligation of parties in such cases to assure access to medicines to ensure treatment and prevent suffering.

During its 111th session, the Board will focus on topics relating to developments in implementing and complying with the treaties around the world, the INCB President said, reiterating that the treaties were unequivocal in their objective that controlled substances should be available exclusively for medical and scientific use and that the letter and spirit of the treaties guided the Board in its work.

The Board will also review the performance of governments in implementing their treaty obligations including those related to ensuring the adequate availability of essential medicines and the prevention of abuse and diversion to illegal trafficking. Moreover, the global situation with regard to the status of licit opium poppy cultivation for the production of medicines as well as its illicit cultivation for the production of heroin will be evaluated. The Board will also focus attention on the drug control situation in Afghanistan, developments relating to new psychotropic substances and its cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization (WCO), among others, with whom the Board will be holding consultations.

During the session, INCB will finalize its [Annual Report](#), with a focus this year on a balanced approach to drug control as well as technical publications on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for 2014. Published in March 2015, these reports will contain the Board's recommendations to Governments and international organizations.

Prior to the INCB plenary session, the Board's Standing Committee on Estimates met on 28 and 29 October to review the supply of and demand for narcotic drugs for medical and scientific purposes, as well as requirements for psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals for licit purposes. This work is conducted in line with the Board's mandate to ensure the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion to illicit channels, and to monitor Governments' control over chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.

INCB is the independent, quasi-judicial body charged with promoting and monitoring Government compliance with the three international drug control conventions: 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.

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