

The International Narcotics Control Board reviews global availability of medicines and access to treatment

VIENNA, 15 May (UN Information Service) – During its 113th session, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) discussed approaches to ensuring greater availability of medicines containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and universal access to preventative measures, drug treatment and rehabilitation.

The new President of the Board, [Mr. Werner Sipp](#), said: “A well-balanced drug control system must not rely solely on interdiction, restriction and law enforcement, but must provide sufficient access to prevention, treatment, medication, reduction of the adverse consequences of drug use, rehabilitation and social re-integration for individuals affected by drug use and addiction.” The President added: “The Board’s understanding of the individuals affected by drugs is multi-faceted and inclusive. It is not simply drugs users themselves who are affected, but also their families and immediate communities. The world drug problem affects our entire societies as trafficking, related crime and violence, in some regions, and health and socio-economic impacts worldwide directly or indirectly deteriorate our quality of life as individuals, and as members of our communities.”

During its two-week session, from 4 to 15 May, the Board met with the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Chair of the Board charged by the Commission with the preparation of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem in April 2016 ([UNGASS 2016](#)), where Board members discussed the constitutive elements of a balanced approach to drug control. The Board also met with the Executive Director of UNODC, the Director of Rights, Gender, Prevention and Community Mobilization of UNAIDS, and the President and Bureau of ECOSOC, the UN Economic and Social Council. Here, Board members discussed developments in the implementation of the drug control conventions, the availability of medicines and medical treatment worldwide, combatting illicit diversion of scheduled substances, new psychoactive substances and other priorities in the lead-up to UNGASS 2016.

The Board worked on a new report on the global availability of medicines containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances which will supplement the Board’s 2015 Annual Report. In its analysis of the availability, supply and demand of opioid raw materials and opioid analgesics, amongst other substances, the Board highlights impediments to access and patterns in global consumption. The Report notes that despite adequate production to meet global needs, more than 75 per cent of the world’s population, or 5.5 billion individuals, have limited or no access to pain relief treatment and other medicines containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

On the issue of availability, the President of the Board said: “The international drug control conventions, when fully implemented, provide a common legal framework in which States must cooperate to provide adequate access to medication and essential health treatment and services, whilst preventing the diversion of scheduled substances to illicit channels and uses.”

In sessions, the Board reviewed the outcomes of recent country missions to Timor-Leste, Honduras and Ghana, and assessed the recent policy developments and treaty compliance around the world. Board members also reviewed estimates and assessments submitted by Member States’ Governments, and analysed intersessional activities of the Board, including participation in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the joint INCB-UNODC International Conference on Precursor Chemicals and New Psychoactive Substances held in Bangkok in April. Members also considered the further developments of the Board’s special projects and the launch of [I2ES](#), a new electronic platform monitoring the licit international trade in scheduled substances. I2ES is currently available to Member States free of charge, and facilitates real-time licit trade and monitoring of the import and export of substance, sharing information to prevent diversion to illicit channels.

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, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

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