

Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria  
Telephone: +43-1-26060, Telefax: +43-1-26060-5867 / 5868  
E-Mail: [secretariat@incb.org](mailto:secretariat@incb.org) Internet Address: <http://www.incb.org/>

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**Statement of the President of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB),  
Mr. Werner Sipp,**

**Reconvened fifty-eighth session of the CND  
Special segment: Preparation for the special session of the General Assembly  
on the world drug problem in 2016  
Vienna, 9 December 2015**

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to be with you on behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) this morning. This meeting is yet another significant step taken towards the 2016 General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem.

UNGASS 2016 provides an opportunity to review progress in the implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and to address current challenges in global drug control. You, the Member States, will have the responsibility for shaping international drug control policy for the years to come.

In April 2016, it will be the third time that the General Assembly of the United Nation devotes a special session to the world drug problem. The first special session in 1990 and the second one in 1998 both contributed substantively to the further development of the international drug control system. In particular the Political Declaration of 1998 - which elaborated the basic principles of a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach, the principle of shared responsibility and the Guidelines for drug demand reduction - constitutes an important pillar of the current drug control system complementing the three Conventions.

Now, what will be the contribution of UNGASS 2016 to the future drug control system?

First: What we need is a differentiated and objective assessment of the global drug situation and of the drug related policies implemented all over the world.

And second: You, the Member States have to draw the right conclusions from this analysis for the future.

Regarding the assessment, there are voices pretending that the current drug control system as a whole represents a "war on drugs which has failed" and which therefore has to be changed. I think this is not an objective assessment. It is too simplistic and the conclusion is simply wrong.

The INCB, as a 'treaty-monitoring body', wants to contribute to a differentiated assessment of the drug control system in light of its mandate and its experience. We understand that our role is:

- To clarify and highlight the 'approaches' and principles of the Conventions and the Political Declarations

- To identify shortcomings in the drug control system
- And to make concrete recommendations based upon the Conventions.

The current drug control system has undoubtedly achieved remarkable success in several areas: For example:

- Thanks to the control of the licit international trade in scheduled substances, today, diversions from licit trade to the illicit market are substantially reduced.
- Moreover, in the last two decades, enormous efforts have been made in many countries to establish programmes for prevention and treatment.
- And international cooperation in drug related-matters has been significantly improved.

Yet, the world drug problem still exists, manifested in various forms.

The INCB, in its Annual Reports, has addressed some of the basic principles of the current drug control system. I want to briefly make reference to some of them.

1. The fundamental goal of the three drug control conventions is to ensure the “health and welfare of humankind”. We will devote the chapter I of our next Annual Report to this topic. In pursuit of this goal, the Conventions contain a range of obligations for Member States, namely:

- the obligation to ensure that narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are available for medical and scientific purposes in adequate amounts;
- the obligation to accord high priority to demand reduction measures - namely to prevention, treatment, reduction of the negative consequences of drug abuse, rehabilitation, aftercare and social reintegration, - rather than rely solely on interdiction and enforcement,.

Many States are now re-evaluating their drugs policy in favour of a more health-based approach. This development is to be commended from the perspective of the Conventions.

2. Drugs are the cause of many social problems and at the same time the result of social problems. The world drug problem requires the implementation of a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach. INCB addressed this topic in its [Annual Report for 2014](#), as a specific contribution to the UNGASS preparations.

A ‘balanced approach’ to drug policy includes not only balancing supply and demand reduction measures but also:

- taking into account the socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions and consequences of drug abuse;
- adhering to international human rights standards in all fields of drug control activities;
- complementing the eradication of illicit crops with alternative development strategies;

- and facilitating greater participation of, and cooperation between all stakeholders, including civil society.

Unfortunately, this 'balanced approach' is very often not fully implemented in many parts of the world.

3. Proportionality: The international drug control treaties encourage proportionate responses by States to drug-related offences and offenders. Disproportionate responses undermine both the aims of the conventions and the rule of law. The principle of proportionality has been dealt in our [Annual Report 2007](#).

The Conventions do not oblige States to adopt punitive responses to minor drug-related offences committed by drug abusers. The three Conventions provide the possibility for alternatives to conviction or punishment through treatment, education, after care, rehabilitation and social reintegration. They allow States to focus the most severe penalties on more serious forms of crime such as trafficking and money laundering, giving State a certain discretion in the legislative and policy choices they make in implementing their obligations under the three Conventions.

4. UNGASS 2016 presents a unique opportunity for Governments to renew their sense of shared responsibility in addressing the world drug problem, a recommendation made by the Board in its [2012 Annual Report](#).

5. Over the years, the Board has continued to play an important role with regard to the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes. We have called the attention of the international community to the low availability of those substances in many countries.

INCB will publish early in 2016 a special report on this topic, where we describe the major impediments to availability as identified by Member States and make recommendations to Governments on how to address these problems.

6. At this juncture, allow me to highlight two of the emerging challenges in drug control, namely the proliferation and diversification of new psychoactive substances (NPS) and the emergence of non-scheduled substitute precursors, including purpose-made "designer chemicals".

We must take all possible measures to prevent NPS from reaching consumer markets and to prevent chemicals from reaching illicit drug laboratories. INCB facilitates cooperation and information-sharing at the global level, through Project ION for NPS and Projects Prism and Cohesion for precursors, and the related communication platforms (IONICS and PICS).

The electronic [International Import and Export Authorization System \(I2ES\)](#), a web-based system developed to facilitate and accelerate the work of the national competent authorities was officially launched this year. The Board invites all Governments to support this new tool.

### **Conclusion**

Since the adoption of the Conventions, global approaches to many drug control issues have changed, and new challenges have emerged. However, the Conventions have not lost their relevance and continue to provide a comprehensive framework for international cooperation in drug policy. They are capable of accommodating various national implementation schemes which each State sets according to the policy choices it has made.

Your work here today paves the way towards the deliberations and the outcome of UNGASS and will influence global drug policy for years to come. The International Narcotics Control Board looks forward to further participating in and contributing to UNGASS 2016.

Thank you.

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