

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 Internet Address: <http://www.incb.org/>

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**STATEMENT BY MS. JAGJIT PAVADIA
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD (INCB)**

**Economic and Social Council Coordination and Management Meeting
26 July 2016, New York
Item 19 (d): Narcotic drugs
Report of the International Narcotics Control Board**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board and in my capacity as First Vice-President of the Board, I have the honour to present to you the Annual Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2015, in accordance with the three international drug control conventions.

At the outset I would like to congratulate the President of the Council, His Excellency Mr. Oh Joon, and the other members of the Bureau on the successful organization of the Council's work over the past twelve months, as well as to extend to them the Board's best wishes for a successful outcome of the Council's deliberations.

The Board is grateful for the ongoing support of the Economic and Social Council with respect to its role in the international drug control system.

The Board, in its quasi-judicial capacity, is mandated to annually publish a Report on its work to be submitted to the Council through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The Board maintains an ongoing dialogue with Governments with a view to improving the functioning of the international drug control system. The Board's analysis of challenges facing national and international drug control efforts and proposed remedial measures are contained in the Annual Report.

Over the past twelve months, the Board has been engaged in various activities, most notably its participation in the General Assembly special session on the world drug problem (UNGASS 2016), which culminated in the adoption of the outcome document, which reaffirms the role of the INCB. The Board has continued to work closely with Governments towards full compliance with the treaties, including through the established reporting system as well as by conducting country missions to evaluate the implementation of the three drug control treaties.

The [Annual Report](#) is complemented by our [Annual Report on Precursors](#), prepared pursuant to Article 12 of the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, as well as our technical publications on [narcotic drugs](#) and [psychotropic substances](#).

This year's Annual Report is also supplemented by a special report entitled [Availability of Internationally Controlled Drugs: Ensuring Adequate Access for Medical and Scientific Purposes](#), prepared by the Board as a special contribution to the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem (UNGASS 2016) that took place in April.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

Every year, the Board advances in the thematic first chapter of its Annual Report a special topic, central to global drug control policy. In view of the Special Session of the General Assembly, the

thematic chapter of our report this year focused on the ultimate goal of the three drug control conventions, namely to ensure the “[Health and welfare of humankind: challenges and opportunities for the international control of drugs](#)”. The chapter examines the importance of drug demand reduction, adequate availability of controlled substances for medical use, including problems of access to these substances for medical use, and the principle of proportionality in relation to the imposition of sanctions reflecting the seriousness of the crime. It emphasizes that drug control actions must be consistent with human rights standards and that States also have an obligation to protect children from drug abuse. The balance in drug policy between supply reduction and demand reduction is the cornerstone of the international drug control system, and the Board urges Governments to review policy in these areas.

The Board emphasizes that the conventions promote the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes and that prevention and treatment of drug abuse are core to ensuring the health and well-being of mankind.

The Conventions do not oblige States to criminalize drug abuse as such. Moreover, where drug-related behaviour is subject to criminalization, the conventions allow the imposition of alternatives to punishment, such as treatment and rehabilitation measures. Where sanctions are applied, they must meet two essential conditions. First, they must be the product of a legitimate criminal trial by a duly constituted tribunal affording the accused all internationally recognized due process rights. Second, they must be proportionate to the seriousness of the crime and to the degree of responsibility of the offender.

The conventions do not call for a “war on drugs”. The drug control treaties should be implemented in a balanced and proportionate manner, with health and welfare being at the core of drug policy and practice. Drug policies must be designed and implemented with due regard for socioeconomic and sociocultural factors such as poverty, economic inequality, access to education and exposure to violence and abuse. States are encouraged to address illicit drug production, related crime and drug abuse, including lack of alternative livelihoods.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

The Board’s assessment of the functioning of the international drug control system is presented in Chapter II of our Annual Report. We evaluate overall treaty compliance, focussing on a number of countries in detail. INCB missions are fundamental to the dialogue with Governments and to understanding the drug control situation and measures being adopted in each country. This enables INCB to provide Governments with constructive and specific recommendations. During the period under review INCB conducted missions to Bahrain, Ghana, Honduras, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, the Republic of Moldova, Timor-Leste and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and these are briefly summarized in the Report. This chapter also highlights some special topics, such as: the misuse or overuse of benzodiazepines among older people; new psychoactive substances (NPS); and new developments in the control of precursors.

The 1988 Convention provides that the Board shall submit a report annually to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the implementation of article 12 of the Convention.

In our Precursors Report for 2015 we note that article 12 of the 1988 Convention rests upon the promotion of international cooperation to prevent chemicals from being available for the illicit manufacture of substances of abuse. To that end, INCB tools such as PEN-Online¹ and PICS² can assist Governments to take action that will enhance international control over precursor chemicals and their sources. The Board invites all Governments to participate in these initiatives.

¹ INCB Pre-Export Notification System

² INCB Precursors Incident Communication System

There have been considerable achievements in the monitoring of legitimate international trade in precursor chemicals through enhancing communications between Governments and promoting cooperation agreements with the chemical industry. Emphasis on voluntary cooperation with industry will be key to addressing vulnerabilities in domestic trade and misuse of non-scheduled chemicals.

The report presents recent trends and challenges such as the continued diversification in illicit drug manufacture and the great variety of non-scheduled substances used to circumvent the existing controls.

New psychoactive substances have continued to emerge at a rapid pace over the past year. Member States had reported 602 new substances as of October 2015, an increase of 55% from the previous year. More flexible and workable approaches to tackle this threat within a framework of international cooperation are required. INCB has developed a special limited prioritized list of new psychoactive substances currently not under international control for voluntary surveillance by Governments.

INCB is also working with Governments to facilitate the sharing of information on incidents involving new psychoactive substances, including through its Project ION³. The Board has issued guidance to aid governments in the establishment of partnerships with the private sector for the control of precursor chemicals and address the emergence of “designer precursors”.

Flexibility of the conventions does not extend to non-medical use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Recent legislative developments in some countries permitting the non-medical use of controlled substances, in particular cannabis, are in clear contravention of the conventions⁴. These deviations strike at the very basis of the international consensus upon which international cooperation in drug control is based.

In the 2014 Report the Board had urged all governments in jurisdictions that have established programmes for the use of cannabis for medical purposes to ensure that prescription of cannabis for medical use is performed with competent medical knowledge and supervision and that the prescription practice is based on available scientific evidence and consideration of potential side effects. The Board urges Governments to put in place control measures for the cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes in line with the provisions of the 1961 Convention.

The Board has continued its consultations with the Government of Afghanistan under article 14 of the 1961 Convention in view of the critical drug control situation and to encourage cooperation by the international community with the Government of Afghanistan.

Chapter II of our Annual Report 2015 details progress over the past year.

Since publishing our report, in May this year the President of the Board conducted a mission to Afghanistan. The President found that the reasons for invoking Article 14 bis of the 1961 Convention remain as valid today as when it was invoked. The Board remains extremely concerned about the drug control challenges the country faces. In view of the gravity of the situation, the Board brings this matter to the special attention of the Council and calls upon the international community, in particular Afghanistan development partners, to continue to support the Government of Afghanistan in its drug control and development efforts. The Board believes that the Development Conference on Afghanistan planned in Brussels in October of this year provides a unique opportunity to ensure that the cross-cutting issue of drug control is comprehensively addressed. Unless the drug control and drug abuse situation in Afghanistan is urgently tackled head on by the Government of Afghanistan with the support of its international cooperation partners, the security situation, terrorism threat, corruption and development issues affecting the country will remain unresolved. The Board stands ready to cooperate

³ INCB Project ION facilitates international law enforcement operations to counter the flow of new psychoactive substances and IONICS, the communication platform of Project ION facilitates the exchange of information among Governments on incidents involving NPS.

⁴ Article 4, paragraph (c), 1961 Convention

with all concerned partners.

In **Chapter III** of the Annual Report, we present an analysis of the global drug control situation region-by-region, drawing attention to threats and challenges, as well as actions being taken at the national and regional levels.

In **Chapter IV** of our Report, INCB makes recommendations to Governments and international and regional organizations to enhance the implementation of the conventions. These recommendations broadly relate to demand and supply reduction, availability for medical purposes and licit international trade, as well as treaty compliance.

Mr President, Excellencies,

INCB's special report on Availability of controlled substances is an extremely important document. While the international supply of internationally controlled substances is more than adequate to meet reported needs, there is low availability in many countries of the world. The reasons are explored in our report. INCB has repeatedly called on States to ensure availability of drugs for medical purposes. This year's special report reviews the status of availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, including trends since the publication of the last such report in 2010.

The essential objective of the Conventions to ensure access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes is far from achieved. The highlights of the findings from our Availability Report indicate a worrying trend:

- 92% of morphine is consumed in countries comprising 17% of the world population.
- Conversely, 75% of the world population, predominantly in lower-income countries, has limited or no access to proper pain relief treatment.
- The significant increase in global consumption of opioid analgesics since 1991 has been concentrated mainly in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.
- Insufficient or inadequate access to psychotropic substances is particularly pronounced in low- and middle-income countries; it is estimated that about four out of five people who need services for mental, neurological or substance abuse disorders do not receive them.
- Our survey revealed that the major impediments to the availability of substances under international control were: lack of knowledge, training and awareness among health care professionals; addiction concerns; limited financial resources; problems in sourcing; cultural attitudes; and fear of diversion.

Against this background, the Board recommends that Governments take firm action in the following areas: national legislation and regulatory systems, health infrastructure, affordability of medications, training of health professionals, education and awareness-raising, and improvement of estimates of national needs and requirements.

National competent authorities are at the vanguard of State's drug control efforts and need to have adequate resources, training and delegated authority to be able to fulfil their regulatory mandates. Regulation of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances is just as important as supply reduction activities. INCB is currently implementing, on a region-by-region basis, a project aimed at training national competent authorities in the technical aspects of control within the framework of the conventions. We count on the support of Member States to ensure the long-term sustainability of the capacity building project.

The INCB strongly encourages international cooperation and the principle of shared responsibility, as also emphasised in the outcome document of the 2016 General Assembly special session on the world drug problem, which sets out operational recommendations in a number of areas, including capacity building.

The Board looks forward to continuing its cooperation with governments and civil society in improving the drug control situation worldwide, through the implementation of the three drug control conventions, contributing to safeguarding and enhancing the health and welfare of mankind, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Following the 2016 General Assembly special session on the world drug problem, the Board encourages States to move towards the 2019 target date for further implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem.

Mr President, Excellencies,

In **closing**, I urge you to convey the recommendations contained in our Annual Report, the Report on Precursors and the Special Report on Availability to your Governments and to encourage and promote their implementation.

I would like to thank Governments for their cooperation with INCB. INCB looks forward to our continued dialogue with all stakeholders in the spirit of shared responsibility in tackling the world drug problem.

Thank you for your attention.