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

Fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

**Agenda Item 6 (c)
Implementation of the international drug control treaties:
International Narcotics Control Board**

17 March 2016

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to present to you, on behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), an overview of the Board's work. The Board has continued to monitor and promote the implementation of the three international drug control conventions. The Board's findings and recommendations take special significance in light of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem.

The Board's recent work is presented in its Annual Report and Precursors Report for 2015. In addition, we have published a special report on the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes which I will address specifically later under agenda item 6(d). At this juncture, I just wish to emphasise that the situation of the supply of medications for pain relief and for medical conditions requiring the use of psychotropic substances is still unsatisfactory, that there has been a shift in the impediments to availability and that much work needs to be done in terms of capacity building if unnecessary pain and suffering is to be avoided.

Furthermore, INCB has published its annual technical publications on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. These are essential tools for your competent national authorities in their work to ensure the adequate availability and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for licit purposes and for preventing diversion.

Thematic chapters of previous Annual Reports

Before summarising our Annual Report 2015, I would like to stress that the thematic chapters of the Annual Reports of the last 20 years have altogether addressed crucial topics which are at the core of the current global debate on drug policy, like for example the implementation of an integrated and balanced approach, the principle of proportionality, primary prevention, alternative livelihoods, shared responsibility, social cohesion, drugs and corruption and more. The findings and recommendations we made in previous years remain highly relevant today in the context of your collective preparations for the special session.

Annual Report 2015

Our Annual Report has been launched on 2nd March, and we briefed the Permanent Missions in Vienna already in February. As the presentation of the launch is on our INCB

web site, I do not want to repeat the presentation, but just to briefly summarize the salient points of our Annual Report and then give you some supplementary information.

Chapter I

In view of UNGASS, our thematic chapter 1 focuses on the fundamental topic of “*The health and welfare of mankind: challenges and opportunities for the international control of drugs*”.

The salient points of this chapter are the following:

- The preambles of the 3 drug control treaties clearly state that ensuring the health and welfare of mankind is the main objective of the drug control system.
- The treaties promote the adequate access to and the availability of controlled substances for medical purposes.
- In order to protect and promote health and welfare, they request that the use of drugs has to be limited exclusively to medical and scientific purposes.
- Promoting health and welfare requires demand reduction efforts undertaken in a comprehensive manner - including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, reduction of the adverse consequences of drug abuse, and reintegration. – as well as measures to prevent and reduce social harms associated with the abuse of drugs.
- Our Report reiterates the importance of the principle of proportionality.
- We explain that the conventions provide for discretion in the determination of appropriate sanctions, namely regarding the legal consequences for the possession of drugs for personal use, and the provision of alternatives to punishment for minor offences.
- We also stress that drug control action must be consistent with international human rights standards.
- When designing and implementing drug policies, States must look deeper at socio-economic and socio-cultural factors such as poverty, economic inequality, social exclusion, exposure to violence and others.

The central question of our Chapter I is: How can drug control promote health and welfare?

These are our main conclusions:

- Promoting health and well-being of individuals and societies means primarily: preventing and reducing drug abuse.
- However, this should be accompanied by other efforts such as
 - applying scientific knowledge
 - humane thinking and respect for human rights
 - applying the principle of proportionality and moderation
 - preventing harm that can result as an unintended consequence of drug control
 - reducing the adverse health and social consequences of drug abuse that is a complementary element of a comprehensive demand reduction strategy.
- The conventions do not call for a “war on drugs”. Some of the policies existing in some countries, which are associated with militarized law enforcement, disregard of human rights, over-incarceration, the denial of medically appropriate treatment and inhumane or disproportionate approaches, are not in accordance with the principles of the conventions.

In fact, we don't need really "new approaches" in drugs policy. Quite to the contrary, we need to better implement the approaches of the drug control treaties which require a balanced and comprehensive approach where health and welfare are at the core of drug control policy.

Chapter II

In its Chapter 2, the Annual Report 2015 describes the functioning of the international drug control system, namely the control of the licit trade. It evaluates overall treaty compliance, focussing on a number of countries where some aspects of drug control policy are tackled in greater detail. Finally, it highlights some special topics, namely:

- Use of benzodiazepines among older people
- New psychoactive substances (NPS)
- New developments in precursors control:

Chapter III of the Board's Annual Report covers a region-by-region review of the global drug situation.

Chapter IV contains recommendation to governments and international organizations.

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I now want to address some additional aspects of our work, which might be of interest to you.

Reporting obligations

The work of national competent authorities is crucial to the functioning of the international drug control system. Through their efforts your competent authorities facilitate licit trade to ensure that medical needs for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are met, while, at the same time, their diversion to illicit channels and misuse is prevented.

The system of estimates and assessments of annual licit requirements for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances forms the cornerstone of the international drug control system. It is essential to enable the Board to monitor international trade, prevent diversion, and above all assist Governments to ensure that they possess adequate stocks to meet the medical needs of their peoples. The provision of this information is a treaty obligation. Regrettably, a large number of Governments fail to submit in a full or timely manner accurate estimates and assessments of their annual requirements for controlled substances.

For example, 65 per cent of Governments provided the Board with the forms required under the 1961 Single Convention. However, all major producers, manufacturers, importers, exporters or consumers of narcotic drugs have submitted their annual statistics enabling the Board to properly assess the balance between the global supply of and demand for opiates.

Almost 70 per cent of Governments submitted information on manufacture, industrial use, stocks, imports and exports of psychotropic substances as required under the 1971 Convention and related ECOSOC resolutions.

The Board regularly investigates, in collaboration with Governments, discrepancies in international trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. These investigations may reveal shortcomings in the implementation of control measures at the national level. Together we clarify those discrepancies and propose remedial actions. Your full, accurate and timely reporting is essential.

Poor reporting is found in countries large and small, poor and rich, including major manufacturing, importing and exporting countries. This has a significant impact on the accuracy of our analysis of the world situation with regard to licit requirements and licit trade.

The Board reminds all State parties that reporting is an *obligation* under the treaties and I urge you all to submit full information by the deadline of 30 June each year, which also applies to reporting on precursors.

In this context, the Board calls upon States to ensure that their competent national authorities are sufficiently resourced and adequately trained to meet the requirements of the treaties. Thus, concerned Governments provide for adequately qualified staff to enable the effective and faithful execution of the provisions of the conventions. The Board stands ready to assist and, to this effect, has established a multi-year training programme for competent national authorities. We are currently planning activities in East Africa and South East Asia later this year and invite Governments to avail themselves of such opportunities. We thank the donors that have contributed to these efforts (the United States and Australia) and call on other Governments to contribute to the further development and implementation of the programme.

Voluntary reporting on psychotropic substances

I wish to draw attention to voluntary reporting on psychotropic substances pursuant to CND- resolution 54/6. In 2014, a total of 53 countries and territories submitted data on consumption of some or all psychotropic substances as requested in the resolution. This is 40 per cent more than in 2011. The Board appreciates the cooperation of those Governments and calls upon all other Governments to take the necessary steps to furnish information on the consumption of psychotropic substances. This is essential to better understanding the needs and to promoting adequate availability of psychotropic substances for medical use.

I2ES

Last year, the Board launched the international electronic platform monitoring the import and export of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, called I2ES.

Since then, the competent national authorities of 19 countries (Afghanistan, Algeria, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Germany, India, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey and Zambia) have registered to use the system. Usage, however, is still very low. A user group meeting will be held at the margins of this session of the CND, on 18 March 2016 from 10:00 to 12:00. All competent authorities interested in learning more about I2ES are most welcome to join. I strongly encourage all Member States to register and use in I2ES, to maximize the mutual benefit of this new electronic platform, which is provided free of charge.

I2ES is being implemented pursuant to 2 CND resolutions (55/6 and 58/10). Resolution 58/10 called on States to provide the fullest possible financial support to enable the secretariat to continue administering and monitoring the system. The Board is grateful for the financial support already provided by Member States to develop I2ES and calls on Governments to provide further support to enable its full deployment and further development.

Abuse of prescription drugs

The abuse of prescription drugs containing controlled substances continues to be a growing problem in all regions of the world. We are all aware of the serious threat posed by abuse of prescription opioids. Some of the countries where this public health threat is of greater magnitude are addressing it head on.

The abuse of prescription psychotropics receives much less attention. Similarly to opioids, the situation is complex, ranging from overuse and abuse of some substances in some parts of the world, to critical under-use in others. Our special reports dwells on these issues.

The Board recommends that Governments collect information on the nature and extent of the abuse of prescription drugs, by including them in national drug abuse surveys, and formulate awareness-raising and prevention strategies targeting the general public and health-care professions. The Board further urges all Governments to share information on seizures, attempted diversion and trafficking routes related to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and to take measures to prevent the diversion and illicit manufacture of prescription drugs, while at the same time ensuring they are available for those who need treatment.

Precursor chemicals

Precursor control aims at preventing chemicals from being diverted and used for illicit drug manufacture. The international community has shown that joint actions and cooperation can yield real results. Through enhancing communications between Governments and also through promoting agreements with the chemical industry, the diversion of precursors has been greatly reduced. Stronger commitments among Governments to exchange information and operational intelligence will help provide the data needed on diversions and seizures – as well as on trade.

We need to find solutions to the vulnerabilities in domestic trade and misuse of non-scheduled chemicals. This requires emphasis on the voluntary cooperation with industry.

The Board encourages all States to use the Pre-Export Notification Online system (PEN Online), the standard international tool for monitoring trade in precursors and identifying suspicious transactions. To generate actionable information on precursor incidents, INCB maintains Project Prism and Project Cohesion [concerning the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants, and heroin and cocaine]. Communications among government authorities on incidents and seizures of non-scheduled chemicals, take place through the Board's online platform, the Precursors Incident Communication System, known as PICS. In real-time, PICS users are able to generate alerts about individual precursor incidents, providing Governments with a basis for undertaking investigations and joint operations related to scheduled and non-scheduled chemicals.

New psychoactive substances (NPS)

New psychoactive substances (NPS) remain a significant challenge. Early detection and collaborative efforts are the strongest hope. Discussing and consulting on the problem of NPS and substitute precursors has been important but it is not enough. We need to recognize the importance of sharing real-time actionable information. INCB Project ION and its Incident Communication System, IONICS, currently has 480 registered users from over 94 countries and territories. IONICS and PICS enable these Governments to start investigations and seize substances.

The Precursors Report for 2015 notes that article 12 of the 1988 Convention rests upon the promotion of international cooperation to prevent chemicals from being available for use in the illicit manufacture of substances of abuse. To that end, PEN-Online and PICS are initiatives and platforms to assist Governments take action that will enhance international control over the chemicals and their sources. IONICS follows a similar approach with regard to new psychoactive substances. The Board invites all Governments to participate.

Ketamine

The Board has continued to collect information on ketamine pursuant to Commission resolutions 49/6, 50/3 and 57/10. The list of countries requiring an authorization for the import and export of ketamine is regularly updated and made available to Governments in the Secure Area for Governments of our web page. The Board urges Governments to submit to the Board the latest information on the status of national control over ketamine.

Afghanistan

The Board has continued its consultations with the Government of Afghanistan under article 14 of the 1961 Convention. The main goal of invoking article 14 was to address the critical drug control situation in the country and to encourage the international community to provide support to Afghanistan in this regard. I refer you to Chapter II of our Annual Report 2015 for details on progress made in the country over the past year. Despite progress, the situation remains very serious and the Board calls on all Governments to continue supporting the Government of Afghanistan in its drug control and development efforts. The Board will continue to closely monitor the situation in Afghanistan.

Cooperation between INCB and Member States

It would not be possible for the Board to do its work without the cooperation of Member States. We appreciate the open and frank dialogue that the Board has with States on treaty implementation and we count on your continuing cooperation.

This also includes:

- facilitating INCB missions to your countries,
- meeting reporting obligations,
- providing information when requested and when relevant developments occur in your countries.

The Board's analysis of the global drug situation, as presented in Chapter III of our annual report, can only be fully useful if it is based on the most recent developments; therefore we ask you to keep the Board abreast of drug control measures, legislative and regulatory changes, patterns of drug use and abuse, and trends in illicit cultivation, production and drug trafficking within your jurisdictions.

The Board recognizes the important work of civil society and values the cooperation the Board enjoys with civil society. I will be having an informal dialogue with civil society, facilitated by the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs, which should have taken place today but will take place tomorrow at 14.00 hours and look forward to seeing many of you there.

The Board is committed to continuing its dialogue with States with a view to ensuring that the drug control measures they adopt benefit the health and welfare of humanity. This includes through:

- the adoption of a health-based approach to addiction;

- the elaboration of proportional and measured criminal justice responses to drug-related crime, which also take into account the special needs of drug users;
- the creation and strengthening of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation frameworks;
- the reduction of the adverse health and social consequences of drug abuse and the unintended consequences of drug control;
- managing licit trade in controlled substances in order to prevent diversion;
- promoting greater international cooperation; and
- sharing good practices and developing measures to address the growing threat of new psychoactive substances (NPS).

These elements are based in the three drug control conventions and the Political declarations.

You, the Member States, in formulating the conventions and declarations, recognized the need for a balance between reducing the illicit supply of drugs of abuse and ensuring the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes. Unfortunately, however, treaty implementation to date has often been neither complete nor balanced.

Our best chances of preventing and minimizing the suffering and social harms caused by inadequate access and availability for medical purposes, drug abuse, drug trafficking and illicit drug production and cultivation rest upon following a balanced and comprehensive approach, with full respect for human rights and utilizing policies and practices founded in evidence.

As we approach and participate in UNGASS 2016, I urge you to bear in mind the principles of the existing framework upon which the international drug control system is founded. I trust that Member States will seize this opportunity to collectively identify ways and means of ensuring its full and balanced implementation. The health and welfare of mankind is in your hands.

Thank you for your attention.