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**Statement by Dr. Viroj Sumyai, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)[s]**

WHO Global Conference on NCDs
*How to enhance policy coherence between different spheres of policy making
that have a bearing on attaining SDG target 3.4 by 2030*

19 October 2017, Montevideo

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

It is an honour to join you at this landmark conference on non-communicable diseases (NCDs). On behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), I congratulate His Excellency Dr. Tabaré Vázquez and Dr. Tedros on convening this meeting.

My name is Dr. Viroj Sumyai, and I am the President of INCB. INCB is working with Governments to facilitate the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical use. This includes, common medical practice, the management of pain associated with cancer and many other NCDs.

NCDs are a leading cause of illness, premature death and suffering. However, many NCDs are preventable, treatable and curable. Prevention is fundamental in rolling back NCDs. INCB would like to bring to the fore a group of NCDs that are often neglected – substance use disorders. Specifically drug use disorders, a particular group of NCDs.

Substance use disorders, like other mental health disorders, deserve greater attention. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the global burden of disease attributable to alcohol and illicit drug use amounts to 5.4 per cent of the total burden of disease.¹

Importantly, there is a current discourse on changing habits and lifestyle to prevent NCDs. When we encourage smoke cessation, a reduction in the intake of sodium and more physical exercise to prevent, for example, cardiovascular disease, we also need to be promoting appropriate prevention for substance use disorders.

In addition to preventing NCDs, their treatment and management play significant roles. INCB emphasizes the importance of ensuring access to and the availability of controlled substances for medical purposes, but realize there are challenges to this.

¹ WHO, Global Health Observatory (GHO) data, Resources for the prevention and treatment of substance use disorders. Available at www.who.int/gho/substance_abuse/en/.

The supply of opioid raw materials is sufficient to meet the world's demand for such medicines. Nevertheless, 75 per cent of people in low- and middle-income countries have no access to such medicines for treatment.

The reasons for the lack of access and availability are often related to the insufficient number of healthcare professionals and the need for more and specialized training in pain management. The second aspect is affordability. Although the pain reliever morphine, a substance used for the management of pain associated with NCDs, is inexpensive, the pharmaceutical industry does not seem to be able to make it available. Instead, the industry prefers to market more expensive preparations.

INCB is calling on countries to close the "global pain divide" by ensuring worldwide access to pain relief medications and balanced availability of controlled substances. One way to achieve this is for Governments to review their laws and regulations to ensure that they do not impede access to medicines. Engaging the pharmaceutical industry to ensure availability and affordability of medicines needs to be promoted. Further, we need to ensure a sufficiently large base of healthcare professionals with the required knowledge to inform and provide advice, diagnose and treat.

In closing, NCDs result in unspeakable suffering of patients and their families, but also pose a grave threat to the functioning of our communities. Only through cooperative and multi-sectoral action, will we improve the well-being of our global village and attain SDG 3.4 by 2030.

I look forward to our discussions over the coming days, and sharing how INCB can assist your Governments achieving the SDG.

Thank you.
