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

Sixty-first session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

**Item 5(c) Implementation of the international drug control treaties:
International Narcotics Control Board**

14 March 2018, Vienna Austria

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour, in my capacity as the President of the International Narcotics Control Board, to present to the Commission the [2017 INCB Annual Report](#) and [Precursors Report](#)¹.

Marking the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Annual Report has a special focus on the linkages between human rights and drug policy.

The **thematic first chapter** of this year's annual report is on **treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration for drug use disorders as essential components of drug demand reduction**. We draw attention to protecting the rights of people impacted by drug use disorders. We emphasize the importance of non-discriminatory access to treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration services.

Our report shows that treatment of drug dependence is highly cost-effective and, ultimately, much less expensive than criminal justice interventions.

The report emphasizes that treatment of drug dependence should be seen as an element of the right to health. However, globally this is not the case:

- Only **one in six people** in need of drug dependence treatment has access to treatment programmes; and
- The stigma associated with drug use disorders remains a **significant obstacle** to accessing treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration services.

INCB's recommendations in this area include actions such as:

- making effective treatment services easily accessible to all those who need them;
- continuing research on treatments for all types of drug use disorders;
- improving collaboration with civil society to increase treatment outreach; and
- reducing stigma and discrimination.

Chapter two reviews the functioning of the international drug control system and contains the Board's positions on a number of policy issues and the Board's analysis of the drug control situation in a number of countries.

On the **non-medical use of cannabis**, so called "recreational use", we emphasize that any measures that permit the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes are contrary to the

¹ Available in all official languages of the United Nations at http://www.incb.org/incb/en/news/AR2017/incb-org-incb-en-news-ar2017-annual_report_2017.html

international drug control conventions. Further action in this regard rests collectively with you, the members of the international community, including through the Commission.

On “**drug consumption rooms**”, we reiterate that their ultimate objective must be to reduce the adverse consequences of drug abuse without condoning or encouraging drug use and trafficking, and that such facilities *must provide or actively refer patients to treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration services*, with rehabilitation and social reintegration remaining the ultimate objective.

Also in **Chapter two**, we report on the **drug control situation in Afghanistan** and our continued consultations with the Government of Afghanistan under Article 14 of the 1961 Single Convention.

We call on the international community to *reprioritize its support for Afghanistan* in the face of the *worsening drug control situation in the country*.

Chapter II of the INCB Annual Report includes a series of special topics, the first of which is on “**drug control and human rights**”.

We emphasize the importance of respect for human rights in the implementation of drug control measures by States.

2018 marks a number of anniversaries:

- the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights; and
- the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

These anniversaries provide an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between drug control and human rights and take action accordingly.

INCB continues to emphasize that for drug control action to be successful and sustainable, it must be consistent with international human rights standards.

In the Annual Report, we reflect on the right to health, and its implications for drug control:

- the need to ensure adequate availability of and access to internationally controlled drugs for medical purposes.
- the treaty obligation to prevent drug abuse and to ensure the early identification, treatment, education, aftercare, rehabilitation and social reintegration of people who abuse drugs.
- the need to ensure non-discriminatory access to health care, rehabilitation and social reintegration services, in particular for women, and including in prison settings.

We stress the importance of protecting the rights of persons with mental health conditions and improving mental health care.

We highlight the need to protect children from drug abuse and prevent the use of children in illicit production and trafficking in drugs and precursors.

We emphasize the need to protect the rights of alleged drug offenders and drug users, including at all stages of the criminal justice process.

We reiterate that, under the international drug control treaties, States are required to be proportionate in their responses to drug-related offences and their treatment of suspected offenders.

INCB continues to encourage all States that retain the death penalty for drug-related offences to commute death sentences that have already been handed down and to consider the abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offences.

We reiterate that extrajudicial responses to drug-related criminality are unacceptable and contrary to the international drug control and human rights frameworks.

In our special topic on ***the risk of long-term opioid use and the consumption of opioid analgesics***, we highlight that the global consumption of opioid analgesics has been increasing in recent decades, particularly in high-income countries.

INCB is drawing attention to the “global pain divide”. This imbalance in the availability of opioid analgesics has a disproportionate impact upon low- and middle-income countries. I call upon States to close this gap. I will say more on this in my statement under item 5d.

We have also stressed the urgency of addressing the **current overdose epidemic** in North America.

A growing number of Governments are authorizing ***the therapeutic use of cannabinoids***. In a special topic on the subject, we recall that authorizing the use of cannabinoids for medical purposes is permissible under the 1961 Convention provided that certain conditions are met.

We recommend that Governments considering the medical use of cannabinoids examine the results of scientific studies and trials and ensure that prescription for medical use is performed with competent medical knowledge and supervision.

In the special topic on the national requirements for ***travellers carrying medical preparations containing internationally controlled substances***, INCB reiterates that the conventions provide special measures to ensure that people with medical conditions undergoing treatment with controlled substances are not forced to interrupt their treatment when travelling abroad.

In the special topic on ***new psychoactive substances***, we report on our work together with Member States on sharing information in real time on NPS incidents. We do this through INCB’s Project Ion and its electronic platform IONICS. Project Ion now encompasses a global network of 125 countries and territories. In 2017, some 76 substances were reported through IONICS.

INCB encourages Governments to adopt appropriate measures to monitor and act on attempts to trade in NPS through online trading platforms.

There is also a special topic on ***illegal Internet pharmacies and the sale of internationally controlled drugs on the Internet***. We note that illegal Internet pharmacies are a growing phenomenon. We recall the [INCB Guidelines for Governments on Preventing the Illegal Sale of Internationally Controlled Substances through the Internet²](#), which can assist Governments in addressing this challenge.

In the special topic on the **International Import and Export Authorization System (I2ES)**, the Board invites all Governments to register and make use of the system to transmit and

² Available in all official languages of the United Nations at www.incb.org

receive import and export authorizations for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Over 40 countries are now registered. I2ES is available to Governments at not cost.

The special topic on ***training for competent national authorities*** refers to ***INCB Learning***, our initiative to strengthen national capacity to regulate and monitor the licit trade in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals.

Since its inception in 2016, INCB Learning has provided training to 68 Governments and 158 officials from Africa, South-East Asia, Oceania, Europe and Central America.

I come now to the last special topic contained in the Annual Report: ***upgrading the International drug control system platform***, known as IDS.

IDS is an INCB information management system that provides automated analysis tools and reporting facilities to monitor treaty compliance based on the information furnished by Governments to the Board.

IDS enables the Board to advise and alert Governments on trade discrepancies, insufficient or overabundant estimates and assessments, and other aspects related to the international trade in controlled substances.

This tool has been in operation for fourteen years and is ***now*** in need of a major overhaul. The Board hopes to see States providing the necessary support to this end.

In Chapter three, we present an analysis of the world situation and highlight developments that have come to the attention of the Board at the regional level.

I acknowledge the feedback on the annual report, particularly this chapter, which has already been received from some Member States. We will continue our dialogue with you in this regard. Allow me to add that this chapter is only as good as the information available to the Board. I therefore encourage your Governments to inform the Board's secretariat of new developments in your countries as soon as they happen.

Oceania has the lowest rate of treaty ratification of any world region. We call on Governments that have not yet ratified one or more of the three treaties to do so as a matter of urgency.

I now come to our report on implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention. **The 2017 INCB precursors report** provides a detailed account of the latest trends and developments in legitimate international trade and trafficking in precursor chemicals. The report also provides an overview of the actions taken by you and the Board to deny traffickers access to the chemicals they need for illicit drug manufacture.

A focus area in this year's report is the role of internet-facilitated trade in precursors and related challenges. The report also examines the growing sophistication of traffickers' attempts to obtain the chemicals they require for illicit drug manufacture.

The precursors report also illustrates how, throughout the year, INCB assists Governments on a daily basis in preventing diversion and in facilitating investigations. In the past year, this has been particularly important in relation to acetic anhydride. There has been a substantial increase in the trafficking of acetic anhydride worldwide. The number of incidents reached a two-decade high. The quantities involved would be enough for up to three-and-a-half years of potential global illicit heroin manufacture. INCB-facilitated cooperation among Governments has helped to link isolated incidents, shedding light on the current *modi operandi* of traffickers and contributing to investigations.

The precursors report also focuses on our recommendation last year and the consequent decisions by the Commission to schedule two fentanyl precursors. Your decision will not only save lives in the current fentanyl crisis, witnessed specifically in countries in North America, but will also make it harder for criminals to illicitly produce and procure a number of deadly fentanyl analogues.

The precursors report makes **recommendations** on enhanced information-sharing, multilateral operational cooperation, domestic law enforcement, and the use of existing tools and cooperation mechanisms in order to identify, disrupt and dismantle organized criminal groups involved in the diversion of precursors.

Viewed together, the precursors reports constitute a comprehensive source of reference for global precursors-related data.

In addition to the annual report and the precursors report, INCB publishes annually two **technical publications**. These concern the international control of the licit trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. I will present some of the findings of these publications during my statement under item 5d.

This brings me to the final points of my presentation.

I trust you will return to your capitals with copies of the INCB 2017 Annual Report and Precursors Report, and the **Board's recommendations** contained therein. I urge you to advocate for the implementation of these recommendations and look forward to your feedback on achievements and challenges faced.

INCB's work to ensure the functioning of the international drug control system would not be possible without **cooperation and ongoing dialogue** with Governments and their competent national authorities. Your cooperation and participation in and support of INCB initiatives is key.

We count on your Governments' cooperation in accepting INCB country missions, which enable us to gain a first-hand perspective of the drug control achievements and challenges in your countries, and tailor recommendations accordingly.

Your support, both financial and in-kind, of INCB activities such as I2ES, INCB Learning, PEN-Online, PICS and IONICS, and related projects, is critical to the long-term viability of these initiatives.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize a number of points:

- Our report draws attention to the protection of the rights of people impacted by drug use disorders. We call upon Governments to ensure that drug control measures fully comply with international human rights standards and norms.
- Although challenging, drug use disorders are treatable health conditions for which effective treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration interventions are available.
- Working in the spirit of the international drug control system and implementing the recommendations contained in INCB's Annual Report, all Governments can positively support their treaty-based commitments to promoting the health and welfare of humankind.

Thank you.
