

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

**Opening of the sixty-first session  
of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

**12 March 2018, Vienna Austria**

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be with you today on behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board.

The Board enjoys excellent cooperation with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, for instance through consultations held with the Chair of the Commission at every session of the Board.

The discussions to take place over the coming week and the resulting outcome of the Commission will go a long way towards addressing the global drug control situation. Here, I would like to emphasize the importance of compliance with the requirements of the three international drug control conventions. This is essential to facilitating access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while helping prevent diversion, illicit drug manufacture, and drug trafficking and abuse.

2018 marks the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration on 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. This year we also commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the International Narcotics Control Board. A special focus of the 2017 INCB Annual Report, released earlier this month, is on the linkages between human rights and drug control.

On behalf of INCB, I call upon all States to adopt drug policies that respect the rule of law, the principle of proportionality and human rights.

During this session of the Commission, and in your resolutions, *you* also have the opportunity to reaffirm that actions taken in accordance with the spirit and letter of the international drug control conventions must also be consistent with international human rights standards and norms.

The thematic chapter of the 2017 INCB Annual Report focuses on “treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration for drug use disorders: essential components of drug demand reduction”. INCB draws attention to protecting the rights of people impacted by drug use disorders. Five out of six people in need of drug dependence treatment lack access to treatment services. We emphasize that stigma is still a significant obstacle to accessing treatment services. Our chapter contains a suite of recommendations to address the situation.

INCB drew attention to the needs of women and girls in the thematic chapter of its 2016 Annual Report on “women and drugs”. In this context, I hope that the Commission’s work this session will be a positive step towards improving the situation of women and girls, and other vulnerable populations, affected by drugs.

I would like to express the Board’s appreciation for your Governments’ support of INCB initiatives. I2ES, INCB Learning, PEN Online, PICS and IONICS help build national capacity and promote international cooperation in drug and precursor control. Without your active participation, and financial and in-kind support, these initiatives would not be possible.

Ongoing dialogue with your Governments is critical to helping INCB monitor and promote treaty implementation, with the ultimate goal of promoting and safeguarding health and welfare. Your timely and accurate reporting to INCB enables us together to facilitate the functioning of the international drug control system, including to ensure the availability of controlled substances in your countries.

INCB is also committed to improving cooperation with the World Health Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. I was delighted that Director-General Tedros and Executive Director Fedotov accepted my invitation to explore new practical and cooperative initiatives, particularly as called for in the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly (UNGASS) on the world drug problem.

The global drug control situation is not without complexities and challenges; therefore, our approaches need to take a multidimensional approach that is sustainable over time and respectful of international law.

Some of those challenges are linked to the continuing illicit production of raw material and manufacture of heroin and cocaine in Asia and the Americas, as well the worrying phenomenon of new psychoactive substances, including synthetic opioids. Another significant challenge is the use of controlled substances in some jurisdictions for purposes other than those foreseen in the treaties. It is time for the international community, through the Commission, to address such challenges.

We should bring together many voices for a common goal – improving the drug control situation worldwide for the benefit of humankind.

On behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board, I wish you a successful and productive sixty-first session.

Thank you.