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

**Opening of the Ministerial segment of the
sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

14 March 2019, Vienna Austria

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At UNGASS 2016, you reaffirmed your commitment to the three international drug control conventions. The ultimate concern of the conventions is the health and welfare of all humankind. This includes the full enjoyment of human rights. It includes the right of children to be protected from drug abuse and drug trafficking.

Full implementation of the treaties can contribute to achievement of the sustainable development goals, particularly SDG 3 on ensuring good health and well-being.

In signing the treaties, States have agreed to ensuring availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes, while preventing abuse, diversion to illicit channels, illicit cultivation and production and trafficking. The operational recommendations made at UNGASS 2016 represented, for the first time, a political commitment to ensuring availability and access. INCB is committed to supporting your Governments in ensuring that national control measures are fit for this purpose. A year ago, I made a joint commitment with the heads of UNODC and WHO to strengthen our collaboration in helping Member States address the world drug problem through implementing the UNGASS recommendations. We agreed to put people at the centre of a balanced, comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach, and recognized the need to have a greater focus on the health and well-being of people.

The treaties enjoy near universal adherence; the achievements in their implementation are vast. There is virtually no diversion from licit international trade, thanks to the controls put in place by your Governments and the exchanges of import and export authorizations. Gradual progress is being made to improve availability for medical use – yet much remains to be done.

The situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating and INCB has invoked article 14 bis of the 1961 convention as a serious call for urgent support from the international community.

We need to address the illicit supply of drugs, including amphetamine-type stimulants and synthetic opioids, associated with critical situations such as those seen in Asia, North America and Oceania.

Efforts to prevent drug use in the first instance and provide people with humane and evidence-based treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration services must be stepped up, in all parts of the world, and are indeed treaty obligations.

We urge you to consider ways to address these challenges and the emergence of new psychoactive substances and “designer” precursors.

INCB’s Annual Report warns of the risks of poorly-regulated medical cannabis programmes. The legislative developments concerning the “recreational” use of cannabis are a real concern not least for their potential impact on health, particularly of youth, but also because they are contrary to your treaties and the commitments you made to one another.

State Parties have made a legal commitment to limit the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances exclusively to medical and scientific purposes. This is the fundamental principle of the treaties. Any divergence poses a grave threat to public health, particularly among young people, and represents a challenge to the States parties to the treaties.

We must address all these complex challenges in full respect of the rule of law and human rights obligations without recourse to extrajudicial responses or capital punishment, both of which are unjustifiable and unacceptable. Measures to reduce illicit supply and demand must be carried out in a balanced way, and in the spirit of shared responsibility.

The drug challenges we see today have a profound impact on public health and well-being. Yet, over the past 110 years, since the first intergovernmental meeting on drug control in 1909, similar challenges have been overcome through international cooperation and political commitment. I encourage you to invoke that same spirit, as you chart the path ahead for international cooperation in drug control.

I wish you success in your deliberations this week and next to see how together you can enhance your efforts in tackling the world drug problem and achieving the SDGs through strengthening treaty implementation and compliance. INCB stands ready to assist you.

Thank you.

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