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**Statement by Prof. Jallal Toufiq,
President of the International Narcotics Control Board**

**67th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Side event:**

**“Harnessing efforts to establish an informal international
platform to advocate for drug abuse prevention among young
people”**

***Organized by the Uganda Youth Development Link
(in cooperation with the Drug Abuse Prevention Centre (DAPC) of
Japan)***

19 March 2024 13:00-13:50

Mr. Kasirye¹, Mr. Fujino, Mr. Lemahieu, ladies and gentlemen,

The prevention of drug use, the treatment of drug use disorders, and the rehabilitation and social reintegration of individuals is of course a key component of the international drug control system. The primary objective of the international drug control conventions is to safeguard public health and welfare from the adverse effects of non-medical use of controlled substances. The prevention of drug use and the treatment of drug use disorders, particularly among young people, are crucial elements towards achieving the goal of safeguarding health.

As an African citizen myself, I can only extend my gratitude to the Uganda Youth Development Link and Mr. Kasirye for organizing this meeting and their efforts to promote safe and healthy development for

¹ Chair of side event: Dr. Rogers Kasirye, Executive Director, Uganda Youth Development Link

young people in Africa. I also acknowledge the long-term dedication of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center (DAPC) of Japan to raising awareness about the importance of preventing drug use and to supporting drug use prevention around the world. I salute the leadership of Mr. Akira Fujino, President of DAPC and a former member of the INCB secretariat.

The DAPC Grants program has enabled the development of projects that adhere to the UNODC and WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention, which summarize scientific evidence on the effectiveness of prevention efforts. Governments, in various documents and resolutions, including the outcome document of the UN General Assembly Special Session in 2016, have recognized the International Standards as a useful tool for promoting evidence-based prevention.

To further enhance practical implementation of these standards, the Board supports the creation of an informal international platform such as that currently being promoted by DAPC. This would offer a mechanism for governments and civil society organizations to evaluate and identify appropriate actions based on scientific evidence, again summarized in the International Standards, when implementing programs for the prevention of drug use among young people.

Such evidence-based prevention strategies not only prevent drug use but also address many other risky behaviors, promoting the healthy and safe development of children and young people.

To reach and influence young people, tailored prevention interventions, such as those that could be identified through an expert

platform, are necessary. INCB always advocates using multiple evidence-based approaches beyond school-based programs, acknowledging the vulnerability of children and adolescents in various settings. Such approaches must also include civil society in development and implementation of drug policies on prevention, treatment, and social reintegration. I think families too, looking at the Iceland model.

There is a joint responsibility for policy makers, scientists, service providers and communities to put in place effective demand reduction strategies and adequately address prevention, treatment and recovery and care of substance use disorders among youth. Scientific evidence shows us that adolescence is a very critical period where the brain is not fully developed so the impact of drugs is even more harmful.

Finally, I'd like to invite you to consider not only the prevention of drug use but also the initiation of use, and not only focusing on drugs but also including all substances, including alcohol and tobacco.

Without consistent and dedicated work focusing on prevention, much of the illicit drug activity worldwide and its devastating consequences would remain in the dark, and receive inadequate attention from the international community.

Thank you very much.