

International precursor control workshop held in Kenya



For the first time ever in Africa, an international workshop dealing exclusively with precursor control issues was held in Mombasa, Kenya, from 12 to 15 July 2005. Organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office for East Africa in cooperation with INCB, and hosted by the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of the Ministry of Health of Kenya, the “Regional stakeholders’ awareness workshop on precursor chemicals” brought together key representatives of the national regulatory authorities, the anti-narcotics police and customs authorities of Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Uganda and Tanzania, as well as representatives of East African trade and industry, to address the inadequate controls over precursors in Eastern Africa and elaborate measures to prevent their diversion. Mauritius and Somalia, which had also been invited, were unable to attend.

The workshop was opened by the Honorable Minister of Health of Kenya, Mrs. Charity Ngilu, who stated that her Government, after a series of attempted diversions of ephedrine from international trade into illicit channels in Kenya, had now appointed a precursor control steering committee within her Ministry to draft appropriate precursor control legislation in conformity with the provisions of article 12 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

The workshop was facilitated by Ms. Eva Fernandez Santis from the Precursor Control Section of the INCB Secretariat in Vienna and Mr. Athol Clarke from the Chemical Monitoring Programme of the South African Police Service. South Africa, which has currently one of the best precursor control mechanisms of Africa in place, is acting as the regional focal point for Africa under Project Prism, INCB’s international initiative focussing on amphetamine-type stimulant precursors.

Participants studied several actual cases of diversion and attempted diversion of precursor chemicals, and discussed in-depth a wide spectrum of issues, such as: international controls over chemicals, legal requirements and recommendations for effective chemical control on the national level; use of chemicals in illicit drug manufacture; latest trends in illicit precursor trafficking; best practices to prevent chemical diversion - Operations Purple and Topaz, and Project Prism; role of customs and excise; controlled deliveries; clandestine laboratories; and voluntary cooperation with industry and trade.

The workshop elaborated concrete and practical actions and measures to be implemented by participants, within their own sphere of competence and within a defined time-frame, and contributed towards effective networking among the countries of the region, with the UNODC Regional Office and INCB.