



Guidelines for Governments on Preventing the Illegal Sale of Internationally Controlled Substances through the Internet





INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD

Guidelines for Governments on Preventing the Illegal Sale of Internationally Controlled Substances through the Internet



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Foreword

The Internet has changed the world of communication and information exchange for the better. It provides a valuable means to collect information, to connect with friends, business partners and the world at large, and to sell and buy goods. It has revolutionized communication and trade. For many of us, the Internet has made professional and personal life easier, allowing previously onerous transactions to take place effortlessly and in very little time. As a result, there have been important improvements in the quality of life of people in all countries and, in particular, for people in remote areas for whom it used to be difficult to engage in timely communication and gain access to services.

But the Internet can also be exploited and abused by criminals. Child pornography, the promotion of violence and financial fraud are probably the best-known forms of such abuse; most of us have read or heard about them. Among the numerous other ways in which the Internet can be exploited by unscrupulous criminals is drug trafficking. Drug traffickers use the Internet to establish and maintain their criminal networks and to sell illicit drugs or the chemical precursors used to manufacture such drugs.

Less well known, but no less dangerous, is the misuse of the Internet by illegally operating Internet pharmacies to sell prescription medicines to the general public without the required prescription. Many of the pharmaceuticals trafficked in this way are either diverted from the licit market or counterfeit and, as such, constitute a danger to the health of individual consumers and the public at large. Moreover, the sale of controlled pharmaceuticals outside the legally established framework of bona fide pharmacies constitutes a criminal offence. The online sale of such pharmaceuticals by unscrupulous racketeers is no different from the trafficking in illicit drugs, as it endangers lives just as much as street sales do.

Enforcing the law is important but not enough. Preventive measures need to be taken to stop the further proliferation of illegally operating Internet pharmacies and to reduce their number. The International Narcotics Control Board invites Governments and international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Universal Postal Union, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization to join it in its efforts to deal with this problem. The Board hopes and expects that such cooperation will better protect the public against the illegal distribution of pharmaceuticals and, in particular, of controlled substances.

As the Internet is a global and dynamic medium, close cooperation between States is important. The need for collaboration was the main reason why the Board developed the present guidelines, which have been elaborated with the support and contribution of national experts and relevant international organizations, Internet service providers, financial services and pharmaceutical associations. The Board hopes that the guidelines will serve as a starting point for the kind of successful international cooperation that will, in the long term, lead to a successful international agreement on the matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hamid Ghodse", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hamid Ghodse
President
International Narcotics Control Board

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I. Introduction

A. Description of the problem

The World Wide Web provides valuable services to a growing community of users. More and more people are accessing online medical services, including for the supply of pharmaceuticals by duly licensed and legally operating Internet pharmacies. Such Internet-based services are an important complement to the services provided by the traditional health-care system, in particular for people in remote areas with limited access to medical services.

However, the Internet is increasingly being misused for illegal activities. Among the many well-known criminal activities involving the Internet, drug trafficking has reached major dimensions. Internet-based drug trafficking includes the sale of illicit drugs and, increasingly, the illegal sale of pharmaceuticals containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Those pharmaceuticals, which have a high abuse potential, have become a significant problem in many countries because they have partly replaced traditional drugs of abuse. In several countries, the abuse of prescription drugs has become a major problem, second only to the abuse of cannabis.

The illegal sale of pharmaceuticals is facilitated by websites that present themselves as Internet pharmacies and supply controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances without meeting the legal and administrative requirements established for traditional pharmacies. In such cases, the term "Internet pharmacy" is misleadingly used to imply that a bona fide pharmacy is carrying out the transaction. However, in most cases such Internet pharmacies have no physical or legal connection with a legal pharmacy and should, in fact, not be considered pharmacies at all. Many of these virtual enterprises are owned by criminal networks and have various branches that deal, for example, in the illegal acquisition and supply of medicines, the provision of sham prescriptions and the smuggling of drugs.

In recent years, the volume of illicit sales of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through websites has risen, making the Internet a major source of drugs for drug abusers. Many of the drugs are addictive; some are highly potent and their abuse can have fatal consequences. Particular concern has been expressed with regard to the ease with which children and adolescents can obtain such drugs, using the anonymity afforded to them by the Internet. In addition, the quality of medicines purchased illegally through Internet pharmacies and other websites

cannot be guaranteed and customers risk purchasing medicines that are counterfeit products.

Internet pharmacies operate through websites hosted by servers located all over the world. The problem is of a global nature and constitutes a new challenge in terms of investigative and preventive efforts. To counteract this development, measures need to be taken at the national and international levels, including by strengthening cooperation between national authorities and relevant international bodies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Narcotics Control Board, the Universal Postal Union, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization.

B. Treaty background

The International Narcotics Control Board, which was established by the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961,¹ is responsible for promoting Governments' compliance with the international drug control treaties and for monitoring the international drug control system, in accordance with the provisions of those treaties.²

For a number of years, the Board has noted with concern the matter of the illegal trade in internationally controlled substances³ through the Internet, the smuggling of such substances by mail and the increase in the number of related incidents reported.⁴ That concern was also expressed by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in its resolution 43/8 and by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2004/42 of 21 July 2004. In its resolution 50/11, the Commission encouraged Member States to notify the Board, in a regular and standardized manner, of seizures of internationally controlled licit substances ordered via the Internet and delivered through the mail, in order to fully assess trends relevant to the issue. In that same resolution, the Commission also encouraged the Board to continue its work with a view to raising awareness of and preventing the misuse of the Internet for the illegal supply, sale and distribution of such substances.

¹United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 520, No. 7515.

²The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol (United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 976, No. 14152), the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 (United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1019, No. 14956) and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 (United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1582, No. 27627).

³The term "internationally controlled substances" applies to the substances included in the schedules of the 1961 Convention and the 1971 Convention, as well as to the tables of the 1988 Convention. It applies to pharmaceutical products containing those substances and to the raw materials. See also the definition provided in the glossary contained in the annex to the present document.

⁴In accordance with the provisions of the 1961, 1971 and 1988 Conventions, the Board has an important role in preventing the illegal sale of controlled substances by monitoring the implementation of the provisions governing international trade. The Board has also collected information on the matter of illegal Internet pharmacies, has initiated a process to identify national focal points and has collected information on relevant legislative action and administrative regulations.

In its annual reports, the Board has repeatedly called on Governments to fully cooperate with other States in ongoing investigative efforts and to increase the awareness of law enforcement, regulatory and drug control authorities regarding the need to counteract the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances through the Internet. As most States do not have sufficient legislation, administrative regulations, structures or cooperative mechanisms to counteract those activities, the Board has produced guidelines on matters related to such illicit sales through the Internet for use by national competent authorities.

C. Purpose of the guidelines

The guidelines are intended to provide assistance in formulating national legislation and policies for prescribers, pharmacists, law enforcement authorities, regulatory authorities and the public with regard to the use of the Internet to dispense, purchase, export and import internationally controlled substances.

The guidelines include recommendations for action to be taken at the international and national levels and are divided into three parts: legislative and regulatory provisions; general measures; and national and international cooperation. The guidelines should help Governments to identify the control measures most appropriate for their country. Some of the recommendations, particularly those relating to the provisions of the three international drug control treaties, need to be implemented by all Governments. To ensure concerted international action, basic requirements on information exchange and cooperation should be met by all States.

II. Guidelines

A. Legislative and regulatory provisions

General legislation on the Internet and the mail

Governments are encouraged to review their legislation to ensure the inclusion of legislative and administrative measures that enable national authorities to respond adequately and in a timely manner to the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances through the Internet.

Guideline 1: The Board recommends that Governments include in their national legislation provisions that empower the appropriate authorities to investigate and take legal action against Internet pharmacies and other websites, hosted by Internet service providers operating from their country, that are used in the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances.

- It is recommended that Internet service providers be required to cooperate fully in such investigations and law enforcement actions.
- Governments are advised to include in their national licensing and registration processes requirements obligating Internet service providers to shut down the websites and domains of clients engaged in illicit activities. Internet service providers should also be obligated to include in their contractual agreements (terms and conditions) with clients a termination clause, to be applied in cases of illegal activities being carried out by the client or of illegal content being posted on the client's website.⁵
- It is recommended that Internet service providers be required by law to keep, for a minimum period of one year, information regarding the identity of the owners of Internet Protocol addresses used when accessing the Internet, independently of whether the addresses assigned are static or dynamic, in order to assist in criminal investigations. Commercial entities providing access to the Internet (such as Internet cafes and wireless local area network providers) should be required by law to hold, for a minimum period of six months, information on the identity of costumers using their services.

⁵In a number of countries, this legal requirement is already in force. Whenever competent authorities inform Internet service providers about infringements of existing legislation, the service provider is legally obliged to remove the offensive pages. If they do not do so, the service provider becomes responsible for the content of the infringing pages and may be sanctioned accordingly. Such infringements may range from violations of national legislative provisions regulating pharmacy services to criminal activities (e.g. drug trafficking).

Guideline 2: Since almost all the internationally controlled substances sold illegally through the Internet are shipped by mail, Governments are advised to adopt national legislation for the designated routing and inspection of all mail entering and exiting the country, including of items handled by international courier companies.

Guideline 3: The Board recommends that Governments ensure that the national legislation of other States prohibiting the shipment by mail of internationally controlled substances is fully respected and that such shipments to those countries are intercepted.

Specific legislation on Internet pharmacies

Governments whose national legislation does not prohibit activities of Internet pharmacies are advised to establish a basic framework for regulating the operations of Internet pharmacies.

Guideline 4: The Board recommends that Governments require Internet pharmacies through which internationally controlled substances are sold and that operate within their jurisdiction to be registered and obtain licences for dispensing preparations containing internationally controlled substances.

- The establishments and premises used by those operating an Internet pharmacy to purchase, store or dispense internationally controlled substances in response to orders received through the Internet should be licensed.
- In cases in which internationally controlled substances sold through an Internet pharmacy are stored in and shipped from a country other than the country of registration of the Internet pharmacy, those operating the Internet pharmacy must also obtain a licence for its establishments and premises from the Government of the country where the substances are stored and consignments are shipped from.
- Internet pharmacies should be required to display information (street address, e-mail address and telephone number) identifying the physical location of the business and to disclose, upon request, information identifying the pharmacist, the name of the licensing authority and the date of issuance and the number of the licence associated with the pharmacy.

Guideline 5: The Board recommends that Governments establish standards of good professional practice for the provision of pharmaceutical services via the Internet. Those should include all the legal and administrative requirements that traditional pharmacies are required to meet.

- Providers should be required to comply with general quality assurance principles for the delivery of medicines, such as adequate packaging, transportation and delivery, to ensure that the quality

and effectiveness of the medicines are preserved; registering the delivery so that only the person specified on the prescription or an individual designated by that person can receive the medicines; and ensuring appropriate means of shipment to allow the medicines to be tracked.

- Providers should be required to give consultations and information to patients on the correct and safe use of the medicines purchased and on the preservation of medicinal products.
- Providers should be required to give recipients of pharmaceuticals purchased via the Internet the contact details of the dispensing Internet pharmacy or of another licensed retailer and to advise recipients to contact their attending physician if they experience medication-related problems or if any adverse effects occur.
- Internet pharmacies should be part of the national quality assurance system to allow the notification of adverse effects, recalls and quality defects related to pharmaceuticals.
- Providers should be obligated to adhere to standards on storing, reporting and keeping records (including on recommendations and other information provided to customers and on the purchase and sale of all medicines) for a minimum period of two years. Such records should be subject to regular inspections.
- Controlled substances should only be sold to customers with valid prescriptions from a medical practitioner; such prescriptions should be in a format (whether on paper or in the form of an e-prescription) that conforms with national legislation. Governments should prohibit the issuance of prescriptions prepared merely on the basis of an online questionnaire or consultation. Prescription drugs should only be provided in the framework of a qualified medical relationship, which is expected to involve at least one medical examination during which the patient is in the presence of a medical practitioner.

Guideline 6: The Board recommends that Governments establish standards and publish guidelines for doctors providing their services to Internet pharmacies on patient evaluation, treatment and consultation, on the issuing of prescriptions and on the maintenance of medical records.

- Governments are advised to raise the medical community's awareness of the legal requirements, risks and implications with respect to the sale of internationally controlled substances through Internet pharmacies.

Legislation concerning internationally controlled substances

The prerequisite for adequately controlling internationally controlled substances is the implementation of all the provisions of the international drug control treaties, Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions 43/8 and 50/11 and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1981/7 of

6 May 1981, 1985/15 of 28 May 1985, 1987/30 of 26 May 1987, 1991/44 of 21 June 1991, 1993/38 of 27 July 1993, 1996/30 of 24 July 1996 and 2007/9 of 25 July 2007, including the provisions concerning international trade (such as the import and export authorization system), the system of estimates for narcotic drugs and the system of assessments for psychotropic substances.

Guideline 7: Governments of countries where Internet pharmacies are permitted to dispense internationally controlled substances within and beyond the national territory are advised to evaluate whether their national regulatory and legal controls, including sanctions for offences, are sufficient for ensuring that Internet pharmacies operate in full compliance with the provisions of the three international drug control treaties.

Guideline 8: The Board recommends that Governments whose national and regulatory controls are not adequate to prevent and sanction the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances through Internet pharmacies and other websites should adopt corrective measures.

B. General measures

Monitoring supply channels

Most narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances sold illegally through the Internet are either pharmaceuticals containing controlled substances that have been diverted from licit supply channels (including licit manufacturing, international trade and domestic distribution channels) or illegally manufactured preparations, i.e. counterfeits. Counterfeits are manufactured either using diverted raw materials, illegally manufactured base substances or other substances used as substitutes for the original narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.

Guideline 9: The Board recommends that Governments assess the adequacy of existing regulations on manufacture and trade control, including reporting and inspection systems, identify weaknesses in such control systems and strengthen them if necessary.

Information exchange

To allow rapid action to be taken against illegal activities carried out through Internet pharmacies, States need to establish effective mechanisms that allow information to be exchanged on specific cases and on the *modi operandi* adopted by those illegally selling internationally controlled substances, at the national and international levels, through the Internet. Such information exchange should take place between, *inter alia*, Government offices and industries involved in Internet services.

Should assistance be needed, the Board is prepared to support Governments in that respect.

Guideline 10: In order to ensure a rapid exchange of data and experiences, Governments are advised to establish mechanisms for sharing information on suspicious transactions with the competent authorities of other States concerned as well as with the Board, through the creation of a single national contact point.

Guideline 11: Governments detecting the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances through the Internet are requested to immediately submit information on such sale to the competent authorities of States involved and inform the Board.

Guideline 12: The Board recommends that Governments provide information to the Secretary-General on national laws affecting the activities of Internet pharmacies, such as legal provisions regarding the importation of internationally controlled substances by mail and regulations governing prescription requirements.

Guideline 13: Governments are advised to inform industries involved in Internet transactions about the illegal sale of preparations containing internationally controlled substances through the Internet.

Guideline 14: Government agencies are advised to establish, in accordance with national legislation, relations with industries whose services are misused for the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances through the Internet, such as Internet service providers, postal and courier services and financial services such as banking, credit card and electronic payment services, and request their support in investigating illegal operations.

C. National and international cooperation

National cooperation mechanisms

Prerequisites for effective national cooperation include the establishment of cooperation mechanisms and the clear identification of the role and responsibility of all regulatory and law enforcement offices and agencies concerned.

Guideline 15: The Board recommends that Governments encourage inter-ministerial cooperation on issues regarding the control of Internet pharmacies and similar websites with a view to developing policies and conducting operational activities within a well-coordinated and focused framework.

- Such inter-ministerial cooperation should include all the main responsible authorities, including those responsible for health (the

ministry of health, the pharmaceutical board or inspectorate etc.), drug control (if other than the ministry of health), finance and customs, law enforcement (the police, the criminal intelligence services, the prosecutor's office etc.), postal services and telecommunication and information services (the ministry of industry, the ministry of the economy etc.).

- Governments are encouraged to ensure that adequate training is available to enable law enforcement officers, members of the judiciary and staff of regulatory and drug control authorities to strengthen control of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in general and to take action against the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances via the Internet.
- The specific office or offices responsible for initiating law enforcement and judicial proceedings should be designated and informed as soon as an illicit sale has been detected.

Guideline 16: The Board recommends that Governments make efforts to gather information on drug trafficking through the Internet, including on the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances, and consider establishing appropriate control entities, such as "cyberpatrol units".

- In a number of countries, specific police or other law enforcement units are investigating various aspects of cybercrime, including child pornography, Internet fraud, system damages, drug and arms trafficking and terrorism. If Governments are not in a position to establish a special unit dedicated to monitoring the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances through the Internet, general cybercrime units should be charged with monitoring the Internet to detect whether narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are being sold illegally.
- Alternatively, Governments could establish special teams charged with investigating drug trafficking, including the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances, through the Internet. To ensure complementarity, authorities should inform each other about such activities.
- Professional associations such as pharmacy guilds and medical chambers should be encouraged to look for suspicious websites through which medicines are sold and cooperate in investigations.
- Governments in a position to do so could enlist public support by establishing appropriate websites for public/private cooperation and national and international telephone hotlines, thus enabling individuals to report any illegal sale of such controlled substances.

Guideline 17: Governments are advised to encourage health authorities, law enforcement agencies (police and customs) and postal services to

cooperate closely. Governments may want to consider measures for strengthening cooperation mechanisms that are already functioning successfully in a number of countries.

- Pharmacists are made available to assist post office staff dealing with parcels at all times, either by assigning their presence at the post office while on duty or by requiring them to be on call, thus ensuring permanent coverage.
- Parcels can only enter a country through a limited number of special and properly equipped customs entry points.
- Customs authorities handling mail are empowered to seize suspicious mail and parcels and initiate investigations.

Guideline 18: The Board recommends that Governments alert private postal and courier service providers about the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances through the Internet and give such service providers the information and training they need to identify suspicious shipments.

- Private postal and courier service providers should be informed about cases involving the illegal sale of internationally controlled substances through the Internet with a view to helping them enhance their screening process by making use of the known addresses of suspicious senders and receivers.
- Private postal and courier service providers should be informed that suspicious consignments of nationally or internationally controlled substances must be reported immediately to the competent authorities.

Guideline 19: The Board recommends that Governments establish cooperation mechanisms with all industries involved in the sale of controlled substances through the Internet.

- Cooperation mechanisms could be established with manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers of pharmaceutical products, or their professional associations, as well as with Internet service providers, providers of financial services (such as banking, credit card and electronic payment services) and pharmaceutical associations.

Guideline 20: States whose national legislation allows Internet pharmacies to operate are advised to encourage health authorities and pharmaceutical associations to establish a certification programme for bona fide pharmacies in order to allow patients to verify the legitimacy of Internet pharmacies.

Guideline 21: The Board recommends that Governments make efforts, for example in cooperation with consumer groups, to increase public

awareness about the risks of purchasing internationally controlled substances through unlicensed Internet pharmacies.

- Governments should sensitize the general public about the illegality of purchasing internationally controlled substances through the Internet from unauthorized individuals and businesses.
- The public should be made aware of the health risks of such purchases, in particular with regard to the uncertain quality of the products and the lack of sound medical advice on their appropriate usage.

International cooperation

Successful cases of international cooperation reaffirm the importance of sharing expertise and standardizing data collection. The investigation of specific cases of illegal sales rely on rapid exchange of information and concerted action between States concerned.

Guideline 22: Governments with experience in establishing and enforcing effective regulatory measures, including relevant legislation and administrative provisions, are requested to make their expertise available to other States by, inter alia, organizing workshops, providing training and disseminating material (e.g. model legislation).

Guideline 23: Governments with experience in identifying, investigating and prosecuting the illegal sale of preparations containing internationally controlled substances through the Internet are requested to provide training in or organize the training of national competent authorities and law enforcement officers of other countries.⁶

Guideline 24: The Board recommends that Governments ensure that their national authorities respond in an appropriate manner to requests for cooperation from other States in cases involving the illegal sale of preparations containing internationally controlled substances through the Internet.

- Countries of origin of illegal shipments should, upon receipt of information or request for cooperation, respond in a timely manner by taking measures to stop the illegal activities, initiating criminal proceedings and adequately sanctioning offenders.

⁶In 2006, INTERPOL launched Project Drug.net to tackle the purchase, sale and production of prescription drugs and anabolic steroids through the Internet. In the framework of that project, a number of training workshops have been organized and a training manual has been published on the restricted pages of the INTERPOL website.

Guideline 25: The Board recommends that Governments introduce adequate standards for investigating cases involving seizures of internationally controlled substances that were sold illegally through the Internet; such standards should include minimum requirements for collecting and reporting data.

- Data on seizures, whether required for the further investigation of specific cases or for analysis of trends, should be reported to all States concerned and all international organizations working in this field (e.g. UNODC, the Board, the Universal Postal Union, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization). Minimum reporting requirements include information on the quantity seized, the international non-proprietary name of the drug or the name of the preparation, the pharmaceutical form of the preparation seized, the country of origin of the shipment, the country of destination of the shipment, information on the offending website, sources of supply etc.

Annex

Glossary

Assessments for psychotropic substances: the calculated quantities of the specific psychotropic substance required for medical and scientific purposes by a country for the period of one year. Assessments of psychotropic substances are reported to the International Narcotics Control Board.

Bona fide pharmacies: genuine pharmacies that are duly licensed and registered by the national competent authorities of the country where they operate to prepare and dispense medication and provide other pharmaceutical services to patients. Many pharmacies have expanded their services through the Internet, thus allowing customers to order and purchase over-the-counter and prescription drugs online. In the case of prescription drugs, patients are usually required to submit a written prescription or provide the name and telephone number of the prescribing physician.

Certifying programmes: certifying programmes are used to accredit legitimate Internet pharmacies so that customers can differentiate between accredited (legitimate) and non-accredited (illegitimate) pharmacies. Certifying programmes for Internet pharmacies can be carried out, for example, by national professional associations in cooperation with Government offices.

Cyberpatrol units: special units operating within the Government offices (e.g. law enforcement agencies) or professional associations concerned that have been charged with regularly monitoring the Internet for offensive or criminal content.

Dispensing drugs: dispensing drugs involves the interpretation, evaluation and implementation of a prescription drug order; it includes the preparation of a drug or device and its delivery to a patient in a suitable container appropriately labelled for subsequent administration or use.

Estimates for narcotic drugs: the calculated quantities of a specific narcotic drug required by a country for medical and scientific purposes for the period of one year. Such estimates are communicated on a yearly basis to the Board, which must confirm them.

Financial services: companies that provide a variety of money and investment-related services. For the purpose of the guidelines, the term “financial services” refers only to services facilitating non-cash payments, for example through debit cards, credit cards and electronic payment services such as CyberCash, PayPal etc.

The international drug control conventions: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol;^a the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971;^b and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.^c

^aUnited Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 976, No. 14152.

^bIbid., vol. 1019, No. 14956.

^cIbid., vol. 1582, No. 27627.

Internationally controlled substances: the narcotic drugs listed in the schedules of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the psychotropic substances listed in the schedules of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and the precursors listed in the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

International mail courier companies: companies that offer parcel delivery or expedited mail services. Such courier services are often supplied by privately owned companies that pick up, transport and deliver letters, parcels and packages, both nationally and internationally.

International non-proprietary names: designations that have been adopted by the World Health Organization and that are used to identify pharmaceutical substances or active pharmaceutical ingredients used in medicines. Each international non-proprietary name is unique, globally recognized and considered public property.

Internet pharmacies: online businesses through which medicines can be sold, prescriptions dispensed and relevant information provided. Illegal Internet pharmacies operate without licences and without being registered, dispensing prescription medicines without requiring proof of prescription.

Internet service providers: companies that provide access to the Internet and related services, such as domains for establishing websites. Internet service providers have the equipment and telecommunication lines necessary to provide clients in a certain geographical area access to the Internet. Large Internet service providers have independent access to high-speed leased lines and are therefore less dependent on local telecommunication service providers.

Narcotic drugs: all of the substances included in schedules I and II of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol.

Non-prescription drugs: medicines that can be purchased without a prescription, also known as over-the-counter drugs.

Pharmacists: individuals, registered and licensed by Government authorities to prepare and dispense medicinal drugs.

Pharmacies: duly licensed establishments where medicinal drugs are dispensed and patients receive pharmaceutical care.

Postal and courier services: public postal service providers are State owned and have a monopoly on most types of mail services. Courier services are usually parcel delivery or expedited mail services which may be also supplied by the postal monopolies but are predominantly owned by private companies.

Practitioners: individuals who have been licensed, registered or otherwise authorized by the appropriate jurisdiction to prescribe and administer drugs in the course of professional practice.

Precursors: all of the substances included in tables I and II of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

Preparations: for the purpose of the guidelines, preparations are pharmaceutical mixtures, available both in solid and liquid form, containing one or more narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or precursors.

Prescriptions: orders for medication issued by physicians, dentists or other properly licensed health-care practitioners on which the name of the patient, the medical preparations to be used by the patient and their dosage are indicated. Prescriptions are part of a professional relationship between prescriber, pharmacist and patient.

Prescription drugs: medicines that can only be dispensed upon submission of a prescription.

Psychotropic substances: all the substances included in schedules I-IV of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971.

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