
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 Internet Address: <http://www.incb.org/>

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**Statement by Mr. Werner Sipp, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

Sixtieth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

13 March 2017, Vienna, Austria

Madam Chair, Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board, I would like to congratulate the members of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on this milestone sixtieth session.

Over the coming days, you, the members of the Commission, will be considering, among other things, the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in 2009. You will also be considering the follow-up to the 2016 special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem (UNGASS 2016).

INCB applauded the results of the special session of the General Assembly. We note that, in the outcome document, Member States underscored the role of the three international drug control conventions as the basis for international cooperation in ensuring the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, in preventing illicit cultivation and production and in addressing drug trafficking and abuse. At the special session, Member States reaffirmed the pivotal role of the conventions and reiterated their commitment to their implementation. However, some voices continue to talk about a need to modernize or “reform” the conventions. INCB remains of the view that the international drug control system, which ultimately aims at the promotion of the health and welfare of humankind,

represents a flexible framework for drug control, provided it is implemented in compliance with the fundamental principles of the three conventions.

The conventions do provide **flexibility** for their implementation at the national level but this flexibility does not in any way extend to any **legalization or regulation of non-medical use of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances**. It is now up to States Parties to the conventions to reflect on how to respond to the action of some States in which the non-medical use of cannabis has been or is being legalized and regulated, which is in clear contravention of the conventions.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

INCB devoted the thematic chapter of its annual report for 2016 to the issue of **women and drugs**. The main reasons are that:

- despite one third of drug users being women, only one in five treatment recipients is female;
- overdoses are increasing disproportionately among women; and
- a growing number of women are being imprisoned for drug-related offences.

I recall the story of one woman I met at a treatment centre during an INCB mission, whose addiction to coca paste had resulted in estrangement from her family and community. Upon learning that she was pregnant, she sought treatment at a women's outpatient treatment service. She remained in treatment and succeeded in not using drugs. She was accepted to a housing centre for women, found a job and was now primarily concerned with providing for her son's future. She told me

that accessing the treatment service had allowed her to regain control of her life.

Unfortunately, many affected women, all over the world, do not have the chance that this young woman had. Many drug dependent women do not have the opportunity to access treatment and assistance. Drug users, particularly women, often face stigma and discrimination. The specific needs of women are very often not taken into account.

INCB is calling upon Governments to ensure that drug-related policies and programmes take into account the specific needs of women. In our annual report, we make a number of concrete recommendations.

Implementing these recommendations will go a long way towards protecting the rights of women who use drugs or who have committed drug-related offences - as well as the rights of their families.

Indeed, the drug control conventions are founded upon **respect for human rights, a balanced approach and the principle of proportionality**.

INCB has reiterated that the drug control conventions do not require the imprisonment of people who use drugs or who commit minor drug-related offences. Yet, alternative measures such as education, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration, as provided for by the three conventions, remain underutilized. I invite you all to join me at an INCB side event this Thursday at 1:10 pm on “The Need for **Proportionality**: State Responses to Drug-related Offences” in conference room M3.

While it is at the discretion of States to determine sanctions for drug-related offences, the Board continues to encourage States that retain

capital punishment to consider the abolition of the **death penalty** for drug-related offences.

INCB also reiterates, in the strongest possible terms, its categorical condemnation of the **extrajudicial targeting** of people suspected of illicit drug-related activity. Such action is not only a breach of the drug control conventions, but also a serious breach of human rights, and is an affront to the most basic standards of human dignity. The Board calls upon all Governments concerned to put an immediate stop to such actions and to investigate any person suspected of having committed, participated in, encouraged or incited any such extrajudicial action.

The Board has reiterated that for the operation of so-called “**drug consumption rooms**” to be consistent with the conventions, a number of conditions must be met. The ultimate objective of such facilities must be to reduce the adverse consequences of drug abuse *without* condoning or increasing drug abuse or encouraging drug trafficking. “Drug consumption rooms” must be operated within a framework that offers treatment, rehabilitation and social-reintegration services, either directly or by referral. They *cannot* be a substitute for demand reduction programmes, particularly prevention and treatment.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

I wish the Commission a successful session and I look forward to meeting with many of you on behalf of the Board. The INCB stands ready to continue to assist your Governments in the functioning of the international drug control system and ensuring that the aims and objectives of the conventions are met. To do this, however, we need your **cooperation**: in meeting your treaty-based reporting obligations, in providing information on drug control developments in your countries, and in receiving missions of the Board.

One way we assist governments is the development of our four **electronic INCB tools** that Governments can use to enhance their drug control efforts: PEN-Online, PICS, IONICS and I2ES. The **INCB Learning** project provided technical assistance and training to competent national authorities. We need your contributions to continue and expand this work.

Our capacity to monitor, analyse and promote compliance with the treaties, to conduct consultations with Governments, to provide training to competent national authorities, and to respond to your requests for advice has not kept pace with the incremental treaty monitoring challenge. The Board would like to urge all your Governments - through your representatives at United Nations Headquarters, where the relevant decisions are made - to ensure that the Board's resources are put at a level that permits INCB to meet today's challenges with regard to treaty implementation and to provide practical advice to your Governments.

Let me conclude, Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

As the 2019 review landmark approaches, INCB urges all Governments to reinforce our efforts to meet the goals set out in the conventions as well as the political declarations adopted by the General Assembly and the Commission in 1998, 2009 and 2016. The targets you, Members States, have established are ambitious, but achievable.

Thank you.