

Foreword

For many generations, attempts have been made to combat the adverse effects of illicit drug trafficking and abuse, and institutions have been set up at the national and international levels to address those issues. Significant progress has been made in reducing illicit drug trafficking and abuse, though a lot more remains to be done.

Many countries are being targeted by drug traffickers, as evidenced by the shipment of large consignments of illicit narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals to those countries. Larger seizures of cocaine and heroin suggest the existence of well-organized criminal syndicates that are moving drugs around the globe with impunity; those syndicates must be dismantled. The seizures also suggest that there is a need to improve the effectiveness of interdiction efforts and intelligence-sharing.

Although the phenomenon of the unregulated market is not new, it is of particular concern to the Board that, in recent years, the variety of internationally controlled substances available on the unregulated market have been increasing. In addition, drug traffickers are turning to innovative ways of diverting and smuggling such substances, such as the transnational distribution of counterfeit drugs and the use of the Internet and postal and courier services.

By making available medicines that are often poorly documented, unsafe, ineffective or of low quality, the unregulated market exposes patients to serious health risks. Moreover, this serious development, if it remains unchecked, may undermine progress made over the years in international drug control. The root causes of the problem need to be identified and remedial measures taken as a matter of urgency. The measures require a concerted response from relevant parties, including Governments, professional organizations and regional and international organizations.

The national and international organizations established for the purpose of curtailing illicit drug trafficking and abuse need to cooperate more closely with one another in order to effectively address this important issue. All Governments need to show greater commitment to the ideals of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, in particular to limit the possession, use, distribution, import, export, manufacture and production of, and trade in, drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes and to address drug trafficking through international cooperation aimed at deterring such activity.

In an age where technological developments are being used for sinister purposes, persons engaged in drug law enforcement and drug regulation need to be better trained and equipped to seize illicit drugs that are being trafficked and counterfeit or substandard drugs that appear in national and international distribution channels.

Law enforcement authorities should use their expertise for the good of all by improving cooperation while fulfilling their mandates. States should share intelligence to facilitate the interception of illicit drug consignments.

Governments should recognize the importance of drug demand reduction activities in alleviating the drug problem. Governments should also introduce drug demand reduction programmes, including programmes for the treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration of drug abusers, that are effective, accessible, affordable and sustainable.

The success of efforts aimed at tackling the world drug problem depends not only on effective implementation of the appropriate legislation, but also on well-designed demand reduction programmes that are conducted by well-motivated personnel, as the personnel of such programmes play a significant role in successful drug control efforts. There is a need for more circumspection in designating men and women to lead drug control agencies.

At the international level, organizations involved in international drug control should work more closely together. Let us put an end to unilateral efforts in the field of drug control. Ultimately, resolving the world drug problem depends on responsible action by all of us – parents, children, civil society and Governments. Let us join hands to rid the world of its drug problem. This is a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the peoples of the world. Let us make that difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip O. Emafo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "P" and a stylized "E".

Philip O. **Emafo**
President of the International Narcotics Control Board