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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 2017 International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) Annual Report examines the global drug control situation, with a focus on treatment and rehabilitation, and makes recommendations to help States take effective measures to address drug-related challenges in full compliance with international human rights standards and norms.

As we commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, INCB has taken the opportunity in this Report to take a closer look at the links between human rights and drug policy, and discuss the implications for national responses to drug control.

This year's thematic chapter deals with the treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration of people affected by drug use disorders as essential components of drug demand reduction. Substance use disorders are among the most stigmatizing of conditions. The stigma associated with drug use disorders remains one of the most significant impediments to the treatment of drug dependency and a major obstacle to social reintegration.

Treatment of drug use disorders, rehabilitation and social reintegration are among the main recommendations in the General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem outcome document, entitled "Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem".¹ Our Report shows that treatment of drug dependence is highly cost-effective and, most importantly, treatment of drug dependence should be seen as part of "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health",² and as such, an element of the right to health.

Recognizing drug dependence treatment as an element of the right to health contributes to dispelling stigma and discrimination, which all too often act as barriers to accessing treatment and to social reintegration. INCB invites leaders, policymakers, and civil society to consider the recommendations made and to pay particular attention to the treatment needs of often-neglected groups.

INCB calls on States to apply a comprehensive and holistic approach when assessing and addressing the needs of special populations, such as women, children, people in prisons, people affected by mental health disorders, migrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, and people engaged in sex work.

The international community is currently facing two contrasting epidemics related to opioids: the lack of availability vs. the over-prescription of opioids. Currently, billions of people around the world have limited or no access to medicines containing narcotic drugs, such as morphine, a substance often used for pain management. People in both low- and middle-income countries are heavily affected by this lack of access, and the Board urges States to close the "global pain divide".



¹ General Assembly resolution S-30/1, annex.

² As set out in article 12 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.



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In contrast, the United States of America and Canada have been experiencing an opioid overdose epidemic. Here we call on all Governments to understand and prevent the risks associated with long-term opioid use.

To confront these dual challenges, the Board reiterates that training for health-care professionals and responsible authorities is urgently needed to ensure rational prescribing practices and to make sure the operational recommendations adopted at the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly are put into practice.

The Board stresses how important it is, at the national level, to increase treatment of substance use disorders and to adopt control and regulatory strategies to improve accessibility and availability of controlled substances for medical use. Such national efforts are also most effective when accompanied by international action in that direction.

Chapter III highlights regional developments, including the underuse of controlled substances for medical purposes in some regions, the opioid overdose epidemic in others, legislative and regulatory changes, including those relating to the non-medical use of controlled substances in a few countries; as well as particular situations such as the illicit cultivation of drug crops in Afghanistan and the Andean region, which are both of great concern to the international community and the Board. We have observed some improvements in the gathering of drug use trend data in some countries, although much remains to be done in this regard. Trends and developments regarding new psychoactive substances around the world are also covered.

Throughout this year's Annual Report we make recommendations that the Board considers would contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 3, relating to good health and well-being. These recommendations include investing in and providing multi-tier structures for the delivery of treatment services and ensuring multi-sectorial coordination to reduce supply and demand. INCB believes that if leaders, policymakers and society at large follow the principles set out in chapter I of the Annual Report, and pay particular attention to people's treatment needs, this will have a significant impact on the health of often-neglected groups.

In its 2017 Report on Precursors, INCB provides a detailed account of the latest trends and developments in legitimate international trade and in trafficking in precursor chemicals under international control as well as in non-scheduled substitutes. This year's Report on Precursors highlights the increase in trafficking of acetic anhydride, a key chemical for the illicit manufacture of heroin, as well as the recent measures to control the flows of fentanyl precursors, a substance that has been associated with the opioid overdose epidemic in North America.



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We aim to continue actively contributing to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and to reaching the objectives adopted at the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly. For this, we will continue to rely on active dialogue with and support from all States.

Drug policies must follow an approach that seeks to promote the health and welfare of humankind. The three international drug control conventions provide ample scope for the international community to achieve this objective.

I hope that our Reports will foster further cooperation and action by States and the international community. Together we can move closer to improving the well-being of individuals around the world and contribute to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Viroj Sumyai

President

International Narcotics Control Board