



EMBARGO: 23 February 2000
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

On the occasion of the release of the INCB annual report for 1999, which, as every year, covers a wide spectrum of national and international drug control issues, I would like to highlight four main themes.

No Fatalistic Attitude Towards Drug Abuse and No Social Acceptance

1. In my opinion, there is no need for an alarmist view of the drug problem. Several countries have been successful in containing the problem. Drug control is no magic task - progress can be achieved through full implementation of the provisions of the international drug control treaties and a willingness to examine and discuss, openly, the causes and consequences of the drug problem and ways to address it. Unfortunately, an apathetic, even fatalistic attitude towards drug abuse has developed in many countries. Sometimes it is no longer even attempted to achieve the objectives of the treaties but accepted that a life with drugs is an unchangeable reality. Such indifference to the fate of drug abusers is unacceptable. When human beings destroy themselves, when young people, the future of all societies, waste themselves away on drugs, nobody should stand by idly. To remain passive is to leave the field to the drug traffickers and to leave drug addicts alone with their problems.

Making Drugs Available for Medical Purposes -- Everywhere

2. While large quantities of drugs are available on illicit markets, it is unbelievable that in the age of globalization, many people in developing countries have no access to drugs which are essential for the alleviation of pain and suffering. The international community must exploit the benefits of globalization in order to make essential narcotic drugs available to those who need them. In its report, the Board invites international aid programmes to donate essential drugs to countries which are not in a position to secure them from the international pharmaceutical market. A non-profit making mechanism for the use of otherwise unused narcotic drugs may also offer advantages and should be considered.

Closer Cooperation of Judicial Authorities

4. To be effective against drug trafficking and money-laundering organizations, authorities must cooperate across national borders. While this has become routine for law enforcement authorities, cooperation of judicial authorities needs to be strengthened because only collaborative justice makes it possible to prosecute drug trafficking organizations and confiscate their proceeds. Judicial cooperation does not necessarily require complicated negotiated bilateral agreements - the provisions of the 1988 Convention on mutual legal assistance or extradition are "mini treaties" which can guide countries in bringing the heads of drug trafficking organizations to justice.



No Refuge for Drug Money

3. One of the most innovative provisions of the 1988 Convention against illicit drug trafficking are the ones against money-laundering. While there has been progress, 'financial havens', with an elaborate machinery to assist people in hiding illicit proceeds from criminal investigations, not only continue to exist but are flourishing. In fact, over the years, they have become an enormous hole in the international legal and fiscal system and a challenge to international drug control efforts worldwide. Vigorous action must be taken to prevent fraudulent use of financial systems. Otherwise, criminal organizations will continue to undermine legitimate economic businesses with their money and buy political influence.

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