

**UNIS/NAR/1075**  
**4 May 2010**

### **The International Narcotics Control Board Holds its Ninety-Eighth Session in Vienna**

VIENNA, 4 May (UN Information Service) – Four new board members from France, India, South Africa and Thailand joined the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), at its 98th session in Vienna. The Board will remain in session until 14 May.

The current President of the Board is Hamid Ghodse (Iran). Its members are Carola Lander (Germany), Melvyn Levitsky (United States), Marc Moinard (France), Jorge Montaña (Mexico), Lochan Naidoo (South Africa), Rajat Ray (India), Viroj Sumyai (Thailand), Sri Suryawati (Indonesia), Camilo Uribe Granja (Colombia), Raymond Yans (Belgium) and Xin Yu (China). One position is vacant and will be filled as soon as the election takes place in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 2010.

The Board, which meets in private sessions, will discuss cooperation with more than 200 countries and territories, examine shortcomings in national drug control systems and formulate proposals to governments to overcome such deficiencies.

INCB will discuss recent initiatives to address the use of benzodiazepines (scheduled under the 1971 Convention) and substances that are not under international control to commit sexual assault. The substances in question are disguised in food or drinks, often in combination with alcohol, and administered to unsuspecting victims. The actions to be taken to counter such activities include awareness raising among the general public, alerting law enforcement agencies to such practices so that they can take measures to detect the presence of those substances in the victims, and inviting the cooperation of industry, for example, to facilitate the detection of such substances in drinks before they are consumed.

In addition, the Board will examine recent developments regarding operations of illegal internet pharmacies and the measures taken by governments to ensure adequate availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes. Barriers to the adequate availability, which have to be overcome in many countries, include knowledge limitations resulting from lack of training for health professionals and administrative regulations or policies that are more strict than those required by the international drug control treaties. The Board will also discuss recent cases of diversion of ketamine from licit channels for subsequent abuse in other countries. When used licitly, ketamine is used predominantly as an anaesthetic and in veterinary medicine. This substance is not under international control but has been identified by many countries as a substance of abuse, by itself or in combination with other illicit substances such as heroin or amphetamine-type-stimulants.

The current session is considering challenges in precursor control. The monitoring of the manufacture and distribution of substances in Table I and Table II of the 1988 Convention at the national level is among the topics to be reviewed.

In its effort to promote universal application of the international drug control treaties, the Board will review implementation by relevant international organizations of the Board's recommendations published in its annual reports for 2005, 2006 and 2007. Information received from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Customs Organization (WCO), Interpol, the Universal Postal Union (UPU), and European Union will be considered to determine the extent to which those recommendations have been implemented by those organizations as well as their impact on drug control at the national and international levels.

During the current session, the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the UNODC Executive Director are also expected to address the Board.

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The Vienna-based Board is an independent body, established by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs to monitor and support governments' compliance with the international drug control treaties. Its 13 members are elected by the Economic and Social Council to serve in their individual capacities for a term of five years.

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