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INCB Reviews the Problem of Illicit Drug Markets and Corruption

VIENNA, 1 November (UN Information Service) – An analysis of the inter-linkages between corruption and illicit drug markets is a highlight of the 99th session of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). The session is presently underway in Vienna and will close on 12 November 2010.

The first chapter of the Board's Annual Report 2010 will focus on corruption and illicit drug markets, a key area requiring action in the fight against illicit drug production, trafficking and abuse. According to the President of the Board, Professor Hamid Ghodse: "Corruption undermines global efforts in the fight against the illicit drug problem. Powerful and wealthy organized crime groups corrupt and intimidate public officials, who facilitate the illicit drug trade. We see many examples where violence and corruption are deeply entrenched in illicit drug markets. Without addressing this vicious circle of corruption and the illicit drug trade, international drug control efforts will never be fully successful."

The Board will also pay special attention in its Annual Report to the issue of availability of controlled substances for scientific and medical requirements, in particular for the treatment of pain and mental illness. During the session, the Board's Standing Committee on Estimates will examine the supply and demand of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances used for medical purposes. The Committee will assess national requirements for licit drugs for each country in order to ensure access to these substances for medical purposes worldwide.

Another key area for discussion by the Board is the status of international efforts to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals for the manufacturing of drugs. The Board will consider the recent shift by traffickers towards the use of non-scheduled substances in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Improved control of scheduled precursor chemicals means that such substances are becoming more difficult for traffickers to obtain.

Since the last session of the Board in May this year, the Board has visited Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Gabon, Georgia, Guatemala and Turkmenistan. The Board will be presenting the findings of the missions, as well as technical visits, and will be exploring ways to further cooperate with these countries in their efforts to fight illicit drug abuse and trafficking.

The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and representatives of the World Health Organization, the World Customs Organization and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) will also attend the session to share the latest information and to discuss cooperation with the Board.

Other major issues to be discussed by the Board include the use of cannabis seeds for illicit purposes, synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists added to herbal mixtures marketed under brand names such as "Spice", designer drugs and the covert use of drugs in sexual assault (date rape). These matters will be reflected in the forthcoming annual report.

The Board, which is based in Vienna, is an independent body, established by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs to monitor and support the compliance of Governments with the international drug control treaties. The 13 members of the Board are elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council to serve in an individual capacity for a five-year term.

The current president of the Board is Professor Hamid Ghodse (Iran) and the current members are: Galina Aleksandrovna Korchagina (Russian Federation), 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).

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