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EMBARGO:

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Criminals increasingly turning to “designer” chemicals for the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants; shared responsibility as important as ever, says INCB

In its Annual Report for 2011, the Board draws attention to the increasing use by criminals of pre-precursors or “designer” precursors, for the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants. Due to increased controls, trafficking of scheduled precursor chemicals has become more expensive and difficult. Traffickers have increasingly been forced to seek non-scheduled chemicals to avoid detection.

For example, phenylacetic acid—a precursor under international control—and some of its uncontrolled derivatives now play a far greater role in the manufacture of methamphetamine, particularly in Mexico. More than 183 tons of phenylacetic acid were seized globally in 2010, which if diverted into illicit drug manufacture could have yielded up to 46 tons of pure amphetamines. Over the course of 2011, the Board observed that many countries in Latin America had now expanded their control measures to include derivatives of phenylacetic acid.

Other countries are responding to the use of new precursors in illicit drug manufacture by enacting legislation which will allow them to proactively counter this new trend. For example, Canada broadened its legislation to prohibit the possession of anything that might knowingly be used for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine and MDMA (“ecstasy”).

The Board has noted that the diversion of acetic anhydride from domestic distribution channels remains very important for illicit heroin manufacture. In addition, potassium permanganate, used in the manufacture of cocaine, is illicitly being produced or substituted with other substances.

The launch of the Board’s Pre-Export Notification (PEN) Online system in 2006 has been instrumental in limiting access to precursor chemicals by criminals. The number of Governments registered to PEN Online has grown to 126, with now more than 20,000 pre-export notifications sent annually. Recognizing the success of the system, the Board urges those countries who have not yet done so to register for PEN Online as soon as possible.