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Message from the President

The annual report of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) for 2013 marks a particular milestone: the 45th annual report of the Board since it was established in 1968 in accordance with the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961. Over that period, there have been significant emerging challenges and efforts made in addressing the global drug problem. The nearly universal adherence to the three international drug control conventions reflects the conviction that the global efforts to tackle the drug problem should be unified and based on the principle of shared responsibility.



This year the Report has a special focus on the economic consequences of drug abuse, a timely topic in a period of financial austerity. We present evidence on the extent of economic and social costs of drug abuse in the areas of health, public safety, crime, productivity, and governance, and urge governments and institutions to join efforts in implementing cost-effective prevention policies and treatment programmes. Prevention and treatment remain essential to counteract the economic and social costs of drug abuse. Even in times of financial austerity, such investment must be maintained. The alternative - losing the potential of citizens - could be the worst “investment choice” of all.

We make a number of recommendations and best practices to reduce the economic costs of drug abuse, thereby improving social welfare. This brings us to the underlying principle of the international drug control system and the three conventions upon which it is founded – concern for the health and welfare of humankind.

Over the period since the entry into force of the 1961 Convention and the establishment of the Board, the international community has affirmed and strengthened its commitment to shared responsibility in drug control. INCB annual reports, accompanied by the annual reports on precursor chemicals and technical publications on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, take stock of achievements made, challenges faced and additional efforts required.

Now, the international community is about to conduct, from 13-14 March 2014, the high-level review of the implementation by Member States of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action, to which INCB will contribute on the basis of its work in monitoring and promoting the implementation of the three drug control conventions. In addition, preparations are under way for the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016, which will draw renewed high-level attention to the issue and guide the way forward. In view of the upcoming events, the INCB annual report 2013 concludes with recommendations for Governments and international and regional organizations aimed at improving the implementation of the conventions and ultimately aimed at ensuring availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing diversion to illicit channels, illicit manufacture, trafficking and abuse.



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At the same time, however, INCB remains concerned about some initiatives aimed at legalization of the non-medical and non-scientific use of cannabis. When governments consider their future policies on that matter, the primary consideration should be the long-term health and welfare of the population, in the spirit of the preamble to the 1961 Convention. In the report, the Board notes with concern that the lower house of Parliament in Uruguay had approved legislation that would allow the State to assume control over and regulate activities related to the importation, production or acquisition of any title, storage, sale or distribution of cannabis or its derivatives, under terms and conditions to be determined by a regulation, for the purpose of non-medical use. Since finalizing the report, the law was approved by the Senate and enacted by the Government. INCB points out that such legislation contravenes the provisions of the 1961 Convention and reminds Uruguay of the need to respect the conventions.

We deeply regret the developments at the state level in Colorado and Washington, in the United States, regarding the legalization of the recreational use of cannabis. INCB reiterates that these developments contravene the provisions of the drug control conventions, which limit the use of cannabis to medical and scientific use only. INCB urges the Government of the United States to ensure that the treaties are fully implemented on the entirety of its territory.

In view of the upcoming high-level review and preparations for the 2016 special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, I reiterate the readiness of INCB to maintaining an on-going dialogue with all countries, including those where such initiatives are being pursued, with a view to ensuring the full implementation of the conventions and to protecting public health.

Raymond Yans
President
International Narcotics Control Board