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AS DELIVERED

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international drug control treaties require that the reports of the International Narcotics Control Board are submitted to the Economic and Social Council, through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Traditionally, as a treaty organ, the Board has made a brief report directly to the Council and responded to any questions which members of the Council have wished to raise.

The annual report for the year 2000 was presented to Governments at a briefing session on 12 February and press conferences were held in more than 40 cities around the world, nine days later on 21 February 2001.

The 44th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs examined the report of the Board and the views of the Governments represented at the Commission are reflected in the Commission's own report which is also before you at this session. Over the years, relations between the Board and the Commission have become closer and interactions between the two bodies are no longer limited to once a year. For example, the current Chairman of the Commission, Ambassador Pavel Vacek of the Czech Republic, has visited the 70th and 71st sessions of the Board for an exchange of views on the latest developments in international drug control. This is the type of direct dialogue and communication which helps both organs to address common concerns and achieve common goals.

One of the main themes emerging in the course of discussions during the Commission was the widespread excessive use of controlled drugs available for medical purposes - a subject that was reviewed in the first chapter of the annual report. This review complemented the 1999 report which pointed to the widespread lack of availability in many parts of the world of opiates needed for the management of pain. Thus, the world situation unfortunately encompasses an undersupply of much needed narcotic drugs for medical purposes in most parts of the world, and an oversupply and excessive consumption in other parts. Prolonged consumption of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances may result in drug dependency as well as other physical and mental suffering. The Board is particularly concerned that a considerable number of individuals who suffer from social pressures are treated with psychotropic substances without having been diagnosed as having a real mental or physical disorder. The Commission echoed the

concerns of the Board and adopted a resolution which addresses the consumption of benzodiazepines.

Benzodiazepines are one group of psychotropic substances controlled under the 1971 Convention. Although they have their place in medical care, for example in the short term treatment of insomnia or anxiety, they are also frequently prescribed inappropriately. This results in their being diverted from local distribution channels into the illicit market. For example, benzodiazepines are smuggled in large quantities across Europe as well as into Asia and Africa. The Commission's resolution tries to provide guidance to national drug control authorities around the world on how best to manage this issue. With the adoption of the resolution, the international community has shown that it is willing to act decisively on this matter.

Mr. Chairman,

Discussions about the validity of certain aspects of the international drug control treaty system have been going on in several countries, particularly in relation to cannabis. The Board, as the main guardian of the international drug control conventions, would not wish to discourage such discussion as long as it is based on available scientific findings. If these findings show that amendments to the schedules of the Conventions are necessary, the procedures for consultation and review established by the Conventions must be adhered to. Any unilateral action by individual countries can only have a very negative effect on national and international drug control.

Mr. Chairman,

I would also like to highlight the draft resolution on the control of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs. This has been approved by the Commission and is before the Council for adoption. The draft resolution calls for coordination in order to facilitate the exchange of information between countries that are used as a source of key chemicals and those in which synthetic drugs are illicitly manufactured.

In line with the Board's mandate under the 1988 Convention, the use of chemicals which are frequently used in illicit drug manufacture is routinely monitored and in addition, the Board has helped to initiate two programmes which take controls one step further and prevent the illicit diversion of commonly used chemicals.

The first such programme is "Operation Purple", an international tracking programme for potassium permanganate, which is the main chemical used in illicit cocaine manufacture. The operation, which is now in its third year, has been extremely successful. It has resulted in seizures of over 250 tonnes of potassium permanganate which, if diverted, would have been sufficient to manufacture over 1,000 tonnes of cocaine. In fact, as Governments reported to the Commission, the success of "Operation Purple" has led to higher street prices and lower quality of cocaine sold on illicit markets. The operation has also contributed to the dismantling of international trafficking networks.

In view of these encouraging successes, the Board initiated a similar approach for acetic anhydride, a key chemical in illicit heroin manufacture. An international meeting was held in October 2000, with the cooperation of the Government of Turkey, and "Operation Topaz" was officially launched in March of this year. This is an intensive programme focusing on acetic anhydride and already 20 Governments, including most of the main chemical manufacturing countries, are participating in the operation, as well as Interpol, the World Customs Organization, the European Commission and Europol.

Control of chemicals is an important activity within the overall efforts to reduce the illicit supply and demand of opiates and cocaine and encouraging results are becoming visible world-wide on many fronts.

There is also evidence of the need to strengthen controls over the chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs, which has been spreading at an alarming rate. For this purpose, the Board convened a round-table consultation in Beijing in June 2001 on the chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of MDMA, or "ecstasy". In cooperation with Governments, the Board has also been looking into practical approaches to stop the flow of chemicals towards clandestine laboratories that make amphetamine-type-stimulants. However, initiatives on the supply side can only be successful if complemented by effective demand reduction activities. The Board believes that much more work is still needed on demand reduction, in order to halt and reverse the upward trend of abuse of amphetamine-type-stimulants in many parts of the world.

Our results have shown that progress can be made and I would like to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge the hard work of the secretariat of the Board in Vienna.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in its recent evaluation of UNDCP also evaluated the work of the INCB secretariat and I am delighted to report that it found that the INCB secretariat has been able to adjust to evolving circumstances and to keep up with the changing world and modern management.

The OIOS report also highlighted the budgetary difficulties that the Board has been facing for many years and which have constrained its full potential. Among the activities that have been affected are the country missions of the Board. Every year, the Board carries out several missions to different countries to discuss with Governments national drug control legislation, drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. Country missions also review the coordination of drug control activities at national and international levels, the extent of the drug abuse problem in the country, and the illicit cultivation and trafficking of drugs and countermeasures taken by the Government. Missions also entail on-site elements such as visits to a pharmaceutical manufacturer, hospital pharmacies or institutions where drug addicts are treated and rehabilitated. Missions of the Board have yielded tangible results: many countries have strengthened their legislation to give effect to the provisions of the international drug control treaties, have established appropriate national structures for action against drug abuse and illicit trafficking, or have reinforced

their activities in the drug control field. A visit by the Board has often led to a significant improvement in performance under the international treaties.

However, while more than 150 countries in the world are parties to the three main international drug control treaties- the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances- the Board is only able to visit about 15 countries per year, due to lack of resources. Five years ago, the Council adopted a resolution (1996/20) in which it called on the Board to intensify its programme of country missions. Unfortunately, as resources have not been forthcoming to the necessary extent, the Board has been unable to fully meet this request by the Council.

Mr. Chairman,

As you know, the relationship between the Board and the Council is close because the Council serves as the electoral organ for INCB. In May, the Council elected five new members to the Board. I was pleased to note that the chosen candidates, most of whom I know personally, are of the highest calibre, with a proven track record in developing and implementing successful strategies in addressing the drug problem at both national and international levels.

The reputation that the Board enjoys in the international community is based on its members: firstly, on their qualifications and the experience that they bring to the Board and secondly, on their independence from Governments. As required by the 1961 Convention, Board members are experts who serve in their personal capacity and not as Government representatives. While Governments, when electing members to the Board, should make sure that nominees are able to act independently and not in a governmental capacity, the Board has also established its own procedure which guarantees that its members remain independent throughout their term of office. In closing my remarks, I would also like to thank you for your support in re-electing me to the Board.

Mr. Chairman,

Your invitation in April this year to brief the Permanent Missions in New York and members of the Council on the work of the Board was, as you know, very much appreciated by all parties including the Board. Your personal interest and involvement in inviting all Permanent Missions and in chairing the meeting, together with excellent attendance and the discussion which followed, set the scene for a close relationship between the Board and the Council and this is an opportunity for me, Sir, to thank you on behalf of the Board and its secretariat. As requested by yourself and all those present, we will definitely continue with these briefings in the years to come. This dialogue is of the utmost importance as the Board is the guardian of the international drug control conventions and the Council is the guardian of the Board.

Thank you for your attention.