

World Health Assembly

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Statement by, Dr. Philip O. Emafo President, International Narcotics Control Board

Item 11.3 HIV/AIDS - WHO's contribution to universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care

Madam Chairperson,

My comments will address some aspects of the second and third strategic directions in document A 59/39 as they affect the work of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and in particular, the prevention of HIV transmission and pain relief management. The WHO and the INCB have been working together to ensure that internationally controlled drugs are available for medical purposes, while preventing the diversion of such drugs into illicit channels.

Licit global consumption of narcotic drugs has increased significantly over the years, but the differences in their consumption among countries are very considerable. The developed countries account for such increased consumption. The availability of opioid analgesics for the management of pain continues to be very low in many developing countries. The INCB is concerned that patients who require opioid analgesics for the management of pain are being denied access to such medicines.

The INCB welcomes the initiatives of WHO in developing a strategy for improved palliative care for HIV/AIDS, cancer and other chronic diseases. INCB looks forward to working with WHO in the development of guidelines on the use of opioids for the management of opioid dependence, which might be a component of community-based approaches for the prevention of HIV infection among injecting drug abusers.

In response to ECOSOC resolution 2005/25 and the World Health Assembly resolution 58.22, the Board together with WHO are working on a feasibility study that will make recommendations regarding possible assistance mechanism to facilitate the adequate treatment of pain using opioid analgesics. It is hoped that this joint activity by INCB and the WHO will identify factors that prevent patients from having access to their legitimate needs of opioid analgesics and so help put in place mechanisms to improve access of patients suffering from cancer or HIV/AIDS to essential medicines for the treatment of pain, while ensuring that they are not diverted for illicit use.

On behalf of the Board, I thank you for the opportunity to address the Assembly and look forward to a future of greater collaboration between the INCB and WHO.

Thank you for your attention.