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REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD

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**Fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
(12-16 March 2012)**

Agenda Item 4 B:

**Implementation of the international drug control treaties:
International Narcotics Control Board**

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to present to you the Annual Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2011 and the Board's report on precursor chemicals. The reports highlights achievements made by Governments, identifies weaknesses in the implementation of national and international drug and precursor control systems, and makes recommendations to Governments and international and regional organizations.

The Board has dedicated its reports for 2011, published in 2012, to the hundredth anniversary of the adoption of the International Opium Convention signed at The Hague on 23 January 1912. This convention is the cornerstone of international drug control and the international community should be proud of its achievements over the past century of international drug control. These achievements are covered in detail in my keynote speech to the special event commemorating the centennial of the 1912 Convention. Many significant challenges remain in drug control and the Board addresses many of these in its Annual Report.

Madam Chair,

Each year the Board devotes the first chapter of its Annual Report to a topic of particular concern, to promote the identification and implementation of solutions. In its 2011 report, the Board has addressed the topic of social cohesion, social disintegration and illegal drugs.

The decision to abstain from or engage in drug-related behaviour lies primarily with the individual. However, in some communities, drug abuse has become highly prevalent, part of a vicious cycle of social problems. The situation in these marginalised communities poses a threat to the members of the communities, and to society at large.

When a community lacks social cohesion, it is fractured, and drug abuse and criminality can be some of the visible symptoms. Threats to social cohesion *can* – but not always – include social inequality, displacement, political and economic transformation, emerging cultures of excess, growth in individualism and consumerism, shifting of traditional values, conflict, rapid urbanization, breakdown in respect for the rule of law, and the presence of illicit drug economies. The Board stresses the importance of responding to the needs of communities experiencing social disintegration before the tipping point is reached, beyond which effective action becomes difficult.

Governments in both developed and developing countries are doing much to address the needs of marginalized communities facing drug-related problems. However, much more action needs to be taken, and the Board has made a number of recommendations, including: drug abuse prevention, treatment and rehabilitation; equitable educational, employment and recreational opportunities; community policing; community rehabilitation; addressing the signs of financial success of criminals associated with drug trafficking, and the promotion of positive role models. Building social cohesion in marginalized communities suffering from drug problems is a major challenge for Governments, local organizations and citizens, but the consequences of not doing so should be avoided at all cost.

Madam Chair,

The second chapter of the Board's Annual Report reviews the functioning of the international drug control system, the status of adherence to the drug control conventions and evaluation of compliance in selected countries. As part of its ongoing dialogue with Governments, the Board undertakes country missions, enabling it to gain a comprehensive understanding of the drug control situation in the countries visited and to provide Governments with targeted recommendations. The Report also includes an evaluation of the implementation by Governments of recommendations made following the Board's missions in 2008, and of recommendations made in the Board's Annual Reports for 2005, 2006 and 2007. The Board appreciates the cooperation of Member States in facilitating the missions of the Board and in implementing the Board's recommendations.

The Board is committed to a constructive dialogue with civil society and appreciates the assistance of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs in identifying non-governmental organizations with whom the Board can meet during its country missions. NGOs are often the unsung heroes of drug abuse prevention and treatment programmes at the grass-roots level, and can play a great role in preventing and alleviating suffering caused by drug abuse and drug addiction.

In 2000, the Board invoked article 14 of the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol with respect to Afghanistan and since then has maintained an ongoing dialogue with the Government of Afghanistan, most recently through the attendance of a high-level delegation of the Government at the Board's 103rd session earlier this year. At the recent Paris Pact Ministerial Conference, I was pleased to note the commitment of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to stem the illicit flow of opiates from Afghanistan, building upon the already impressive achievements of the Paris Pact.

Adequate availability of internationally controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes is a one of the key goals of the international drug control treaties and one of the main topics of the Board's dialogue with Governments on treaty implementation, and I will address this topic in detail under agenda item 4c. While inadequate availability is a problem in some regions and countries, overconsumption is a growing concern in some countries.

Over the past few years, the international community has been working to develop a concrete proposal for an international electronic import and export authorization system for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Such a system would prevent diversions by minimizing the risk of forgery of import and export authorizations, would reduce the workload of national competent authorities, accelerate legitimate transactions and possibly lead to an increase in availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in some countries for medical and scientific use. The Board hopes to report to the Commission in due course on achievements made in this regard and is convinced that an international electronic import and export authorization system would bring long-term benefits to all Governments and to the international drug control mechanism as a whole.

Despite the great success achieved in preventing diversion of controlled substances from international trade, the Board has noted that diversion of many narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances from licit domestic distribution channels has become a main source for supplying illicit markets. This remains a major challenge since international criminal organizations are increasingly becoming involved in such diversion. The substances involved range from opioid analgesics, to stimulants, to anxiolytics and sedative hypnotics. Although there is limited knowledge of the sources and methods used to obtain the substances, they are frequently diverted in the form of pharmaceutical preparations containing those substances, sometimes with active participation of unethical members of the health profession. Furthermore, the abuse of prescription drugs is a problem of increasing concern in many countries. The Board therefore requests Governments to investigate the sources of the diverted substances and to inform the Board of the results of their investigations. This will enable the Board to share the lessons learned from such cases with other countries and to recommend remedial measures as necessary.

The sale of internationally controlled substances by illegal Internet pharmacies continues and the illegal Internet pharmacies are increasingly publicising their websites through message board and social network advertising. The Board welcomes the efforts of Governments and the private sector to prevent the operation of illegal Internet pharmacies and to educate the general public about the risk of purchasing medicines from illegal Internet pharmacies.

Since 2009, pursuant to the Commission resolution 50/11, the Board has collected data on internationally controlled substances ordered via the Internet and delivered through mail. In 2011, the Board decided to collect data on all seizures of internationally controlled substances sent via the mail, whether ordered via the Internet or not. Only a low number of countries that had data on seized drugs sent via the mail were able to identify whether those drugs been ordered via the Internet. The majority of the seizures by mail were reported in Western and Northern Europe, as well as North America, Australia and New Zealand. India was the most frequently identified origin of seizures, accounting for just over half of the global seizures of licit substances sent via the mail for which the country of origin could be identified. The other most prevalent countries of origin were, the United States of America, China, Poland, Spain and Germany¹. However, information received from Governments indicates that the countries of origin of seizures by mail are frequently changing.

Madam Chair, Excellencies,

The Board has for several years expressed its concern regarding aspects of drug control policy in the Plurinational State of Bolivia that contravene the international drug control

¹ In descending order.

conventions, in particular, the national legislation that allows the cultivation and consumption of coca leaf for non-medical purposes, especially chewing of coca leaf. The Board has noted with regret the step taken by the Government of Bolivia to denounce the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol. The Board has expressed its concern that the action is contrary to the fundamental object and spirit of the Convention. The Board has noted that the integrity of the international drug control conventions would be undermined, if the international community was to adopt an approach whereby States parties would use a mechanism of denunciation and re-accession with reservations to overcome problems in the implementation of specific provisions of the treaties.

While the matter is ultimately for the decision of Governments, the Board feels that it is its duty to ensure that Governments are aware of this threat to the integrity of the international drug control conventions. If the Board was not to do so, it would have failed in its duty. The Board is committed to an ongoing dialogue with the Government of Bolivia, and conducted a mission to the country in December 2011 in an attempt to make progress on this issue in a manner in line with both the spirit and letter of the Convention.

Madam Chair,

In order to highlight achievements and identify weaknesses in drug control, the Board draws upon a vast array of information obtained from official government sources and from the reports of international organizations in its analysis of developments in drug control.

South America now accounts for sixty per cent of global cocaine seizures and the United States remains the largest cocaine market in the world. Drug trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean is posing a threat to the security of the region. In West Africa, cocaine abuse is increasing in some of the countries affected by cocaine trafficking. Cocaine trafficking routes to Europe have diversified, with increased trafficking via North Africa and through South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. The trafficking of cocaine to Australia by organized crime syndicates is an increasing concern. Trafficking in and abuse of stimulants, including cocaine, is increasing in West Asia, and illicit opium poppy production increased by sixty per cent from 2010 to 2011. In East and South-East Asia, the continuing increase in illicit opium poppy cultivation and opium production is worrying. In South Asia, there are increasing problems with the abuse of prescription drugs. These points illustrate the extent of the challenges that need to be addressed.

Madame Chair, Excellencies,

I would now like to draw your attention to matters concerning the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. As it enters into its third decade since coming into force, it is clear that the Convention is, and will continue to be, a vital component of efforts to counter illicit drug manufacture and trafficking in the decades to come. In its 2011 report on precursors, the Board presents its analyses of the latest developments in global precursor chemical control and has also included a new thematic chapter which reviews the past twenty years of international precursor control. While I would invite you to read the report in its entirety, I would like to take this opportunity to point out for you some of the more salient issues discussed in the report.

Firstly, the active and continued use by States of the Pre-Export Notification (PEN) Online system is crucial if we are to continue to successfully prevent diversion of precursor chemicals from licit international trade. I strongly urge all states that have signed up to actively

use the system. For those few States who have yet to sign up, the INCB Secretariat would be pleased to assist you in the process.

Secondly, I would like to highlight the concrete results that have been achieved through concerted international cooperation over the course of 2011. This cooperation resulted in more than 250 seizures of controlled chemicals, totaling more than 240 tons and thousands of litres, that could have been used in the production of illicit drugs. However, the challenge will be to continue to develop new operations and projects to prevent diversions in the same vein as the successful Cohesion and Prism Projects.

Thirdly, I would like to raise some of the Board's concerns regarding amphetamine-type stimulants. The Board has noted that there is an increasing propensity of illicit drug traffickers to source non-scheduled substances as substitutes for controlled precursors. While this is a sign that the control system has been successful insofar as it has forced illicit drug traffickers to seek new methods to manufacture amphetamine-type stimulants, the flip-side to this is that we must remain vigilant with regard to emerging manufacturing methods. The Board will continue to monitor this phenomenon but also urges States to report to the Board's Secretariat any new developments observed on their territories related to the sourcing of non-scheduled substances as substitutes for controlled precursors.

The Board requests States to remain actively vigilant with regard to diversions of precursors from domestic trade, in other words for trafficking of precursors within their own borders. While sourcing precursor chemicals from international trade has become more difficult for criminals, diversion from domestic trade now constitutes the key source of precursors used in illicit drug production.

Finally, and with regard to heroin production in Afghanistan, the Board remains aware of the many severe obstacles currently faced by the Government of Afghanistan in tackling this very important problem. To help address this, the Board calls upon the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to take adequate measures to ensure the effective implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1817 (2008) on precursor control. More specifically, the Board strongly urges the international community to assist the Government of Afghanistan to continue to improve systems for the collection and analysis of information with regard to seized precursor chemicals, in order to facilitate the identification and interdiction of smuggled consignments. The Board also calls on all governments, and relevant regional and international entities operating in and around Afghanistan to share information through the established Project Cohesion mechanisms.

Madame Chair, Excellencies,

It is clear that many challenges remain in international drug control. Strong efforts are required by the international community to address these challenges, to ensure that narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are limited to licit medical and scientific use, and that diversion of controlled substances from licit to illicit channels is prevented.

As we look back upon the last hundred years since the signing of the International Opium Convention in 1912, let us pay tribute to those progressive non-governmental organizations who over a century ago had the foresight to lobby for international cooperation to protect individuals from drug abuse and to help them preserve their right to be free from drug abuse and drug dependency. Let us honour those who have fought so tirelessly in drug control over the past century – and those who have suffered from drug abuse, drug addiction, or from

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crime and violence associated with drug trafficking – by working to make the next century of drug control even more successful than the last.

Thank you, Madam Chair.