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**Statement by Mr. Werner Sipp, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

Sixtieth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

**Agenda item 8(d): Implementation of the international drug control treaties:
International cooperation to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic
substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion**

16 March 2017, Vienna, Austria

Madam Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The UNGASS 2016 was a turning point in many respects but one particular aspect of the outcome document that was adopted at the Special Session is truly novel: the prominence given to the issue of the availability of internationally controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering.

Not only did you express concern about the fact that such availability remains low to non-existent in many countries of the world, but you also highlighted the need to enhance national efforts and international cooperation at all levels to address that situation in order to fulfil the aims and objectives of the three international drug control conventions.

The operational recommendations adopted on this important aspect of the international drug control architecture provide national governments, international organizations and civil society at large with a clear focus for action in the next years.

The Board welcomes these developments and appreciates that the work of the Board in the past has been taken into account, particularly the analysis and recommendations contained in various reports devoted to this issue, and the special report published last February 2016.

That report was subtitled “Indispensable, adequately available and not unduly restricted”. These are the words used in the international drug control treaties to describe the fundamental principles that countries should apply to ensure the availability of internationally controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes.

The Board has noted that several Member States are already taking action regarding the UNGASS 2016 operational recommendations to ensure availability and access.

The first of those operational recommendations is about the need for Member States to review domestic legislation, to streamline and simplify regulations and administrative procedures. To remove regulations that are unduly restrictive. This may include also allowing a larger base of professionals to prescribe or dispense, increase prescription validity, and strengthen inter-agency cooperation. All this while maintaining appropriate control mechanisms.

Some Member States have recently developed new regulations, as well as electronic systems for prescribing and dispensing. These are producing results in accessibility while reducing the risk of diversion and abuse of prescription drugs.

Another important element that is crucial to the success of reform of the legislation and simplification of administrative procedures is the capacity of the national authorities to implement them. This includes the correct and adequate estimates and assessments for controlled substances to be consumed, which depends on ensuring sufficient human resources in Competent National Authorities.

The outcome document explicitly refers to the need to enable competent national authorities to do their work. INCB immediately took action on this by launching the project "INCB Learning" in April 2016. This is one of the areas where INCB is supporting the implementation of the Outcome Document. Through the INCB Learning project, the Board is delivering training seminars and awareness-raising workshops in collaboration with WHO, and developing e-learning modules. Two regional training seminars were delivered in 2016 in East Africa and South and South East Asia and the Pacific. Seminars in West Africa, Europe and Central America are planned. However, we need your support to continue to expand this work.

The outcome document also refers to the [INCB/WHO Guide on Estimating Requirements for Substances under International Control](#). We encourage all to make use of this tool. I quote from the operational recommendations: "Governments should enhance domestic data-collection mechanisms in order to present the International Narcotics Control Board with estimates on the consumption of drugs used for medical and scientific purposes".

One important aspect is for you to expedite the process of import and export authorizations. Several countries have enrolled in the INCB International Import and Export Authorization System, also known as I2ES. More countries need to join. Resources for maintaining the system are needed.

A further recommendation is that Member States address issues related to affordability, including limited resources and problems in sourcing, also in cooperation with the private sector. Several countries have started initiatives such as national morphine production; importing morphine powder; and providing morphine free of charge to patients. We would like you to inform us about these initiatives so that we can share this information with others and look at developing guidelines to replicate best practice.

Member States should also develop national supply management systems. In this regard, we have observed that actions have been taken to establish computerized pharmaceutical systems to monitor stocks and ensure availability, and to establish new observatories on palliative care to monitor needs and inform policy.

In the area of essential medicines, WHO and CND work together, and countries need to review the lists of essential medicines at the national level.

I would like to close by mentioning the need to raise awareness of the problem of over-consumption of controlled substances. While access and availability are of the highest importance, attention should also be given to the need for control mechanisms. In particular, attention should be paid to the potential for diversion, over-prescription and abuse of controlled medicines, which have created an overdose crisis in some regions of the world. In this regard, the training of health care practitioners and pharmacists as well as the establishment of appropriate supervision mechanisms are paramount.

The challenge remains to strike the right balance between the need for controlled substances to treat or alleviate various health conditions and the potential negative effects and damage that the same substances can cause if taken beyond the therapeutic purposes.

Thank you.