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**Statement by the President of the International Narcotics Control Board,
Mr. Cornelis P. de Joncheere**

Reconvened sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

13 December 2019

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to join you today for the reconvened session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Yury Fedotov for his service as Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for his leadership and his many achievements in this area. On behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board, I express our gratitude to Mr. Fedotov for his unwavering support, which has allowed the INCB to perform its treaty-mandated role with professionalism and independence, and in an increasingly challenging resource context. We also look forward to a continuation of this excellent cooperation when we welcome Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly as the incoming Executive Director. Thank you, Yury, and wishing you all the best and success in your new endeavours, and that you can enjoy more time with your family and friends.

Just a few weeks ago, at our [126th session](#), we finalized the INCB annual reports for 2019. I look forward to presenting these to the Commission in March 2020, and sharing them in advance with the Permanent Missions in February. Our thematic chapter this year focuses on improving prevention and treatment services for young people.

Also at our session, we decided to recommend to the Commission the international control of MAPA, methyl-*alpha*-phenylacetoacetate, a pre-precursor used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine and methamphetamine. I will brief you in more detail on this matter later this morning, under agenda item 9. I will highlight again the need for a more encompassing solution to address the continuing emergence of designer precursors used in illicit drug manufacture.

The Commission's Ministerial Declaration of March this year and the 2016 special session of the General Assembly both reaffirmed the centrality of the three conventions to international drug control, and the importance of ensuring availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing diversion, trafficking, illicit production and manufacture and abuse. INCB continues to engage and redouble its dialogue with Member States towards achieving the implementation of the three international drug control conventions in what is becoming an increasingly complex environment.

In 2019, we conducted 15 country missions, thanks to the cooperation of governments in accepting our proposed missions and organizing constructive programmes, which provided a great opportunity for dialogue and to learn about countries' efforts and policies to address their national drugs problems. This is the second year running with a high number of missions, 16 were done in 2018. But the resources to sustain this level of work, both human and financial, are basically insufficient.

We were pleased to also meet with civil society representatives during our missions and here in Vienna, which we have done at the meetings of the Commission for many years and at our May sessions this and last year, a practice that we hope to continue.

Equally we are equally pleased with the outcome of our open dialogue meetings with Member States that we have now held for two years running during the Board's November sessions, a practice that will to continue as well.

Last year's [supplement to our annual report](#) showed the global imbalance in availability of controlled substances for medical purposes prevails. While some progress is observed, much remains to be done and we look forward to further intensify our efforts together with UNODC and WHO in this area of work.

Through [INCB Learning](#), we have trained over 237 officials from 88 countries and territories towards improving the regulatory control and reporting related to international trade in internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes; with support from the Russian Federation we have just completed a training course in Moscow for Russian-speaking countries. The regional training seminars and national awareness raising workshops, delivered in cooperation with the World Health Organization and UNODC, are aimed at building capacity and knowledge to improve availability for medical use while preventing diversion and abuse. The [e-Learning modules](#) are available for national authorities to use on demand. These initiatives are largely funded by extrabudgetary contributions, for which the Board expresses a big 'thank you'.

With UNODC, we established the International Import Export Authorization System ([I2ES](#)) to facilitate the electronic exchange of import and export authorizations between trading partners, which should contribute to improving availability for medical purposes. With increased take up and use by national authorities of this free-of-charge system, the administrative load associated with paper-based international control requirements will be significantly diminished. INCB Learning and I2ES depend on your countries' active participation and financial support.

INCB's Pre-export notification (PEN-Online) and Precursors Incident Communication (PICS) systems, as well as task forces, help governments monitor and control the licit international movement of precursors. These activities, which have been underway for the past three decades, support governments in implementing article 12 of the 1988 Convention and are largely funded by your extrabudgetary contributions, for which we are grateful.

The INCB's [Project Ion](#) and its [IONICS](#) system are helping your national authorities address the ongoing emergence of new psychoactive substances, and we are working to address the challenge posed by non-medical synthetic opioids.

I look forward to continued cooperation with your governments, and wish you a successful meeting.

In closing, allow me to say that the international community can feel proud of its achievements in agreeing to and implementing the three international drug control conventions.

Yet we should also be concerned about the mounting new challenges, just to name a few : emergence of new synthetic drugs, which is changing the world drugs landscape; the enormous illegal drugs market and the organised crime that comes with it; the role of darknet, and the developments on legalizing cannabis for non-medical use, on which the Board has repeatedly and publicly spoken out that these are in violation of the obligations under the conventions.

As the international community just celebrated World Aids day and World Human Rights day I want to stress that actions carried out in the name of drug control must not violate human rights. In our 2019 Annual Report, INCB reiterates the importance of ensuring that drug control efforts fully respect human rights. We again urge the immediate cessation of extrajudicial actions against suspected drug-related behaviour, and again call on countries that maintain capital punishment for drug-related offences to consider its abolition.

Any drug control activity that violates human rights also violates the drug control conventions.

With that I Thank you, and I wish you fruitful discussions.
