

As delivered

**Statement by Mr. Cornelis P. de Joncheere, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)
Sixty-fourth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs:
Item 5 (b): Challenges and future work of the CND, the WHO and the INCB in the
review of substances for possible scheduling recommendations
13 April 2021**

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will recall the Conference Room Paper prepared by INCB for the last session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in March 2020.

In that paper, entitled “Options to address the proliferation of non-scheduled chemicals, including designer precursors”, INCB summarized the challenges and presented options to address this problem. The Conference Room Paper was intended as a starting point to explore what – in addition to proven precursor control approaches - could be done together to address these new problems.

Since then, the Commission’s decision to add MAPA, a pre-precursor of amphetamine and methamphetamine, to Table I of the 1988 Convention, became effective in November 2020. Many Governments are yet to implement control over MAPA at the national level - some Governments even still have to implement controls over other internationally controlled chemicals -: data already show the emergence of an alternative to MAPA, called EAPA. This continues a trend that we have been observing over the last years - of appearance and disappearance of a series of chemically related precursors.

Data on seizures of some of these precursors, as shared by Governments through our Precursor Incident Communication System (PICS), show that after the international scheduling of APAAN and APAA, quantities seized of these chemicals decreased drastically. At the same time we witnessed the emergence of alternative non-scheduled precursors.

Our 2020 report on precursors shows that the use of non-scheduled chemicals now extends to all drug classes, including fentanyls, and also plant-based drugs such as heroin and cocaine.

Considering the ever-growing number of non-scheduled chemicals, INCB, or any State Party, could readily notify the Secretary-General of additional chemicals for possible international control, pursuant to paragraph 2 of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

However, this substance-by-substance scheduling process takes time and is resource intensive, and it would be almost impossible to keep up with the potential number and diversity of non-scheduled chemicals and the speed at which traffickers shift synthesis methods.

Nevertheless, the 1988 Convention remains the only legally binding instrument on precursors with a global reach. The Board will continue to assess priority chemicals for possible international control as it has been mandated to do.

However, should you as State Party consider notifying a chemical for international control, the Board would urge you to review the chemistry of that substance and consider notifying its

close chemical relatives at the same time so we can enhance the effectiveness of the international control system.

The Board is aware that a number of Governments have responded to the emergence of non-scheduled chemicals in different ways, including by placing additional chemicals under control. Updated information about national controls is an important tool to address the misuse of non-scheduled chemicals.

We urge you to share such information and your experience with INCB so that it can be made available to all of you in our annual update of the *Information Package on the Control of Precursors*.

Illicit drug manufacture continues to remain at high levels with the associated human suffering and societal problems. The Board invites you all to join efforts, exchange experiences and good practices, and actively contribute to a consensus-building process on the need for global action on designer precursors.

I also take this opportunity to refer to the increasing emergence of NPS belonging to the benzodiazepine class (also known as “designer benzodiazepines”), which over the past years have posed considerable challenges to the international drug control system.

With limited medical use but yet potentially more harmful than existing well-known benzodiazepines, the chemical and pharmacological profile of many of these designer benzodiazepines remain unknown: detecting and monitoring is therefore extremely difficult.

Greater effort should be devoted, both internationally and nationally, to understand this issue and the nature of these substances, so as to provide a more rigorous basis for a better policy response.

I would also like to refer to the scheduling decisions taken in 2020 by the Commission on cannabis and cannabis-related substances. I was pleased to have the opportunity prior to the vote to address the Commission on the control implications of the recommendations.

INCB is committed to supporting Member States and their competent national authorities to ensure treaty compliance pursuant to the decisions taken.

As there is a growing number of countries engaged in the cultivation of cannabis for medical use, the Board is working with Member States on the development of guidance on the reporting and information requirements for cannabis and cannabis-related substances.

The Board looks forward to continuing to work with the State Parties and partners to address the challenges as outlined today.

Thank you.

* * *