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**Statement by Ms. Jagjit Pavadia, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

**Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Special Event commemorating
the United Nations International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking**

25 June 2021

Madam Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to meet with you to commemorate the 2021 International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, with the timely and appropriate theme “Share Facts on Drugs, Save Lives”.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate UNODC on the 2021 World Drug Report. The Report is a valuable tool for better understanding the ever-changing world drug situation. INCB is committed to continued cooperation with UNODC, to ensure that the support provided to Member States within our respective mandates results in the maximum possible benefit to those we serve.

Evidence-based drug policy is a prerequisite to ensuring health and well-being, contributing to achievement of the SDGs, particularly goal 3, and – above all – saving lives.

The pandemic has demonstrated the need for universal access to health care, including access to medicines containing controlled substances and uninterrupted prevention and treatment services. It has also highlighted the need for reliable factual information which is accessible to all. This sharing of facts about drugs also extends to ensuring accurate perceptions

of risks and INCB reiterates its call on governments to ensure the provision of evidence-based prevention services, in which we recognize the valuable role of civil society.

The system of international drug control established by the drug control conventions has proven to be effective in ensuring the continued international trade in controlled substances for industrial, medical and scientific purposes. During the pandemic, INCB convened an expert group meeting on facilitating timely supply of and access to controlled substances during emergency situations. We highlighted the need for Governments to exercise flexibility in implementing the simplified control measures for the international trade in those substances, so as to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to save lives. While the systems largely functioned, further development is required to ensure a global response, with the Board assisting through the INCB Learning Project.

Comprehensive data is also key to developing effective treatment and rehabilitation programmes. In some countries and regions, this data remains virtually non-existent. INCB has been calling on governments to improve data collection to facilitate the design and adoption of evidence-based drug policies and the provision of appropriate prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services.

This is particularly important as the drug control conventions have at their heart the objective of safeguarding the health and wellbeing of all people. They oblige Parties to take measures for the prevention of illicit drug use and for early identification, treatment, education, aftercare, rehabilitation, and social reintegration. The human right to health should form the basis for the humane treatment of people who use drugs, while recognizing that if certain drugs are becoming more prevalent in some communities, there

needs to be strengthened cooperation on adding protections for the rights of children. Children have a right to be protected from the illicit use of drugs and from involvement in the illicit production and trafficking of drugs and there is an urgent need to overcome stigma associated with drug use. This will ensure that all people, including women and minority communities, can access prevention and treatment services without discrimination.

Human rights protections also need to be strengthened in addressing illicit drug use and trafficking and in any criminal justice responses to drug use. This includes respect for the rule of law and human rights, the presumption of innocence, the prohibition of arbitrary arrest and detention, the right to a fair trial and protection against all forms of cruel and inhumane punishment.

At the same time, criminality must be addressed. The World Drug Report shows how drug sales over the dark web have increased, how NPS markets are emerging in countries where control systems may be weaker, and how illicit drug manufacturers continue to change the chemicals they use to bypass controls. INCB continues to promote partnerships among Governments, international organizations and the private sector to prevent and interdict sales of NPS, emerging non-medical synthetic opioids and other dangerous substances. INCB special intelligence-gathering operations, such as those conducted through INCB's GRIDS Programme, bring together focal points in police, drug control, customs, postal and regulatory agencies. This enables them to craft effective responses to all aspects of this problem. INCB is continuing to support Governments in addressing the proliferation of non-scheduled chemicals, building on the Conference Room Paper submitted by INCB to the sixty-third session of the Commission.

In closing, I reiterate that many lives can be saved through the implementation of the provisions of the drug control conventions, supported by the sharing of facts and data. Public health and wellbeing can be enhanced, contributing to attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 3 of Good Health and Wellbeing for all.

Thank you.

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