

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

Awareness raising event: *Improving Availability*

New York, 8 June 2022

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join again with the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Health Organization and other stake holders to raise awareness of the need to scale up implementation of the treaties and policy commitments to improve availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. I congratulate Ambassador D'Hoop on his initiative that was launched with the Joint Call to Action by WHO, UNODC and INCB earlier this year.

For many years, the INCB has been calling the attention of the international community, including the ECOSOC and the CND to the global inequities in availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. The issue was the focus of a series of supplements to the INCB annual reports for 2010, 2015 and 2018. These reports highlighted disparities in availability, and outlined the barriers to access and availability, set out recommendations and a way forward for Member States to improve the situation.

INCB's special availability reports identified the main barriers to adequate availability as communicated by Member States to INCB. These were related to a lack of capacity, under-resourced health systems, lack of know-how to accurately evaluate the needs of the population, inadequate regulation and too few sufficiently trained health-care professionals.

Internationally controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are essential for a wide range of medical purposes, from anaesthesia, palliative care, to treatment of opioid use disorder.

The political will of the international community has been reiterated through General Assembly, ECOSOC and CND resolutions to ensure that globally all people have access to the controlled substances they need for medical treatment.

Global imbalances in the consumption of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes remain serious. INCB's 2021 annual report highlighted that almost all consumption of opioid analgesics remains concentrated in developed countries in Europe, North America and Oceania. The lowest-consuming regions in the world include Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, South Asia, and East and South-East Asia, home to a large proportion of the global population. Based on consumption data reported by Member States to INCB, we know that in 2020 low- and middle-income countries, consumed only 17 per cent of the total amount of morphine used for the management of pain.

With respect to internationally controlled psychotropic substances, which are essential for the treatment of anxiety disorders and epilepsy, we see that their availability is still confined to high-income countries. This is despite the fact that significantly more people in low- and middle-income countries suffer from these conditions.

It is clear that the political will needs to be translated into tangible action to prevent unnecessary suffering.

Such action is essential to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health and wellbeing for all at all ages.

These regional imbalances are not due to a shortage of opiate raw materials. Supply has been found to be more than sufficient to satisfy demand reported to INCB in form of estimates of consumption.

In this regard, the Board encourages governments to calculate their estimates on the basis of the methods suggested in the “Guide on Estimating Requirements for Substances under International Control” developed by the INCB and the WHO.

The choice of which method to use is determined by the availability appropriate data, necessary resources and the structure of the controlled substance supply chain and distribution system. The competent national authorities need to familiarize themselves with the guide and identify the method that is best suited for their situation.

There is an urgent need to strengthen capacity to collect data from all stakeholders in the supply and consumption chain for determination of an accurate estimation of their requirements for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

INCB is committed to supporting Governments in their renewed efforts to improve availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and prevent diversion and misuse.

To assist in addressing these issues, in cooperation with the WHO and UNODC, INCB Learning is supporting competent national authorities to improve the accuracy of their estimates of requirements for medical and scientific purposes.

Ongoing humanitarian emergencies, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, have demonstrated the urgent need to ensure that availability of controlled medicines encompasses emergency situations. INCB has been raising awareness about applying simplified control procedures for the export, transportation and provision of controlled medicines in emergency situations to ensure all patients have access to the controlled medicines they need in consultation with other stakeholders.

INCB is currently engaging with Member States and NGOs on the current situation, and our findings will be presented in a special availability supplement to our 2022 Annual Report, to be launched early 2023.

The 2021 INCB annual report calls for targeted policies to ensure availability with the support of governments, health systems and health professionals, civil society, the pharmaceutical industry and the international community. INCB also recommends that countries with greater resources assist other countries in their efforts to ensure access to and availability

of substances for treatment of pain. Decisive and cooperative action by Member States is required so that no patient is left behind to suffer unnecessarily.

Thank You.