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

**United Nations Economic and Social Council
Management Segment,
Item 19 (d): Narcotic drugs
*Report of the International Narcotics Control Board***

New York, 8 to 9 June 2022

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to present to the Council the annual report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2021¹.

The annual report contains recommendations to Member States, the United Nations and other international and regional organizations based on INCB's review of implementation of the three international drug control conventions.

The conventions are founded upon concern for the health and welfare of humankind. To this end, INCB is committed to supporting Member States in treaty implementation and advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 3 on health and well-being and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

The key goal of both the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances is to ensure the availability of these indispensable substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing diversion and misuse.

National responses to INCB questionnaires in 2010, 2015 and 2018 showed that the main barriers to adequate availability were related to lack of capacity, under-resourced health systems, lack of knowledge for accurately evaluating the needs of the population, inadequate regulation and too few sufficiently trained health-care professionals. Right now, INCB is engaging with Member States and civil society on the current situation and barriers faced, and this will be the focus of a special supplement to our 2022 Annual Report.

While some progress has been made, there are still substantial global imbalances in the consumption of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for licit purposes.

Chapter II of the INCB annual report reviews the functioning of the international drug control system and highlights, among other issues, that almost all consumption of opioid analgesics remains concentrated in developed countries in Europe, North America and Oceania. At the other extreme, the lowest-consuming regions in the world include Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, South Asia, and East and South-

¹ E/INCB/2021/1, available in the six United Nations languages:

<https://www.incb.org/incb/en/publications/annual-reports/annual-report.html>

East Asia. In 2020, 82.6 per cent of the world's population, mainly in low- and middle-income countries, consumed only 17 per cent of the total amount of morphine used for the management of pain.

Some psychotropic substances are essential for the treatment of anxiety disorders and epilepsy. Yet their availability is still confined to high-income countries, regardless of the fact that a much greater number of people in low- and middle-income countries live with these conditions.

In our 2021 annual report, we reiterate the urgent need to increase levels of consumption and to improve the prescription and use of opioid analgesics for medical purposes in all countries reporting inadequate and very inadequate levels of consumption. We also call for targeted policies with the support of governments, health systems and health professionals, civil society, the pharmaceutical industry and the international community.

The COVID-19 pandemic and recent and ongoing humanitarian emergencies have demonstrated the need to ensure that availability of and access to controlled medicines extends to emergency situations. Together with partners including the World Health Organization, World Customs Organization and UNODC, and following consultations with humanitarian relief agencies, INCB has been raising awareness about the possibility of 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.

The INCB Learning programme is building the capacity of national authorities towards ensuring the adequate availability of controlled substances. INCB e-learning tools are available for the competent national authorities of your countries, and training seminars are being held region-by-region.

The thematic chapter of INCB's 2021 Annual Report is on illicit financial flows related to drug trafficking and their impact on development and security. Such flows serve as the lifeblood for organized criminal groups engaged in drug trafficking. Curbing these illicit financial flows is therefore essential to addressing drug trafficking around the world. Our report highlights the impact of illicit financial flows, including corruption, violence, instability, and stifling of development. Africa loses approximately \$88.6 billion, or 3.7% of its GDP, to illicit financial flows every year, almost equivalent to official developmental assistance and foreign direct investment. I encourage the Council to take this issue into account in consideration of development priorities.

In the Annual Report we also highlight the link between social media use and drug use which is of concern as young people are the main users of social media. Social media platforms can glamourize drug use and create opportunities to purchase drugs. Governments are encouraged to consider utilising social media for drug prevention programmes and to work in partnership with service providers to reduce exploitation of social media platforms.

In a global issue highlighting the differences between 'depenalization', 'decriminalization' and 'legalization', we recall that the legalization of non-medical use of drugs contravenes the conventions and reiterate that proportionality should be a guiding principle in drug-related criminal justice matters. The use of alternatives to conviction and punishment, as provided for by the conventions, can form an integral part of a balanced and human-rights based approach to drug policy.

Furthermore, a treaty-based function of the Board is the scheduling of precursors found to be frequently used in the illicit manufacture of drugs. In March 2022,

the Commission on Narcotic Drugs placed three fentanyl precursors under international control on the recommendation of the Board.

Continuing with precursors, INCB's 2021 Precursors Report² on chemicals used in illicit drug manufacture highlights significant shortcomings in controls at the national level over manufacture, trade and distribution, including Internet-facilitated trade in precursor chemicals. INCB is calling for enhancement of national precursors control and regulatory frameworks, noting that there is virtually no diversion from licit international trade.

INCB's Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Programme is building the capacity of Member States to prevent trafficking in new psychoactive substances and non-medical synthetic opioids, in close cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Universal Postal Union, World Customs Organization, Oceania Customs Organization, and other international and regional organizations.

INCB's recommendations to Member States, UN bodies and other international and regional organizations address all these issues, including calling for a focus on supply and demand reduction strategies that also address illicit financial flows.

Full implementation of the drug control conventions will not only contribute to progress on the 2030 Agenda, but will also contribute to the protection of human rights.

Thank you.

² E/INCB/2021/4 https://www.incb.org/incb/en/precursors/technical_reports/precursors-technical-reports.html