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**Statement by Prof. Jallal Toufiq, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

**Commission on Narcotic Drugs Thematic Discussions on the
Implementation of All International Drug Policy Commitments,
Following-up to the 2019 Ministerial Declaration**

***Challenge – “the abuse, illicit cultivation and production and
manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances,
as well as the illicit trafficking in those substances and in
precursors, have reached record levels, and the illicit demand
for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals are on
the rise”***

23 October 2023

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenge we are discussing this afternoon has never been this complex, with trends in trafficking changing rapidly. Illicit drug manufacture, particularly of synthetic drugs, has become even more sophisticated, is often of an industrial scale, and benefits from new methods and sources for securing the needed chemical precursors and specialized equipment, challenging precursor control frameworks at both the international and national levels.

INCB has noted a marked discrepancy between seizures of key precursors and of the corresponding end-products, in this case synthetic drugs, in several regions of the world. The downward trend in both the licit international movement and seizure of precursor

chemicals included in Table I and II of the 1988 Convention is contradicted by the upward trend in the seizures of the illicit drugs usually manufactured with these internationally controlled chemicals. East and South-East Asia together with North America accounted for almost 90 percent of all methamphetamine seizures globally in the period 2017 to 2021 but few seizures of the internationally controlled precursors used in methamphetamine manufacture have been reported in this region. A similar divergence between the amounts of drugs seized and the reported amount of seized chemicals is also seen for other synthetic drugs, including amphetamine (“captagon”) precursors in West Asia. INCB has identified two possible explanations for these discrepancies.

The first is that illicit drug manufacture is increasingly fed by chemicals diverted from domestic distribution channels, as highlighted by INCB in recent years. Results of an INCB survey point at loopholes in a significant number of the countries in the monitoring of final destinations of controlled chemicals domestically manufactured, traded and distributed. Preliminary results of the survey can be found in chapter IV of the 2021 Precursors report; the final findings of the survey will be included in the 2023 Precursors report to be published early in 2024.

The second possible explanation for the divergence between the amounts of drugs seized and the reported amount of seized chemicals is that non-scheduled chemicals, including designer precursors, are used as alternatives for controlled precursors in illicit drug manufacture. For almost a decade, the Board has alerted

Governments to the risks and challenges posed by these substances to international precursors control, pointing out that there are virtually no limitations to the range of chemicals and manufacturing methods that could potentially be employed in illicit drug manufacture, especially synthetic drug manufacture. Countries across all five continents have reported seizures of such substances.

Identifying a more proactive, innovative and dynamic approach that would complement the regulatory frameworks is now essential.

To assist Governments in responding to the emergence of non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors, the Board's "Pre-Export Notification (PEN) Online Light" system enables the exchange of pre-export notifications for non-scheduled chemicals on a voluntary basis. Since its launch in October 2022, approximately 700 pre-export notifications have been submitted by 12 exporting countries to 50 importing countries and territories.

Engaging industry to play a more proactive role in preventing diversion and sourcing of chemicals and equipment used in illicit drug manufacture has emerged as fundamental element for precursors control, both nationally and internationally.

This concept has proved to be an invaluable supplement to regulatory frameworks, owing to the flexibility of industry partners to adjust quickly to changing circumstances. Of key importance is the knowledge and understanding of the range of industries that deal with chemicals and thus might – often unknowingly – be targeted by traffickers to obtain chemicals for illicit drug manufacture. This also

applies for equipment-related industry, a much more specialized and smaller market.

Illicit drug manufacturing is evolving at a very high speed. Criminal operators have already understood the many benefits that synthetic drugs can offer compared with natural drugs and are already re-designing their supply chains. They are unscrupulous and quick to adjust to changing legal and economic environments and INCB stands ready to support Governments in improving their regulatory efforts to control precursors as well as in strengthening partnerships with national industrial sectors.

Thank you.