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**Statement by Ms. Jagjit Pavadia, Member,
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 criminal misuse of information and
communications technologies for illicit drug-related activities
is increasing”***

25 October 2023

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The escalating use of information and communications technologies for illicit drug-related activities represents a contemporary challenge that encompasses technology, law enforcement and public health concerns. The advent and rapid expansion of digital technologies has provided nefarious actors with unprecedented opportunities to engage in drug-related crime. This has necessitated the use of a multifaceted holistic approach to be undertaken by Governments in cooperation with the private sector to prevent and curb these activities.

Illicit trade in controlled substances has found fertile ground on the dark web, where anonymous transactions are facilitated through cryptocurrencies. These underground decentralized financial systems have enabled the growth of online drug

marketplaces, making it exceedingly difficult for law enforcement agencies to trace and apprehend those involved. Increasingly, criminal networks have adopted encrypted communication platforms to conduct their operations securely, including through app-based technology of closed drug marketplaces.

Conversely, new psychoactive substances are openly advertised by vendors on the surface web, exploiting legitimate social media and e-commerce platforms, despite the public health threats of these emerging substances. Vendors exploit e-commerce websites to reach a broader customer base, complicating efforts of governments to safeguard health and wellbeing of citizens. The rapidly changing nature of markets for dangerous substances presents challenges in terms of monitoring, regulating or prosecuting these drug-related activities.

In 2018, INCB's Global OPIOIDS Project exchanged intelligence among government law enforcement focal points on 77 emerging vendor marketplaces misusing information and communications technologies exploiting legitimate leading global online services to sell the deadliest synthetic opioids. Identified through INCB's SNOOP tool, those marketplaces were subsequently dismantled by the Governments' private sector partners. However, by 2022 the number of targeted global marketplaces identified by SNOOP, were communicated to national authorities and dismantled by the private sector increased to over 1,450.

Increasing criminal misuse of information and communications technologies for drug-related activities transcends

national boundaries. International collaboration and the sharing of intelligence is needed to effectively combat the global reach of these operations. The borderless nature of the Internet poses not only jurisdictional challenges but legal frameworks and capacity of many countries encounter difficulties in keeping pace to investigate these technological developments.

Addressing this challenge and safeguarding health and wellbeing from the threats posed by these developments requires closer international cooperation, a holistic approach by Governments, and cooperation with the private sector to implement and effectively combat the evolving nature of technology-driven drug trafficking in real-time.

Thank you for your attention..