

*Check against delivery*

**Speech by Ms. Jagjit Pavadia, President,  
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)  
Sixty-sixth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs  
Vienna, 13-17 March 2023**

**Agenda Item 5 (d) International cooperation to ensure the availability of  
narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific  
purposes while preventing their diversion**

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board, it is an honour to address the Commission to once again make an important call on behalf of those who do not have access to controlled substances for medical purposes. The international drug control system was created with the aim of protecting the health and well-being of all people and must be implemented in a comprehensive, balanced and proportionate manner. However, most of the world population still has limited or no access to controlled essential medicines.

INCB is proud to have been an equal partner in the initiative of Ambassador D'Hoop in this direction.

The survey of INCB highlights the inadequate global distribution in the consumption of opiates, which does not seem to be the result of a lack of supply of raw materials and opioids, which are sufficient to meet requirements as reported by governments. However, many national authorities do not have the capacity to accurately assess the actual needs of their populations or health care systems. There are significant disparities between countries and regions in the availability of narcotic drugs due to such inaccurate estimates of medical needs and due to limited access stemming from a number of factors, including affordability.

While the situation related to psychotropic substances is less clear, data reported to INCB show that the availability of some essential psychotropic substances for the treatment of mental health and neurological conditions and substance use

disorders remains limited to high-income countries. This is despite a much greater number of people living with these conditions in low- and middle-income countries.

To further support Member States in improving the situation, INCB has published a supplement to its 2022 Annual Report, entitled “*No Patient Left Behind: Progress in Ensuring Adequate Access to Internationally Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes*”. The supplement describes how factors such as fear of diversion, fear of addiction, fear of prosecution and cultural attitudes continue to be significant impediments to the availability of and access by patients to controlled medicines. Other impediments include a lack of training and awareness of health professionals with respect to the prescribing and dispensing of opioid analgesics. Moreover, the Board observed an increase in problems in sourcing and limited financial resources, possibly related to the COVID-19 pandemic and emergency situations in many parts of the world. This also points to structural problems which need to be addressed.

INCB is taking action in collaboration with WHO, UNODC, the Pan American Health Organization, the Organization of American States Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission and other agencies to support countries in their efforts to provide adequate medication to patients. Through the INCB Learning Programme, the Board is providing training, as well as awareness raising workshops on availability. Training which identifies and addresses the specific challenges faced by countries on an individual as well as regional level is pivotal to ensuring availability and reducing the risk of diversion.

Furthermore, in August 2022, a new INCB Learning e-module on Ensuring the Adequate Availability of Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes was launched. This module is a comprehensive tool for competent national authorities to strengthen their knowledge about the issue and increase their capacity to take action to tackle this global challenge. I would like to encourage all of your competent national authorities to take advantage of this tool.

INCB encourages Member States and partner organizations to continue supporting INCB Learning, in line with CND resolutions 63/3 and 62/5, to build capacity

to implement the provisions of the drug control conventions and to improve availability of controlled substances for medical purposes while preventing diversion and misuse.

The supplement to INCB's 2022 Annual Report also sets out a number of recommendations to improve availability. These include the continued pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, prioritization of training of health professionals in rational prescribing and safe administration of controlled substances and administrative and budgetary measures to address problems of procurement and affordability, including in rural areas.

The recommendations also cover legislative and regulatory systems, health systems, education and awareness raising, and use of the *INCB/WHO Guide on Estimating Requirements for Substances under International Control*<sup>1</sup>.

In light of the many ongoing humanitarian emergencies and related increased needs for controlled medicines and supply chain disruptions, INCB invites countries to review and implement the recommendations contained in the INCB factsheet "*Lessons from countries and humanitarian aid organizations in facilitating the timely supply of controlled substances during emergency situations*"<sup>2</sup>.

At this juncture, I would like to offer the Board's sympathies to those affected by the recent earthquake emergency in Syria and Türkiye, and the ongoing humanitarian emergency affecting Ukraine. INCB reminds Governments that in emergencies such as these, simplified control procedures can be used for the export, transportation and provision of medicinal products containing controlled substances.

In closing, I would like to reiterate INCB's commitment to supporting Member States in improving the availability of internationally controlled substances.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.incb.org/documents/Narcotic-Drugs/Guidelines/estimating\\_requirements/NAR\\_Guide\\_on\\_Estimating\\_EN\\_Ebook.pdf](https://www.incb.org/documents/Narcotic-Drugs/Guidelines/estimating_requirements/NAR_Guide_on_Estimating_EN_Ebook.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.incb.org/incb/en/publications/guidelines-for-use-by-competent-national-authorities.html>