

Resolution 61/8

Enhancing and strengthening international and regional cooperation and domestic efforts to address the international threats posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs,

Reaffirming its commitment to the goals and objectives of the three international drug control conventions, including concern about the health and welfare of humankind as well as the individual and public health-related, social and safety problems resulting from the abuse of synthetic opioids, including fentanyl-related compounds, and reaffirming further its determination to prevent and treat the abuse of such drugs and substances and prevent and counter their illicit production, manufacture and trafficking,

Recalling the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”,⁵⁰ in its entirety, reiterating that the operational recommendations contained therein are integrated, indivisible, multidisciplinary and mutually reinforcing and are aimed at a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach to addressing and countering the world drug problem,

Recalling its resolution 53/4 of 12 March 2010, on promoting adequate availability of internationally controlled licit drugs for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion and abuse, and its resolution 55/7 of 16 March 2012, on promoting measures to prevent drug overdose, in particular opioid overdose,

Acknowledging with grave concern the international challenge posed by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in, and the non-medical use of, synthetic opioids, and their diversion in some cases, in particular fentanyl-related compounds, in part due to increased demand, in some cases, to public health, welfare and safety and law enforcement and, in some cases, public security, as appropriate, and noting that drug traffickers are exploiting the market with new methods such as the sale of synthetic opioids and precursors online and their distribution through the international mail system and express consignment carrier shipments so as to make available for the purpose of abuse an increasing number of synthetic opioids in addition to and as alternatives to internationally controlled drugs,

Committed to ensuring the safety and security of individuals, societies and communities by intensifying its efforts to prevent and counter the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic opioids, as appropriate,

Noting that falsified or fraudulent substances, purporting to be medicine, that contain synthetic opioids are a matter of concern because they may endanger the health and welfare of humankind,

Recognizing that a comprehensive global response at the national, regional and international levels is required to curb the threat posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids, including through the international scheduling of the most prevalent, persistent and harmful synthetic opioids,

Determined to strengthen national and international action to address the challenges posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids, including their adverse health and social consequences, and underscoring the importance of enhancing information-sharing and early-warning networks, developing appropriate national legislative, regulatory, prevention and treatment models and supporting the

⁵⁰ General Assembly resolution S-30/1, annex.

scientific evidence-based review and scheduling of the most prevalent, persistent and harmful substances,

Recognizing the important role played by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the treaty-mandated roles of the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, in collecting data to inform scheduling recommendations made to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in particular as they relate to synthetic opioids,

Welcoming the publications by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime under the global Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends programme entitled “Understanding the synthetic drug market: the NPS factor”, of March 2018, and “Fentanyl and its analogues: 50 years on”, of March 2017, as important for the enhancement of international understanding of the threats posed by fentanyl and its analogues,

Recalling its resolutions 55/1 of 16 March 2012, 56/4 of 15 March 2013, 57/9 of 21 March 2014, 58/11 of 17 March 2015, 59/8 of 22 March 2016 and 60/4 of 17 March 2017 on enhancing national and international action on new psychoactive substances, in particular relating to sharing information on supply reduction and demand reduction strategies and on emerging evidence about effective treatment models and by supporting the international drug scheduling system to meet the challenges posed by these substances, noting that Member States and relevant international and regional organizations need to enhance law enforcement actions in addressing new psychoactive substances as a type of synthetic drug, and noting also the relevance of those measures to the threat posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids,

Reiterating the importance of further strengthening existing international, regional and bilateral cooperation mechanisms for the control of the non-medical use of synthetic opioids, including through the participation of Member States in regional or international database platforms supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board, with a view to gathering information, on a voluntary basis, on all the factors relevant to the integral monitoring and analysis of trafficking and use trends related to the non-medical use of synthetic opioids,

Noting with appreciation the efforts of the World Health Organization, including its Expert Committee on Drug Dependence, to regularly review new trends in synthetic opioids, including fentanyl-related compounds, to inform recommendations on potential control under the international drug control conventions,

Noting the need for capacity-building to ensure the safety of law enforcement units in pursuing the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic opioids,

1. *Urges* Member States to strengthen cooperation efforts at the bilateral, regional and global levels to reduce demand for synthetic opioids for non-medical use and to counter illicit trafficking in synthetic opioids with a view to protecting public health, welfare and safety and law enforcement and, in some cases, public security, as appropriate;

2. *Also urges* Member States to improve access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes by appropriately addressing existing barriers in this regard, including those related to legislation, regulatory systems, health-care systems, affordability, the training of health-care professionals, education, awareness-raising, estimates, assessment and reporting, benchmarks for the consumption of substances under control, and international cooperation, coordination and assistance, while concurrently preventing their diversion, abuse and trafficking;

3. *Calls upon* Member States, as appropriate, to explore innovative approaches to more effectively address any threat posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids by involving all relevant sectors, such as broadening domestic and regional control over synthetic opioids, reinforcing health-care systems and building

the capacity of law enforcement and health-care professionals to respond to this challenge;

4. *Also calls upon* Member States to take appropriate measures in accordance with national legislation, such as calling the attention of health-care professionals to the threats posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids and promoting cooperation with pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors, as necessary, in order to prevent the abuse of prescribed synthetic opioids, including fentanyl;

5. *Requests* Member States, where applicable, to continue to provide information, within existing reporting requirements, to the Secretariat on national efforts to address the international challenge posed by the use of synthetic opioids for non-medical purposes, and requests the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in consultation with the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, within their respective mandates, to report to the Commission at its sixty-second session on any such information received from Member States;

6. *Encourages* Member States to support the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization in accelerating the process of issuing recommendations for the inclusion of synthetic opioids in the international control regime, in particular through more frequent meetings of the Expert Committee on Drug Dependence of the World Health Organization and increased data-sharing using the existing online portals supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board;

7. *Requests* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization to continue their efforts, within existing programming, to develop new and innovative approaches to better address the threats posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids, including treatment and prevention of their abuse, by updating, publicizing and disseminating reports on the latest trafficking and use trends related to the non-medical use of synthetic opioids, along with making such information accessible through the existing online portals and targeting new paradigms in the world drug problem;

8. *Encourages* Member States to actively participate in early warning networks and promote, as appropriate, the use of drug surveillance lists and controls and the sharing of relevant information through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, within their respective mandates, and enhance bilateral, subregional, regional and international cooperation in the identification and reporting of the threats posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids and incidents involving them and, to that end, strengthen the use of national, regional and international established reporting and information exchange systems, such as, where appropriate, the early warning advisory on new psychoactive substances and the global Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Project Ion of the International Narcotics Control Board;

9. *Invites* Member States to promote the inclusion in national drug policies, in accordance with national legislation and, as appropriate, of elements for the prevention and treatment of drug overdose, in particular opioid overdose, including the use of opioid receptor antagonists such as naloxone and other measures based on scientific evidence to reduce drug-related mortality;

10. *Affirms* the commitment of Member States to share, as appropriate, relevant information with and strengthen the capacity of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, and other relevant international and regional organizations to prioritize the review of the most prevalent, persistent and harmful synthetic opioids for non-medical use and to facilitate informed scheduling decisions by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs;

11. *Encourages* Member States and, within their mandates, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board, and relevant regional and international organizations to collect data, analyse evidence and share information within existing programmes with respect to trafficking in synthetic opioids for non-medical use conducted via the Internet, the international mail system and express consignment carrier shipments, and to continue to strengthen legal, law enforcement and criminal justice responses, based on national legislation and international cooperation, so as to curb such activities;

12. *Also encourages* Member States to share information, to the extent possible, and when consistent with national legal frameworks, on equipment frequently used in the illicit manufacture and identification of synthetic opioids;

13. *Requests* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, together with the International Narcotics Control Board, and the World Health Organization to convene an intergovernmental expert group meeting before the sixty-second regular session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, taking into consideration cost implications for Member States, on the international challenge posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids to learn more about the challenges and to propose core elements for an international response;

14. *Welcomes* the initiatives of Member States to take action to enhance international cooperation and coordination regarding an appropriate global response to the threats posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids at the national, regional and international levels, to learn more about the challenges posed by them and to advance strategic solutions as part of such a coordinated response;

15. *Invites* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to continue to act as the coordinating entity within the United Nations system on efforts to implement activities to address the challenges posed by non-medical use of synthetic opioids;

16. *Invites* Member States and other donors to provide extrabudgetary resources for the purposes described above, in accordance with the rules and procedures of the United Nations.