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**Statement by Jagjit Pavadia, President,
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**at the Intersessional Meeting of the Commission on
Narcotic Drugs (CND)**

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*Thematic session 3: Criminal misuse of information and
communications technologies for illicit drug-related activities*

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Experts, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address the CND, on behalf of the International Narcotics Control Board, at this intersessional meeting of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the criminal misuse of information and communications technologies for illicit drug-related activities. INCB is supporting governments in this priority area through its GRIDS – Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances – Programme.

As we all know Information and communication technologies are highly susceptible to misuse for criminal purposes because they enable transactions to be made in expeditiously with high level of anonymity. Non-scheduled synthetically engineered drugs, including various new psychoactive substances (NPS) and non-medical synthetic opioids and drugs of traditional use are ordered online on the clear web and shipped around the world along with millions of letters and parcels each day. In this era of globalization, with the growing volume and complexity of communications and trade, it has become particularly profitable for drug traffickers to make use of the Internet through darknet and clear web to market their products and to exploit the ever-growing list of logistic services to deliver their products directly to their customers. The Internet spheres accessible with ordinary browsers and applications, including online pharmacies, e-commerce marketplaces, and social media platforms and encrypted messaging services are servicing this illicit supply chain.

Dark web is accessible only with special browsers, and these marketplaces tend to attract the attention of Governments and the international community due to their intrinsically secretive nature and technical novelty.

This problem is not an issue of only of law and regulatory control, but of right to life, social protection, health and social well-being. Those profiting from the misuse of technologies that are

meant for sustainable development of humankind should be brought to book. The problem is spiralling out of control and the international community must take urgent action against this phenomenon to prevent and punish those perpetuating this misuse.

When INCB's global projects started engaging with Governments and marketplaces on this matter, we saw that some of the world's leading marketplaces had detected the misuse of their services, and were quick to remove such problematic posts and users. However, many of the legitimate marketplaces had, at that time, yet to devise mechanisms to detect such misuse.

Rapid sharing of information and effective coordination among national authorities and relevant industry partners is required. INCB has therefore been sharing its experience and expertise in promoting public-private partnerships, as developed through activities relating to precursor control, NPS and synthetic opioids. This cooperation between national authorities and the private sector aims and assists in bridging the information gap to prevent the exploitation of legitimate businesses for trafficking in dangerous substances.

Through the Global Rapid Interdiction on Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Programme, which unites Project Ion on new psychoactive substances and the Opioids Project under one umbrella, we have 2,013 focal points including 252 regulators

from 194 countries/territories. These focal points also include customs officers, police officers and postal inspectors. We also have four Regional Technical Advisors (RTAs) in Egypt, Mexico, Nigeria and Thailand, who coordinate our exchange with Member States. In doing so, the focus is on the four key areas exploited by drug traffickers, or, as we call it, “the Four Ms”. These are **manufacture, marketing, movement and monetization**. The GRIDS Programme has been especially successful in promoting relevant partnerships in the area of marketing, in particular the marketing of dangerous substances through the “clear web” sphere of the Internet.

In the area of Marketing collaborative actions with regulatory and enforcement authorities of countries in East and South Asia and the rapid dissemination of relevant information has resulted in a significant reduction in suspicious selling offers of dangerous substances on e-commerce marketplaces, curtailing their availability and preventing their use. In Latin America, similar successes were achieved. This also led to seizures of precursors of heroin fentanyl's and the arrest of perpetrators. The INCB list of fentanyl related substances with no legitimate use which was compiled in early 2018 and made available to Member States assisted in the successful completion of these actions.

The GRIDS Programme has also been committed to building capacity and providing guidance in intelligence sharing and operational cooperation among Member State focal points

through dedicated communication tools accessible only to designated officials, namely the Project Ion Incident Communication System (IONICS) and several additional tools linked to it. One such tool monitors suspicious activities relating to the marketing of dangerous substances on the clear web sphere of the Internet and provides Governments and their private- sector partners with results in a timely manner. Governments can obtain access to this tool by signing up to IONICS.

Intelligence-gathering operations support Member States' efforts to address this challenge. Earlier this year, the Board's precursors control project implemented a time-bound intelligence gathering operation focused on precursor diversions or trafficking attempts through e-commerce marketplaces. The operation enabled national authorities to collect information on suspicious vendors offering precursors on several of the world's major e-commerce marketplaces.

In relation to the 'Movement' industries, INCB is promoting partnerships with public and private postal operators as well as express courier companies. In 2018, INCB signed a partnership agreement with the Universal Postal Union (UPU) to prevent the misuse of postal services for trafficking in deadly synthetic opioids and other dangerous substances. In relation to the 'Monetization' industries, INCB has had some of the world's major e-wallet companies on board for discussion with Governments on possible

collaboration to prevent the misuse of their services for dangerous substance trafficking.

Looking ahead INCB will further promote public-private partnerships with the four ‘M’ industries.

This work of INCB contributes to progress on Sustainable Development Goal 17, which calls for enhanced global partnerships that bring together Governments, international organizations, and the private sector. Frontline officers working on drug control can safely carry out their functions and sustainably serve the social and economic needs of their communities, while at the same time preventing these harmful substances from reaching the public.

INCB appreciates the support of Member States and peer international organizations, especially the engagement in voluntary cooperation with private-sector partners facilitated by the Board’s global projects. The Board looks forward to further strengthening cooperation with all Member States and partners in preventing the misuse of Internet-related services for trafficking in dangerous substances in order to prevent these substances from reaching our communities, and, ultimately, to contribute to the achievement of the health and wellbeing objectives of the international drug control system and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you.

