



## **International Narcotics Control Board**

### **Contribution to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs 2024 mid-term review of progress in implementation of international drug policy commitments**

*Ministerial declaration on strengthening our actions at the national, regional and international levels to accelerate the implementation of our joint commitments to address and counter the world drug problem, Commission on Narcotic Drugs 2019:*

“...We reaffirm our commitment to a balanced, integrated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary and scientific evidence-based approach to the world drug problem, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility, and recognize the importance of appropriately mainstreaming a gender and age perspective into drug-related policies and programmes and that appropriate emphasis should be placed on individuals, families, communities and society as a whole, with a particular focus on women, children and youth, with a view to promoting and protecting health, including access to treatment, safety and the well-being of all humanity;”

#### **Taking Stock – work undertaken by INCB and progress made since 2019**

Over the five-year period from 2019 to 2023, the Board has continued to fulfil its treaty-mandated monitoring functions by examining national legal, regulatory and policy developments related to all aspects of drug control, in particular with respect to their consistency with the international legal obligations incumbent upon States pursuant to the three drug control conventions. In addition to its normative functions, the Board has also undertaken a number of initiatives to support the implementation of the conventions and achievement of their objectives.

The Board has taken action to ensure an ongoing dialogue with State parties to the conventions on drug control matters and has engaged with them in order to assist them in implementing their obligations in the areas of availability of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals for rational medical use, supply reduction (illicit manufacture, law enforcement, border control), demand reduction (prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, aftercare, social reintegration).

In pursuing this objective, the Board has undertaken 20 country missions aimed at gaining a better appreciation of the specific challenges facing State parties in their drug control efforts, identifying good practices, hearing civil society perspectives, and assessing needs in order to formulate recommendations aimed at fostering increased implementation of the drug control conventions to achieve their health and welfare objectives.

#### *Availability of internationally controlled substances*

Since 2019, INCB has been working to improve the availability and accessibility of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. In 2022, the Board published a “Supplement to the annual report of the Board for 2022 on the availability of Internationally Controlled Substances: No Patient Left Behind: Progress in Ensuring Adequate Access to Internationally Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes.” The supplement provided an update on the global situation on availability and access to controlled substances and on progress made by countries in this area based on the follow-up to the recommendations contained in the 2016 UNGASS outcome document.

#### *System of estimates and assessments for licit trade in internationally controlled substances and ensuring a balance between supply and demand*

As regards the licit manufacture of, trade in and use of drugs, INCB endeavours, in cooperation with Governments, to ensure that adequate supplies of drugs are available for medical and scientific uses

and that diversion of drugs from licit sources to illicit channels does not occur. This includes the administration of a system of estimates of national requirements for narcotic drugs and a voluntary assessment system for psychotropic substances, which monitors licit activities at the international level through a statistical returns system, with a view to assisting Governments in achieving, inter alia, a balance between supply and demand. Annually, the Board reviews nearly 600 supplementary estimates for narcotic drugs, processes over 100 annual assessments for psychotropic substances and monitors over 33,500 shipments of precursor chemicals in international trade through the PEN-Online system. Despite these systems, in some regions there is insufficient availability and INCB is working, together with the World Health Organization and UNODC, to support Governments improve the accuracy of their estimates of requirements for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, to ensure that they reflect actual medical requirements.

#### Monitoring and reporting requirements for cannabis and cannabis-related substances

Following the decisions of the Commission in December 2020 on the WHO recommendations on cannabis and cannabis-related substances, INCB engaged in a dialogue with Member States to clarify the monitoring and reporting requirements for cannabis and cannabis-related substances. This process has led to amendments to the various forms on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (Forms B and C related to statistics for narcotic drugs and Forms B/P, A/P and P for psychotropic substances). Member States welcomed the efforts made by INCB to identify standards for reporting on cannabis and cannabis-related substances in accordance with the monitoring and reporting requirements of the 1961 Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

#### *Support to the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence*

INCB participates as an observer in WHO's Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD) to provide insights to with regards to that committee's scheduling recommendations contributing to the understanding of the trafficking and/or misuse of non-controlled substances, including, for example, ketamine where information was gathered from 101 countries and territories.

#### *Supply of controlled substances during emergency situations*

INCB has held outreach activities, collected information, held inter-agency webinars, CND side-events and finalized the document "Lessons from countries and humanitarian aid organizations in facilitating the Timely Supply of Controlled Substances during Emergency Situations". INCB, together with UNODC and WHO, issued a joint statement on World Humanitarian Day 2021 to raise awareness on the measures available to ensure the unimpeded movement of internationally controlled medicines during emergencies. The topic was also a focus of a global issue in the 2020 Annual Report and a chapter in the 2022 availability supplement.

#### *Monitoring the growing use of substances controlled in Schedule I of the 1971 Convention in clinical trials*

INCB has been monitoring the growing use of substances controlled in Schedule I of the 1971 Convention (namely psilocybin and MDMA) in clinical research trials for potential therapeutic use. Active communication is ongoing to understand how control is being maintained and guidance has been provided to several countries where the cultivation of psilocybin containing mushrooms is being considered.

#### *Preventing illicit manufacture of, trafficking in and use of drugs*

As regards the illicit manufacture of, trafficking in and use of drugs, INCB identifies weaknesses in national and international control systems and contributes to correcting such situations. Over the past five years, assistance was provided to Governments on 73 cases in verifying the authenticity of import/export authorizations and the legitimacy of transactions involving psychotropic substances. Over the same period, Governments' use of the PEN Online platform for international precursor chemical trade monitoring prevented the diversion of nearly two tons of pseudoephedrine preparations

to illicit manufacture. Expansion of the system to the voluntary PEN Online Light system for pre-notification of shipments involving chemicals not under international control has helped to stop shipments amounting to over 350 tons of GBL. INCB's Precursor Incident Communication System has collected information on nearly 2,000 incidents (including 74 on equipment) which led to the prevention of the illicit manufacture of more than 120 tons of amphetamine-type stimulants.

#### *INCB treaty role in the scheduling of chemicals used in illicit manufacture of drugs*

In accordance with article 12 of the 1988 Convention, INCB is responsible for assessing chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs, in order to determine whether they should be placed under international control. Since 2019, INCB has, following assessments, recommended to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs 25 chemicals for inclusion in the tables to the 1988 Convention.

#### *Precursor Chemicals and Equipment*

In addition to supporting States in implementing article 12 of the 1988 Convention, in order to take better advantage of the potential of article 13 of the 1988 Convention, INCB developed and launched several technical tools aimed at strengthening the technical capacity of governments to prevent essential equipment from reaching illicit laboratories. INCB tools made available to Member States include a Technical Paper on Illicit Drug Manufacturing Equipment and Article 13, the Guideline on investigating and preventing diversion of essential equipment, the International Monitoring List of Equipment used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.

#### *Facilitating public private partnerships to prevent illicit drug manufacture*

Engaging the industries handling controlled and non-controlled chemical substances used in illicit drug manufacturing is a pivotal element of the INCB proactive approach to the evolution of illicit drug manufacturing. In addition to the resources INCB has made available to member states on public private partnerships and voluntary code of conduct, INCB is leading a global initiative aimed at expanding national cooperation to categories of industries beyond those that are typically regulated as part of traditional precursor control systems.

The sharing of intelligence under INCB's Projects Cohesion and Prism has resulted in the identification of companies suspected of supplying chemicals for illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants. Additionally, following interventions through the Project Cohesion/Prism mechanism, Governments took steps to address the issue of web postings involving precursors, as well as equipment used for illicit drug manufacture, on business-to-business Internet platforms.

#### *Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Programme*

The INCB's GRIDS Programme is a global project to support Member State governments in effectively reducing illicit supply of new psychoactive substances (NPS), non-medical synthetic opioids, and related precursors. GRIDS and its preceding projects have facilitated real-time information exchange through the INCB's proprietary online communication tool named the Project ION Incident Communication System (IONICS), which is accessible only to registered government users. IONICS users increased by more than eight times, from 172 to 1456 during the review period. The number of communicated incidents increased at an even higher pace from 1,840 to 79,866 during the same period.

GRIDS facilitated cooperation between governments and private sector partners for the prevention of dangerous substance trafficking through organizing over 20 meetings focused on the industries considered most vulnerable to misuse, namely chemical/pharmaceutical manufacture, Internet-related services, logistic services, and online financial intermediaries. Over 250 recommendations from these meetings provided a basis for the four "Practical Guidance" booklets containing self-assessment checklists for governments and the private sector.

The support provided by GRIDS to governments and their private sector partners has led to operational cooperation which has assisted a Government in South Asia identifying and arresting drug dealers

operating on the dark web and a Government in Europe dismantling an organized crime group responsible for shipping NPS and synthetic opioids by mail.

### *INCB Learning*

In its work supporting Member States towards achieving the goals of the international drug control conventions, INCB has noted that many Governments have insufficient capacities to ensure full implementation of treaty provisions and this may lead to undesirable situations. On the one hand, it increases the risk of diversion and trafficking of substances intended for medical and scientific purposes and, on the other, insufficient availability for drugs that are needed for licit purposes. To support Member States meet this challenge, **INCB Learning** has been developed to provide technical assistance to Member States to support them in their compliance with the international drug control treaties on narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals. The ultimate goal of the INCB Learning programme is to ensure the appropriate availability of internationally controlled substances while preventing their misuse and diversion to illicit channels.

Under the INCB Learning programme, 11 regional in-person training seminars have been carried out in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania and over 350 officials have been trained. Furthermore, more than 150 countries and territories have used the e-modules developed under INCB Learning to further strengthen their knowledge on the estimates and assessment systems for narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, the international drug control system and the availability of drugs for medical and scientific purposes.

### *Next Generation IDS*

In addition, the Board is in the process of updating the database known as the International Drug Control System (IDS) which contains the statistical reports and other data provided by Governments pursuant to their reporting obligations under the treaties as well as voluntary information. In addition, the Board provides countries with two online platforms linked to IDS to assist in facilitating the rapid trade in controlled substances (I2ES and PEN Online) while ensuring such trade is not diverted into illicit channels. The new web-based platform, **Next Generation IDS**, will contain a number of new features that will allow the competent national authorities of Governments to provide reporting data more rapidly and accurately, track reporting errors and review historical data. Next Generation IDS, which will provide a protected and secure web environment for Governments, will also have a multilingual interface and deepened integration with PEN Online and I2ES.

## **The way forward: the road to 2029**

Over the period being reviewed, the Board has issued, through its Annual Report and Precursors Report, the recommendations summarized in this document to States parties and international and regional organizations with the aim of fostering effective drug control policies and actions that promote the availability of controlled substances for medical purposes while preventing their diversion into illicit channels, adoption of health and evidence-based drug policies which take into account the specific needs of their populations, respect human rights and provide for responses to drug-related criminality which are proportional and respect due process.

This document also contains information on how implementation of these recommendations and international policy commitments contributes to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 3 on health and wellbeing and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

At the mid-points of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the road to the 2029 CND review, INCB urges Governments and international and regional organizations to apply the recommendations summarized in this document, and encourages civil society to take these recommendations into account in carrying out their work.

**Challenge:**

**Both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying**

*“The adoption of the international drug control conventions was based on the understanding among the international community that the challenges posed by the world drug problem required a coordinated response by States. Reflecting this, the conventions are today among the most widely ratified international instruments in existence. Addressing the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility and requires joint action. In this regard, international platforms and networks for dialogue, information-sharing and debate among States are crucial. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs acts as the principal policymaking body of the United Nations with prime responsibility for drug control matters. The Board calls on Governments to use the Commission as a forum for accessing and providing knowledge and experiences on drug-related successes and challenges and to support the international community in addressing the world drug problem in a comprehensive and collaborative manner.” (INCB Annual Report 2019)*

Misuse of drugs, drug-related crime, the resultant impact on villages, cities and countries worldwide, the global impact on economies, safety, trade and most importantly human health and lifespans is not something any country can handle alone. These issues know no borders, and for them to be tackled, global cooperation is a must.

Foregrounding all such efforts is the political commitment to full implementation of the three international drug control conventions. Exchange of information and data, cooperation in criminal justice matters, material and knowledge-based support to and collaboration based on the principle of common and shared responsibility is the key to assisting regions facing particular challenges.

**Summary of recommendations issued from 2019 to 2023**

The Board reiterates that universal ratification of the drug control conventions is imperative for strengthening the international drug control framework and for ensuring that traffickers do not target non-parties due to actual or perceived weaknesses in the scope of control of scheduled substances. Accordingly, the Board urges all States that have not yet become parties to one or more of these instruments to do so and to take steps to ensure their full implementation.

Reiterating the need for comprehensive and linked-up knowledge networks to effectively address both supply and demand side factors, the Board calls upon all States to regularly provide data on drug production, trafficking and drug misuse prevalence, as well as any information regarding legislation, policies or other efforts on drug misuse prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration in their territories.

It also urges Governments to provide accurate annual and quarterly statistics on the cultivation, production, manufacture and consumption of and international trade in internationally controlled substances, and urges them to continue to strengthen their national mechanisms to monitor the same. Improving and developing national data-collection systems, training key staff regularly to compensate for staff turnover, enhancing inter-agency cooperation and ensuring close cooperation with companies licensed to deal with internationally controlled substances are some ways to augment national mechanisms. It also encourages donor states to include information collection and analysis programmes as part of their assistance programmes.

The Board encourages those countries and territories that have not provided the reports as required under the international drug control conventions to do so as soon as possible and to take necessary measures to ensure that their respective competent national authorities have sufficient resources to prepare the reports in a timely manner. In this regard, INCB offers the possibility of training, including through its INCB Learning programme, to support capacity-building in the area of reporting.

The Board urges Governments actively to use PEN Online, PEN Online Light, PICS, IONICS, and participate in GRIDS activities to prevent diversion of and investigate trafficking incidents involving

internationally controlled precursors, non-scheduled chemicals, illicit-drug manufacturing equipment, new psychoactive substances, non-medical synthetic opioids, and related dangerous substances.

The Board recognises and supports the continued implementation of industry-related initiatives to address the diversion of chemicals, non-scheduled chemicals and dangerous substances to prevent them from reaching illicit laboratories and markets and encourages them to use available tools including the limited international special surveillance list of non-scheduled chemicals to that end.

In a global issue in the Board's 2023 Annual Report on the impact of drug-related crimes on the environment, the Board calls on Governments, with the support of the international community, to take urgent action to address such threats, prioritizing the safety and well-being of vulnerable populations, as well as the protection of the environment. Furthermore, the Board urges Governments to collaborate with the international community and with the United Nations system in improving the available research and data on the dynamics of illicit drugs and the environment and the related impacts across all regions of the globe.

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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 that the illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals are on the rise

*“A significant share of the chemicals seized globally continues to comprise chemicals diverted from domestic distribution channels, including common markets. As regulating the domestic market and monitoring domestic sales and distribution pursuant to article 12, paragraph 8, of the 1988 Convention is the exclusive prerogative of Governments, knowledge of industry landscapes at the national level is a critical first step in protecting these licit markets and their operators from traffickers.” (INCB Precursors Report 2022)*

The Board continues to address emerging issue such as the proliferation of non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors and the use of the Internet for precursors trafficking, while calling on Member States to implement articles 12 and 13 of the 1988 Convention.

Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 form the basis of international precursor control. The fact that there are 190 States parties to the 1988 Convention indicates a firm global commitment to the international system designed to prevent the diversion of chemical precursors to the illicit manufacture of drugs.

The Board continues to highlight the importance of international cooperation and information sharing to tackle trafficking in precursors and equipment that can be used to manufacture drugs. In addition to encouraging Member States to ensure the presence of robust domestic legislative frameworks to regulate listed substances, the Board has also focused its attention on the exchange of actionable intelligence, illicit financial flows and their impact on sustainable development and security.

The Board encourages Governments and international organizations to enable their law and regulatory enforcement focal points to take advantage of the suite of INCB proprietary counter-trafficking tools, including: the Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS) and Project Ion Incident Communication System (IONICS) for secure real-time exchange of information on incidents involving precursor chemicals and new psychoactive substances; the Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Intelligence HD strategic and operational targeting platforms; the eLearning Individualized Training Environment (ELITE) referred to in Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 66/2; and the Scanning of Novel Opioids on Online Platforms (SNOOP) tool for detection and dismantling of online vendor marketplaces, along with GRIDS Programme operational activities. In addition, the Board developed the online platform International Import and Export

Authorization System (I2ES) with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, its secure Internet-based tool Pre-Export Notification (PEN) Online, its recently launched PEN Online Light which provides Governments a tool for the monitoring of international trade in non-scheduled chemicals that could be used in the illicit manufacture of drugs. INCB manages the statistical reports and other data provided by countries pursuant to their reporting obligations under the conventions in the International Drug Control Database System (IDS). This system will be supported through the development of the next generation international drug control system, an INCB initiative to update and expand the functionalities of the existing database.

### **Summary of recommendations issued from 2019 to 2023**

**Precursors and Pre-precursors:** The Board has been warning of the rapid emergence of designer precursors and drugs and the importance of tackling this issue. The response it recommends is designed to address all aspects of the issue. It has offered its full support to Governments in their efforts to implement articles 12 and 13 of the 1988 Convention, with regard to precursors under international control, chemicals not included in the tables of the Convention, and illicit drug manufacturing equipment. The Board recommends making full use of its guidelines to ensure an appropriate response to the diversion of materials and equipment. Governments may also refer to the Board's dedicated [web page on materials and equipment](#), which features select national approaches. Specifically, it offers support in the implementation of CND resolution 65/3, which recommends preemptive action on scheduling substances that can be substituted for seized precursors in real time, to impede traffickers and has developed a number of tools to assist in this regard.

The Board encourages Governments, international donors and organizations and other relevant cooperation partners to build capacities and operational knowledge to prevent chemicals from being diverted into illicit drug manufacture. It reiterates its call to Governments to pay increased attention to the strengthening of comprehensive precursor monitoring systems. The Board recommends that Governments make greater use of the limited international special surveillance list of nonscheduled substances and the list of substances not under international control but under national control in some countries, to prevent chemical diversion.

It also encourages Governments to map their national industry landscapes to establish whether the different categories of industries that might be involved in the manufacture, trade or distribution of chemicals used for illicit drug manufacture are present in their country, as well as their scope and geographical spread. This would allow Governments to approach and eventually engage industries in self-protective, proactive strategies aimed at both reducing opportunities for infiltration by traffickers and facilitating the monitoring of the potential evolution of illicit drug markets.

It also emphasizes the critical importance of the full implementation of the scheduling decisions of the CND for effective global precursor control, urging parties to the 1988 Convention to ensure that, in all cases, those scheduling decisions become fully effective at the national level within 180 days after being communicated by the Secretary-General, as provided for in article 12, paragraph 6, of the Convention.

INCB encourages Governments to increase international cooperation and achieve a global consensus on internationally binding measures, as well as voluntary measures, including those outlined in the Board's guidance document, regarding non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors. In addition, Governments are encouraged to continue to identify approaches and measures, share successful national practices, engage with industry partners, and enhance capabilities and the use of forensic profiling analysis, with a view to identifying the precursors used in illicit drug manufacture. Related to this, it emphasizes the criticality of the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 convention, as explained in the preceding paras.

The Board encourages regulatory and law enforcement authorities to improve their cooperation at the national level and with their international counterparts. It also encourages them to treat stopped

shipments as the starting point of investigations to identify traffickers and new modus operandi, including back-tracking. It urges governments to investigate foiled diversion attempts with the same attention as seizures, as this provides valuable intelligence, which, if shared internationally, could help prevent diversion.

It invites governments to systemically use the advantage of the PEN Online system to supply pre-export notification of shipments. In instances where their legitimacy is in question, the Board recommends that Governments clearly indicate that the shipment would not proceed without the explicit approval of the authorities of the importing country or territory. It also encourages Governments to determine and report whether seized precursors such as ephedrine and P-2-P, which are under international control, have been diverted from a legitimate source, or whether they have been illicitly manufactured from non-scheduled alternative precursors. This will facilitate the development of appropriate measures and the addressing of underlying weaknesses in control systems. It also suggests that Governments use the PICS platform to share all incidents concerning precursors, non-scheduled chemicals and related materials and equipment.

Calling for submission of more comprehensive data on precursor seizures (via Form D), the Board reiterates the critical importance of the quality, comprehensiveness and timeliness of data for meaningful analyses, the identification of new developments and preventive action. It also encourages governments to: (a) Communicate precursor-related incidents on an ongoing basis through PICS; (b) Share more relevant and timely information on incidents involving internationally scheduled substances and incidents involving non-scheduled chemicals, designer precursors and precursors of new psychoactive substances, as well as substances recently scheduled under the 1961 and 1971 Conventions; (c) Improve the accuracy of estimates of annual legitimate requirements for imports of precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants so that they reflect the current market environment.

The Board welcomes any industry-related initiatives aimed at preventing the diversion of precursors and encourages Governments to continue their efforts to establish and implement such mechanisms. In doing so, INCB tools such as the international special surveillance list could be utilized. Governments that have built successful models of industry cooperation are encouraged to share them with the Board, to be showcased as global good practices.

INCB also encourages all Governments to make use of the existing global cooperation mechanisms under Project Prism and Project Cohesion to gather and exchange information on new precursor trafficking trends and on the criminal organizations involved and how they operate, and to use that knowledge to develop specific risk profiles and conduct joint operations to prevent future diversions.

The growing threat posed by a surge in illicit cocaine manufacture and trafficking: The Board wishes to encourage Governments to further strengthen a coordinated response at the international level to target each element of the cocaine supply chain – cultivation, manufacture, trafficking and distribution – in addition to disrupting the related financial flows. Governments are encouraged to make use of various INCB tools and guidance documents, including those related to precursor chemicals, containing recommendations for action at the national and international levels, to disrupt the burgeoning manufacture and trafficking of cocaine.

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Challenge:

Increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in persons, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and money-laundering and, in some cases, terrorism, including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism, are observed.

Challenge:

The value of confiscated proceeds of crime related to money-laundering arising from drug trafficking at the global level remains low.

*“Illicit financial flows are a critical enabler of drug trafficking from which organized criminal groups derive wealth and power. ...The concept of illicit financial flows has evolved in the international development community as a construct to unite a variety of complex issues. While initially associated with capital flight in the 1990s, illicit financial flows now encompass activities that divert public funds and tax revenues from poverty-reducing programmes and infrastructure in developing countries; accordingly, they are receiving growing attention as a key development challenge.” (INCB Annual Report 2021)*

As with any other market, even when it comes to illicit drugs, it is important to address both supply side factors and the demand for illicit drugs. On the supply side, the trafficking and illicit manufacture of drugs is the primary phenomenon that needs to be tackled. However, a plethora of other supply side issues also impact the safety of communities and threaten lives. These include money-laundering, corruption and other forms of transnational organized crime.

Drug-related crime is multi-faceted and widespread, and directly impacts the development and security of nations, from the grassroots level onwards. It has local, regional and international consequences.

### **Summary of recommendations issued from 2019 to 2023**

The Board suggests prioritizing sales and trafficking on the internet in drug control efforts, and has explored this issue in detail in the thematic chapter in the 2023 INCB Report. It suggests Governments monitor the Internet (the surface web) for suspicious postings regarding precursors and deploy investigations to identify and disrupt traffickers. It also suggests voluntary cooperation with Internet platforms to ensure the removal of such postings, in cases where investigation is not possible, and to explore all possible options appropriate to the circumstances.

On the issue of illicit financial flows, explored in detail in the thematic chapter of the Annual Report 2021, related to drug trafficking, the Board recommends that all Governments improve methods to identify and measure the flow of money and link them to the illicit activities and predicate crimes. It also suggests focusing equally on drug supply- and demand- reduction strategies in cooperation with partners from both the public and private sectors, as well as civil society. It suggests including civic and moral values in curricula from an early stage to promote a culture of transparency and accountability, to curb corruption and the illicit economy.

With regard to the legal aspect, it recommends all States become parties to, and implement all, United Nations conventions related to countering transnational organized crime, in particular trafficking in drugs, illicit financial flows and corruption, and implement all the provisions of article 3, paragraph 1 (b), of the 1988 Convention, as well as the “International Standards on Combating Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation” of the Financial Action Task Force, and equally importantly, undertaking financial sector assessments, monitoring economic systems and supporting compliance with these standards.

It suggests strengthening anti-money-laundering measures worldwide so that criminals cannot take advantage of regulatory weaknesses in some jurisdictions to avoid detection of and sanctions for illicit financial flows. It further recommends the establishment of specialized units or task forces at the

national and international levels to share intelligence and work on dismantling the organized criminal networks involved in these activities. They can also work pre-emptively to prevent the possible exploitation of newly emerging financial services and products, such as e-wallet services and cryptocurrencies in these criminal activities.

The Board also suggests that governments combat impunity through more effective transparency laws that provide for appropriate penalties for such crimes. Finally, the Board emphasizes the importance of raising awareness on how these criminal activities have a negative impact on political, economic and social stability and development worldwide. It suggests exploring the potential for utilizing proceeds of asset recovery and forfeiture of property related to drug trafficking to expand the availability of drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services.

The Board reiterates that States Parties to the international drug control conventions are required to apply drug control measures in free ports and free trade zones that are at least as, if not more stringent than those applied in other parts of their territories, as outlined in the conventions. Ensuring that drug control measures are upheld in free ports and free trade zones is imperative to preventing trafficking in internationally controlled narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals.

The Board also encourages voluntary cooperation or public-private partnerships between governments and private sector partners from industries considered vulnerable to the misuse for trafficking of internationally controlled substances and other non-scheduled dangerous substances such as new psychoactive substances. Such vulnerable industries would include those related to ‘manufacture’, ‘marketing’, ‘movement’ and ‘monetization’ of illicitly trafficked substances.

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Challenge:

The criminal misuse of information and communications technologies for illicit drug -related activities is increasing

*“The challenges posed by the various incarnations of Internet-facilitated drug trafficking – the use of cryptomarkets, social networking sites, encrypted apps, e-commerce platforms and illicit Internet pharmacies – all require legislative and policy measures to address their unique roles in trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals.” (INCB Annual Report 2023)*

The Internet offers potential for improving international drug control, for preventing non-medical drug use, for improving access to treatment services, and for improving the collection of information. To optimize the opportunities provided by the Internet, the international community should consider using social media to conduct drug use prevention campaigns and to promote awareness-raising messages on drug-related risks.

International drug control efforts continue to grapple with the dynamic and dangerous reality of the online market, emerging trends in creation of ever newer versions of NPS, and the challenges they pose. While misuse of internet pharmacies had been flagged as an area of concern by the Board over two decades ago, it has since evolved to encompass wider reaches of the dark web and misuse of social media websites, as analyzed in the thematic chapter of the INCB Annual Report 2023 which explores the various challenges related to prosecuting illegal marketplaces, the importance of public-private partnerships, improving cooperation at the national and international levels and the provision of mutual legal assistance between national Governments and regulatory agencies. Meeting these challenges requires cooperation between international organizations, national Governments, regulatory authorities and private companies working in the relevant sectors. The international community needs to consider this issue collectively, drawing on the expertise, across various organizations, of specialists in cybercrime and money-laundering as well as trafficking in drugs and firearms, counterfeiting and other forms of smuggling. Fentanyl-related substances are emerging as the major area of concern for law enforcement and health authorities, as are synthetic non-fentanyl

opioids. Cooperation, coordination and use of technology are encouraged to tackle trafficking in NPS, emerging non-medical synthetic opioids, synthetic non-fentanyl opioids as well as precursors. Governments are also urged to harness the potential of social media and other Internet-based technologies for improving the provision of prevention and treatment services.

The Board has stressed the need for multifaceted and multipronged approaches to tackle these varied, yet connected issues. Its recommendations run the gamut from specific suggestions such as capacity building, to promoting public-private partnerships, use of technology for INCB's special intelligence-gathering operations, tools such as PICS and IONICS for real-time information exchange, the International Import and Export Authorization System (I2ES) and the INCB International Drug Control System (IDS) which enables the Board to monitor the utilization of controlled substances. The Board has also developed online systems to monitor trade and facilitate governmental cooperation, information exchange and joint investigations. These tools include PEN Online, PEN Online Light, PICS, IONICS and GRIDS. To build the capacity of Governments to implement the three international drug control conventions, INCB Learning e-modules are available to competent national authorities.

### **Summary of recommendations issued from 2019 to 2023**

Social media in promotion of the use of drugs for non-medical purposes: The Board encourages Governments to work in partnership with social media platforms to take action to reduce and, where possible, eliminate their use to market, sell or otherwise promote illicit drugs, NPS and opioids, as well as drug precursors. Governments are therefore urged to ensure that the legal and operational means are available to prosecute illegal marketplaces operating on social media platforms. It encourages the identification and dissemination of best practices, including preventive measures, such as updated terms of service prohibiting this type of content, effective and accessible user tools to report content violations, and up-to-date, automated algorithms to prevent, identify, restrict and remove content and users indulging in prohibited activities. Moreover, it recognizes that social media per se can be very useful for reaching vulnerable groups, and should be used for engaging with them by conducting prevention campaigns and more.

The Board encourages Governments' and international organizations' law and regulatory enforcement focal points to take advantage of the suite of INCB proprietary counter-trafficking tools, including: PICS and IONICS for secure real-time exchange of trafficking information on precursor chemicals and NPS (especially its bulk communication feature); the GRIDS Intelligence HD strategic and operational targeting platforms; the eLearning Individualized Training Environment (ELITE) contained in Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 66/2; and the Scanning of Novel Opioids on Online Platforms (SNOOP) for detection and dismantling of online vendor marketplaces, along with INCB GRIDS Programme training.

It encourages governments to nominate active GRIDS Programme enforcement and precursors focal points in their national police, customs, postal, health regulatory and drug control agencies to exchange suspicious shipment and seizure information via INCB IONICS and PICS systems to help foster joint actions, including with the private sector to deny, disrupt and dismantle trafficking networks that exploit Internet-related and e-commerce services.

The Board stands ready to assist Governments to engage with relevant private sector partners to voluntarily identify, prevent and eliminate exploitation of legitimate business activities by traffickers of dangerous synthetic opioids not under international control with no known legitimate use. Governments are encouraged to make use of a series of practical guidelines prepared under the INCB GRIDS Programme to promote Voluntary Cooperation with the Express Courier Industry, the Freight Forwarding Industry, the e-Commerce Industry and Internet-related Services.

In particular, with regard to the Board's efforts under its GRIDS Programme to assist Governments address the threat posed by synthetic drugs, States parties are encouraged to:

- Identify private sector companies, industry associations and related stakeholders vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers of synthetic drugs, such as business-to-business, business-to-consumer, search engines, internet registries/registrars, social media, and online financial services, so that they may work with them to help prevent trafficking using Internet-related services.
- Use the OPIOIDS Project’s fentanyl-related substances list, and the Project’s other lists of dangerous substances to encourage industry partners to voluntarily refrain from conducting any activity beyond research and analysis on them.
- Work with the GRIDS Programme to facilitate public-private partnership engagement, dialog, and cooperation between governments and industry using tools such as the Board’s ‘Practical Guidance for Voluntary Cooperation for E-Commerce and Internet-Related Services by Government and Industry to Prevent Trafficking of Synthetic Opioids, Fentanyls, and Related Dangerous Substances.’
- Utilize the real-time counter-trafficking tools available through IONICS, including GRIDS Intelligence HD, ELITE and other tools, to develop actionable intelligence that identifies and links traffickers that exploit Internet-related and e-commerce services.

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Challenge:

Responses not in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and not in conformity with applicable international human rights obligations pose a challenge to the implementation of joint commitments based on the principle of common and shared responsibility

*“While recalling that according to the international drug control conventions, the determination of penalties applicable to drug-related behaviours remains the exclusive prerogative of States parties, the Board encourages all States that retain the death penalty for drug-related offences to commute death sentences that have already been handed down and to consider the abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offences in view of the relevant international conventions and protocols and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other United Nations bodies on the application of the death penalty for the category of drug-related offences.” (INCB Annual Report 2022)*

Drug-related offences range from possession and consumption to trafficking. Reducing the stigma related to drug misuse disorders remains a challenge, as does the application of the principle of proportionality as a guiding principle in the determination and application of criminal sanction for all drug-related offenses, from trafficking to possession. The death penalty is still applied in several jurisdictions for drug-related offenses; the Board has encouraged States that retain the death penalty for drug-related offences to consider abolishing it and to commute any death sentences already handed down for drug-related crime.

Drug misuse and drug-related activities cannot be lawfully addressed without ensuring the protection of human rights and due process which is a central condition for compliance with the international drug control conventions.

The Board also analyzed the trend of legalizing of cannabis in some countries in the thematic chapter of its 2022 annual report and the impact it has on the international drug control system.

### **Summary of recommendations issued from 2019 to 2023**

The Board recommends and appeals to all States parties that when they design and implement drug control policies that these are based on ensuring the protection of human rights consistent with international human rights instruments, are in compliance with the international drug control

conventions and the rule of law; as well as the principle of proportionality. Disproportionate responses to drug misuse and possession are counterproductive to the protection of public health and human rights, and alternative measures can constitute an integral part of a balanced and human rights-based approach.

In particular, it urges States that retain capital punishment for drug-related offences to consider the abolition of the death penalty for and commuting death sentences that have already been handed down.

The Board also appeals to Governments to take all measures necessary to prevent the extrajudicial targeting of persons suspected of involvement in drug-related offences and calls upon them to investigate and prosecute all such instances. The Board continues to reiterate that any extrajudicial action purportedly taken in pursuit of drug control objectives is fundamentally contrary to the provisions and objectives of the three international drug control conventions, as well as to human rights norms to which all countries are bound; that all State drug control actions should be undertaken in full respect of the rule of law and due process of law; and that violations by law enforcement personnel should be impartially and independently investigated and prosecuted and punished as appropriate.

INCB recommends effective prevention and criminal justice responses based on rule of law and alternative development initiatives that target the financial incentives offered by drug trafficking.

For minor offences or when people who use drugs have committed drug-related offences, the Board recommends that States parties avail themselves of the possibility provided for in the conventions to apply alternatives to conviction and punishment for drug-related offences, such as treatment and rehabilitation. This approach has been shown to have a positive impact on the health and welfare of people and improves overall criminal justice processes, however it remains underutilized by States parties.

It also reminds States parties of taking requisite steps for the prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons affected by drug use disorders, to helping reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with those disorders, as covered in the global topic “Promoting equality and non-discrimination towards people who use drugs and in the access to prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes” in the 2022 Annual Report.

In the thematic chapter of its Annual Report 2022, the Board analyzed the trend to legalize the non-medical use of cannabis. Recalling the health and welfare objectives of the three international drug control conventions, the Board reiterates that they limit the use of controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, of which cannabis is one, exclusively to medical and scientific purposes. The Board calls upon the Governments of countries in which the use of cannabis or cannabis derivatives for non-medical purposes has been permitted, nationally or at the subnational level, to take steps to bring the entirety of their territories back into compliance with their legal obligations especially, Article 4 of the 1961 Convention. The Board underscores the fact that despite the room for flexibility with regard to penal provisions, this does not provide for exceptions to the of the obligations of States parties under article 4 (c) of the 1961 Convention as amended. The Board found that the evidence available to assess the impact of legalization on society and individuals is limited. This impact varies considerably according to the different legalization models. The apparent tension between article 4(c) of the 1961 Convention as amended and the trend towards legalization must be addressed by the signatories to the three drug control conventions. The Board’s mandate is to assist Governments in implementing the international drug control conventions and to “facilitate effective national action to attain the aims of this Convention” (art. 9, para. 5, of the 1961 Convention as amended). The Board will continue its ongoing dialogue with States on identifying ways to further the objectives of the international drug control conventions within the flexibility provided by the conventions through the adoption of balanced and proportionate approaches founded on respect for human rights and the advancement of public health and welfare (Paragraph 122, 2022 Annual Report).

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Challenge:

Drug treatment and health services continue to fall short of meeting needs and deaths related to drug use have increased

Challenge:

The rate of transmission of HIV, the hepatitis C virus and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use, including injecting drug use in some countries, remain high.

*“Over the past decade, the international community has highlighted the need for the voluntary treatment of people who use drugs, adopting health- and people-centred approaches that incorporate human rights concerns. However, many countries still lack mechanisms for gathering information on the scope and nature of drug use and treatment demand. That hinders the ability to determine the scope and consequences of drug use. It also hinders Governments and the international community as they seek to respond effectively through evidence-based drug use prevention and treatment programmes.” (INCB Annual Report 2022)*

Reaffirming the serious threat posed by drugs to the health and welfare of human beings, the Board continues to provide recommendations to Member States on the most effective ways to address drug misuse, both by preventing it and by ensuring that those suffering from drug misuse disorders are given adequate and humane treatment. The Board has repeatedly underscored the need to destigmatize drug misuse and to adopt a rights-based approach to interventions stressing the need for early interventions that target both drug misuse and other problematic behaviours. In particular, in its thematic chapter in the 2019 INCB Annual Report, it has made several recommendations on improving substance use prevention and treatment services for young people, and the thematic chapter of its 2020 Annual Report makes recommendations to address the hidden epidemic of drug use among older people.

### **Summary of recommendations issued from 2019 to 2023**

The Board strongly advocates for the implementation of data and evidence-based policies and programmes to prevent and treat drug misuse disorders, and to promote early prevention and detection. Urging governments to base their interventions on, inter alia, the International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders developed by UNODC and WHO, the Board has also recognized the importance of providing access to a wide range of prevention programmes that tap the unique strengths of different sets of stakeholders, in the community, in families and in schools. In doing so, Governments should address systemic disparities and ensure inclusivity in treatment services, with special attention given to populations in situations of vulnerability. The Board also encourages Member States to implement continuous mechanisms to review treatment services, with the aim of ensuring they are in line with the UNODC and WHO International Standards.

The Board calls upon all Governments to examine any drug terminology that has ambiguous usage, or is potentially stigmatizing, and that might have an impact on the ability of the international community to cooperate effectively on and jointly counter the world drug problem.

The Board reiterates the importance of developing mechanisms to improve the data collection on drug misuse and prevalence, in order to develop evidence-based, and customized prevention and treatment strategies and encourages bilateral development partners and regional and international organizations to provide support to that end.

Reiterating the driving principle of the drug control conventions, which is to safeguard the health and welfare of humanity, the Board has made it clear that it discourages the use of compulsory treatment for drug use disorders and recommends to all States Parties that they ensure that people who use drugs are not discriminated against in terms of access to services including prevention and services related to mental health and opioid agonist therapy. It also encourages Member States to continue to focus on initiatives to combat stigma and discrimination in relation to people who use drugs.

INCB urges Governments and medical authorities to consider using methadone and buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid use disorders, given that there is scientific evidence indicating the effectiveness of opioid agonist therapy programmes.

The Board has also focused its attention on the hidden epidemic of substance misuse amongst older persons, which it explored in detail in the thematic chapter in the INCB Annual Report 2020. In this context, it recommends that steps be taken to remedy the lack of data on substance use among older persons as this often translates into a lack of policies and programmes tailored to their needs. Specifically, it recommends expanding the age range of the population surveyed in epidemiological studies beyond 65 years; amending existing prescription-monitoring systems to help detect problems of overuse and related risks; preventing the stigmatization of older persons who use drugs and to involve older persons in the development of and training for professionals working in the relevant support services including outreach services; implementation of culturally adapted programmes that are based on principles of independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity, as set out in the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, and should be developed using Active Ageing: A Policy Framework and the Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health.

Addressing stakeholders in the multilateral arena as well as development partners, the Board encourages them to help States parties, especially those with lower institutional capacities and financial resources, to strengthen their regulatory frameworks and public health systems to provide prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services to those in need. It encourages Governments to strengthen capacity-building in drug misuse management, data collection and data-sharing, public policies, treatment and rehabilitation services, and to continue collaborating with the international community in that respect.

Focusing on mitigating the deleterious health and social impact of drug misuse, the Board recommends that such programmes be grounded in comprehensive drug demand reduction strategies and based on scientific data and evidence-based good practices.

Amongst other desirable characteristics of prevention and treatment programmes are a participatory approach to their development, integration of the same into sustainable systems of public health and a multisectoral approach catering to the needs of youth in particular.

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Challenge:

The adverse health consequences of and risks associated with new psychoactive substances have reached alarming levels

Challenge:

Synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of prescription drugs pose increasing risks to public health and safety, as well as scientific, legal and regulatory challenges, including with regard to the scheduling of substances

*“Currently, the urgent macro-level challenges to international drug control are the misuse, diversion from domestic trade and evolution of designer and pre-precursor chemicals and new psychoactive substances, including non-medical synthetic opioids, that are not under international control.” (INCB Annual Report 2023)*

The Board has been drawing the attention of the international community to the public health and security risks posed by the proliferation of new psychoactive substances, including non-medical synthetic opioids. Through the INCB GRIDS Programme, Governments are enabled to exchange operational information on the trafficking and seizure of these dangerous substances and educated on the safe handling and interdiction of highly potent non-medical synthetic opioids. Building and strengthening public private cooperation throughout the 4Ms of the supply chain (manufacture, marketing, movement and monetization) is essential to preventing the exploitation of legitimate

industry for the trafficking of dangerous new psychoactive substances and non-medical synthetic opioids.

### Summary of recommendations issued from 2019 to 2023

It encourages Governments to direct more attention at the national level towards monitoring new fentanyl analogues as well as emerging synthetic non-fentanyl opioids in circulation and to testing for these in overdose toxicology examinations.

It underlines the importance of information exchange to develop actionable intelligence for interdiction efforts. It also invites all Governments and, through them, industry partners to voluntarily refrain from any manufacture, marketing, export, import or distribution of the 55 synthetic non-fentanyl opioids on the Board's list, as well as designer precursors with no known legitimate use.

Finally, in an effort to decrease misuse and risk of overdose, the Board also highlights the importance of public education and encourages Governments to work together with relevant partners such as public health officials, pharmacists and physicians, manufacturers and distributors, consumer protection associations and law enforcement agencies to promote information about the risks associated with the improper use of prescription drugs, illicitly produced synthetic opioids and methamphetamine.

Misuse of preparations containing codeine: The Board calls on Governments affected to consider the introduction of stricter control measures on such preparations and to implement appropriate prevention and treatment interventions to address this challenge.

Non-medical use of opioids: The Board calls upon all States to carefully review their prescription practices related to pharmaceutical opioids and to be vigilant about the increasing non-medical use of such substances in many regions. The Board also emphasizes the need for increased efforts to reduce trafficking in synthetic opioids and invites Governments to make full use of existing mechanisms and tools for information sharing.

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#### Challenge:

The availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and palliative care, remains low to non-existent in many parts of the world

*“The system of estimates and assessments of annual licit requirements for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances is the cornerstone of the international drug control system. It enables both exporting and importing countries to ensure that trade in those substances stays within the limits determined by the Governments of importing countries and that diversion of controlled substances from international trade is effectively prevented. For narcotic drugs, such a system is mandatory under the 1961 Convention as amended, and the estimates furnished by Governments need to be confirmed by the Board before becoming the basis for calculating the limits on manufacture and import” (INCB Annual Report 2020). As at 20 November 2023, the Governments of 177 countries and territories had submitted estimates of requirements for narcotic drugs for 2024. To ensure that Governments may import narcotic drugs for medical and scientific purposes, estimates are established by the Board for countries that are unable to supply them and, for 2023, 39 countries in all regions of the world operated on the basis of estimates established for them by the Board.*

The Board is committed to working with and assisting the international community in ensuring adequate availability of and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. It has consistently stressed the need for regular and robust data in ensuring availability to those in need. The Board has also pointed out that the disparities in availability especially of pain medication must be urgently addressed in the spirit of international solidarity and cooperation.



In 2022, the Board published a supplement to its annual report entitled “No Patient Left Behind: Progress in Ensuring Adequate Access to Internationally Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes (2023)”. One of the main messages of this document is that the full implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development would effectively address the main impediments to access to and availability of medicines containing controlled substances.

With regard to precursors, the Board encourages Governments to improve the accuracy of estimates of annual legitimate requirements for imports of precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants, some of which are used for medical purposes, so that they reflect the current market environment.

In addition, the Board developed, through its INCB Learning Programme, an e-module for officials of competent national authorities to support Governments in their actions towards ensuring the adequate availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

Through its in-person training, INCB Learning has conducted seven awareness-raising events on the issue in Central and South America and with countries in Central Asia, which brought together the officials of national competent authorities in the subregions with experts from UNODC, WHO, as well as relevant civil society organizations.

### **Summary of recommendations issued from 2019 to 2023**

Availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and accurate reporting of data: The Board reiterates that there is an urgent need to improve the rational medical use and prescription of opioid analgesics for medical purposes in all countries reporting inadequate and very inadequate levels of consumption. It calls for targeted policies developed and implemented by governments with support from health professionals, civil society, the pharmaceutical industry and the international community.

In its 2022 supplement, INCB recommends that Governments follow a two-pronged approach. On the one hand they must continue to prioritize training health professionals in the rational prescribing and safe administration of controlled substances to avoid over-prescribing and prevent misuse. On the other, ensure that administrative and budgetary measures are put in place so that those in need, including those living in rural areas, can afford and obtain such medication. In sum, it reminds Governments of the need to foster responsible prescription practices and controls on distribution to avoid diversion into illicit channels and over-consumption resulting in dependence and associated harms.

The Board highlights that, although data from producing and manufacturing countries point to a global balance between the supply of opiate raw materials and the demand for opiates, there are significant disparities between countries. In particular, low- and middle-income countries see an imbalance because many are not accurately estimating their medical need for opioid analgesics or have limited access. Consequently, the Board emphasizes the importance of ensuring sufficient availability at all levels and calls upon countries with greater resources to assist other countries access medication for pain relief.

It also reminds Governments to ensure that those living with mental health conditions have access to adequate treatment and medication containing controlled substances, as an integral part of their health care systems, thus reducing stigma and discrimination. It stresses the importance of the continuity of such services during emergency situations.

Ensuring access for humanitarian emergencies: The Board strongly encourages Governments to review existing national legislation and, if need be, to make amendments and/or adopt new provisions that allow for greater flexibility in the import and export of such substances during emergency situations, especially for those most in need. It reminds States however that there should be clear specifications of the conditions under which such flexibility can be exercised. All relevant front-line

workers responsible for the delivery of controlled substances should be adequately skilled in and aware of emergency procedures.

In 2021, INCB published a factsheet entitled “Lessons from countries and humanitarian aid organizations in facilitating the timely supply of controlled substances during emergency situations”. The document provides recommendations on how to improve access in emergencies, including pandemics, conflicts and climate-related disasters. INCB invites countries to review the recommendations contained in that factsheet and consider incorporating them into their own legislative and administrative systems.

Narcotic drugs & psychotropic substances: For the purposes of monitoring and controlling the production of morphine, the Board requests countries cultivating opium poppy rich in noscapine to provide information in a consistent and regular manner about the same and about the intended use of and any extraction and use of the morphine alkaloid from this variety. Although noscapine itself is not an internationally controlled substance, significant amounts of internationally controlled alkaloids can be extracted from opium poppy rich in noscapine.

The Board emphasizes the importance of ensuring sufficient availability at the global level and urges opioid manufacturing countries to devote an increasing amount of morphine to be utilized for the production of immediate release oral morphine preparations for pain management and to increase the amount destined for palliative care use in low- and middle-income countries. As affordability is an important factor, it encourages giving these countries the possibility of purchasing affordable morphine instead of expensive synthetic opioids. It also encourages countries to review pricing and production policies of medicines for low- and middle-income countries and suggests governments allocate resources to ensure sufficient availability.

It reiterates the need for Governments to introduce mandatory training on pain and palliative care management in the curricula of medical and nursing schools, as well as continuing medical education programmes, to ensure proper rational prescribing and administering of opioid analgesics.

Finally, the Board notes that a large number of countries have reported educational and awareness-raising activities targeting the general public and the pharmaceutical community and encourages them to continue their programmes in this area.

Also, on the basis of its analysis of the global situation the Board urges major cultivating countries to ensure that there are no shortages of the opiate raw materials rich in thebaine, codeine and oripavine on the global markets.

The Board calls upon States to ensure that the import prohibitions invoked by States parties pursuant to article 13 of the 1971 Convention are respected and that when they are invoked they take into account the needs for controlled substances.

Electronic tools for export and import and training: Stressing the need for secure systems for import and export authorizations for controlled substances, the Board recommends the use of the I2ES system, the only international control system that has been endorsed by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Governments which are using their own national systems must ensure that these are in conformity with their obligations under the relevant conventions and resolutions. Governments should ensure the safe and secure trade in internationally controlled substances when shipments of such substances transit their territory.

It urges Member States to consider the provision of extrabudgetary resources to scale up efforts to support digital transformation in the Board’s secretariat which will allow the development of further digital solutions and agility to respond to challenges of international drug control. Governments are invited to request the assistance of the INCB secretariat in implementing and integrating I2ES into their national systems, including through the provision of guidance on first steps and additional initial training.

Continuing learning and professional development: The INCB Learning Programme is the Board's initiative to deliver capacity-building support to Governments in implementing the provisions of the three international drug control treaties and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. INCB Learning offers different training modalities, one is learning through e-modules which have been developed for five different substantive areas of international drug control:

- The Estimates System for Narcotic Drugs
- The Assessment System for Psychotropic Substances
- Estimates of Annual Legitimate Requirements (ALRs) for Imports of Precursors of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants
- The International Drug Control Framework and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)
- Ensuring the Adequate Availability of Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes

More training modules are being developed, depending on the level of extrabudgetary resources provided. All e-modules are available in English, French and Spanish; selected modules are also available in Russian and Portuguese. More than 1,000 officials from 152 countries and territories have registered for the e-modules and the Board encourages Governments that have not yet done so to register officials of their competent national authorities for INCB Learning e-modules and to provide feedback and suggestions for areas for further training.

INCB Learning also conducts virtual and in-person training programmes, which have been offered in most of the world's regions, including Africa, Americas, Eastern Europe, Asia and Oceania, providing training to some 300 officials.

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## **INCB and the Sustainable Development Goals**

INCB is supporting governments in implementing various elements of the unified and universal 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Of particular relevance are Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 on good health and well-being and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

### **Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**



Target 3.5: Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol

Target 3.8: Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all

The very first words of the 1961 Convention underline that the guiding concern is the health and welfare of mankind. INCB's efforts to promote the full and consistent implementation of the treaties are relevant to reaching Goal 3 and relevant targets. INCB's recommendations provide guidance to assist national efforts to implement policies and programmes. The Board has raised awareness, including via thematic chapters in its annual reports, on drug misuse among young and older people and women. The rights of children to health and well-being, including protecting children from the illicit use of drugs have been prioritized in INCB's statements.

INCB also promotes access to evidence-based essential health-care services and equitable access to safe essential controlled medicines, through:

- Monitoring licit production, consumption and trade, and overseeing the system of estimates and assessments of national requirements for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes;
- Working to ensure a balance between the supply of and demand for controlled substances and the raw materials for their manufacture; monitoring the global availability of controlled substances for medical purposes, including benchmarking of consumption levels;
- Raising awareness of and facilitating availability of controlled substances and access to safe essential medicines, consumed for legitimate use and in accordance with sound medical practice;
- In relation to psychotropic substances, used for the treatment of mental health and neurological disorders, monitoring consumption and assisting governments in measuring consumption; including the recently released compilation of methodologies for collecting data on consumption of psychotropic substances;
- Working with governments to promote and facilitate timely supply of and access to controlled substances during emergency situations, in cooperation with WHO, international organizations and stakeholders providing humanitarian assistance.

In cooperation with UNODC, WHO and UNAIDS, INCB is contributing towards ending the epidemic of AIDS, through supporting governments in meeting their treaty obligations to prevent non-medical drug use and provide evidence-based treatment services, including through recommendations arising from country missions and recommendations made in INCB annual reports.

Through its INCB Learning Programme, INCB is building the capacity of governments to ensure that their estimates of licit requirements of controlled substances more accurately reflect actual needs, and improve access for medical purposes.

The INCB Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Programme is preventing dangerous chemicals reaching end users by building the capacity of law and regulatory enforcement

agencies and facilitating cooperation to address trafficking in non-medical synthetic opioids and new psychoactive substances.

Through its Precursors Programme, INCB assists Governments in addressing the diversion of chemicals, raw materials and equipment used for the illicit manufacture of controlled drugs and other dangerous substances with the support of its Pre-Export Notification (PEN Online) system. Its real-time Precursors Incidents Communication System (PICS) also provides a global early warning mechanism for new chemicals used in illicit drug manufacture, which, in turn, can have serious negative consequences in terms of human health and well-being.

### Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Target 5.5: Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

Target 5.b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

Through efforts to mainstream gender into drug control and policy, INCB is contributing to reducing gender inequality. INCB has specifically included in its annual reports and statements gender disaggregated data, where available, on substance use and treatment. Issues such as stigmatization of women who use drugs or of women in substance use treatment has been particularly highlighted in the Board’s public statements. INCB’s 2016 annual report focused on these issues in a thematic chapter “Women and drugs”.

INCB promotes the development of institutional and professional capacities relevant to women through the INCB Learning, GRIDS and precursor control programmes, and encourages Governments to nominate female participants for INCB events, thereby contributing towards ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities.

### Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



Target 6.3: By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally

By proactively monitoring international trade and supporting real-time information exchange on precursors incidents or suspicious activities, the INCB’s Precursors Programme prevents precursors trafficking and subsequent illegal dumping of chemicals and the release of hazardous pollutants from reaching bodies of water.

### Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries



Target 10.2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

Target 10.3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard

INCB contributes to progress towards these targets through:

- advocacy for non-discrimination and stigmatization of people who use drugs;
- calling on Member States to view non-medical drug use and drug use disorders as a health issue to be treated, not a cause for punishment, and to adjust their legislation accordingly;
- promoting rule of law and human rights in development and implementation of national drug policies and laws with a view to preventing discriminatory responses to drug-related conduct;
- providing training and guidance;
- promoting and building capacity for a more equitable distribution of controlled substances around the globe for patients, including palliative care and mental health patients.

### **Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**



Target 11.b: By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels

Efforts of the Board under SDG 11 are an area of priority, as far as “safety” is concerned, including the safe development of children and youth.

- monitoring and supporting government compliance with the three international drug control conventions through analysis of data on the manufacture, trade, consumption and seizures of controlled substances in order to monitor international trade and ensure availability and prevent diversion;
- raising awareness and making recommendations to governments on the basis of analysed data and trends on necessary action in order to achieve the SDGs and the objectives of the conventions;
- country missions to provide support to governments in implementing the provisions of the conventions;
- through the GRIDS and Precursors Programmes, raise awareness through training and recommendations of voluntary action adopted at INCB events;
- through capacity-building activities delivered through INCB Learning and under INCB’s GRIDS and Precursors Programmes.

### **Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**



Target 12.1: Implement the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries

Target 12.2: By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources

Target 12.4: By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment

Target 12.a: Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production

Targets 12.1, 12.2, 12.4 and 12.a are pursued through the following activities of INCB:

- Monitoring and liaising with countries on cultivation, production, trade and consumption;
- Administering the estimates and the assessment systems, facilitating timely and adequate supply of and access to controlled substances;
- Promoting responsible production and consumption and adequate availability of controlled substances, including through benchmarking consumption and by promoting cooperation among Member States, including the recently developed compilation of methodologies for collection of consumption data on psychotropic substances.
- The activities of INCB's Precursors Programme pre-empt illegal dumping of chemicals into water bodies and soil in the vicinity of clandestine laboratories and their release to air during the illicit manufacture process. The technical materials developed by the Precursors Programme aid law enforcement officers in averting incorrect handling practices that can also have hazardous environments impacts.

**Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**



Target 15.1: By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.

Target 15.2: By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.

Target 15.4: By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development.

Target 15.5: Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

INCB contributes to progress on targets 15.1, 15.2, 15.4 and 15.5 in the following ways:

INCB draws attention to the linkages between illicit drug activity and environmental degradation. In a global issue on “The impact of drug-related crimes on the environment” in its 2023 annual report, INCB called on Governments, with the support of the international community, to take urgent action to address such threats, prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of local, indigenous and vulnerable populations, as well as the protection of the environment. Furthermore, the Board urged Governments to collaborate with the international community and with the United Nations system in improving the available research and data on the dynamics of illicit drugs and the environment and the related impacts across all regions of the globe.

The activities of INCB's Precursors Programme pre-empt illegal dumping of chemicals into water bodies and soil in the vicinity of clandestine laboratories and their release to air during the illicit manufacture process. The technical materials developed by the Precursors Programme aid law enforcement officers in averting incorrect handling practices that can also have hazardous environments impacts.

By proactively monitoring international trade and supporting real-time information exchange on precursors incidents or suspicious activities, INCB's Precursors Programme prevents precursor trafficking and subsequent illegal dumping of hazardous chemicals and the contamination of land.

## Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



Target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

Target 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

Target 16.4: By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime

Target 16.a: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

Target 16.b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

INCB contributes to progress on targets 16.3, 16.a and 16.b through supporting capacity development to promote compliance with and understanding of the international drug control conventions; and promoting proportionate, just and equitable legal and justice system treatment of victims of drug misuse. INCB has, on numerous occasions, called publicly for national drug control systems to be based on the conventions, and various political commitments, where Member States have agreed to implement a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach, principles of proportionality in the determination of penalties and response measures, in the spirit of a shared responsibility and respect for human rights and liberties and the rule of law. The Board's recommendations after its country visits/missions help, in line with SDG 16.1, to develop effective and accountable drug control institutions.

Target 16.4 speaks to the provisions of the international drug control treaties related to criminal justice, covering issues such as penal provisions, international judicial and law enforcement cooperation, asset forfeiture and confiscation, which can serve as effective legal instruments in addressing not only drug-related offences, but also any associated criminal activity, such as organized crime, corruption, illicit financial flows and money-laundering. The Board, by promoting these measures, indirectly supports national efforts to meet this target.

The INCB GRIDS and Precursors Programmes support Governments in combating drug-related organized crime (target 16.4) and in combination with INCB Learning, **promote the rule of law at the national and international levels (target 16.3) through capacity-building of front-line law enforcement and regulatory officials on controlled substances, precursors and non-controlled dangerous substances.**

## Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



Target 17.16: Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.

Target 17.17: Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

INCB supports governments in making progress on the above targets by:

- Promoting cooperation among countries and with INCB and other multilateral stakeholders to improve availability of and access to controlled substances.



- Working with Member States through the INCB Learning, GRIDS and Precursors programmes, as well as through country missions and bilateral and multilateral consultations, to improve capacity for producing reliable data and comply with the requirements of the conventions.
- Partnering with WHO and UNODC and coordinating with other UN entities to provide integral support to Member States on drug control, availability of controlled substances and the prevention of non-medical use of drugs and diversion of precursors into illicit channels.

In addition to longstanding cooperation with WHO and UNODC, INCB has formalized cooperation with the World Customs Organization, the Universal Postal Union and the Oceania Customs Organization, and plans to formalize cooperation with the European Drugs Agency and other relevant regional bodies around the world. It also meets periodically with Interpol, UNAIDS, OHCHR and other relevant bodies.

In particular, the INCB GRIDS and Precursors Programmes are establishing and promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources with several international organizations, e.g. World Customs Organization, Universal Postal Union and with actors in the private sector that can influence and impact the availability of dangerous substances and precursors and prevent them from reaching end-users and from reaching illicit manufacturing operations (SDG 17.16 and SDG 17.17).

The INCB Learning programme is working with WHO, the African Union, and national stakeholders, including civil society, towards achieving adequate access to drugs for medical and scientific purposes (SDG 17.16 and SDG 17.17) and has engaged with the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) or the Organization of American States (OAS) to conduct capacity building and awareness-raising activities in the region.