

Resolution 63/3

Promoting awareness-raising, education and training as part of a comprehensive approach to ensuring access to and the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and improving their rational use

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs,

Recalling the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1954 as amended by the 1972 Protocol,¹ in which the parties recognized that the medical use of narcotic drugs continued to be indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and that adequate provision must be made to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs for such purposes,

Recalling also the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971,² in which it is recognized that the use of psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes is indispensable and that their availability for such purposes should not be unduly restricted,

Recalling further article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,³ in which States parties recognized the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and in which it is stated that the steps to be taken by the States parties to the Covenant to achieve the full realization of that right shall include those necessary for the creation of conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness,

Recognizing that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction as to race, religion, political belief or economic or social condition, and reaffirming its commitment to respecting, protecting and promoting all human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals and the rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies,

Recalling the 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,⁴ adopted at its sixty-second session, in 2019, in which Member States reiterated their resolve to ensure access to and the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering, and address existing barriers in this regard, including affordability,

Recalling also the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”,⁵ in which Member States committed themselves to improving access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes by appropriately addressing existing barriers in that regard, including those related to legislation, regulatory systems, health-care systems, affordability, the training of health-care

¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 976, No. 14152.

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1019, No. 14956.

³ General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

⁴ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2019, Supplement No. 8 (E/2019/28)*, chap. I, sect. B.

⁵ General Assembly resolution [S-30/1](#), annex.

professionals, education, awareness-raising, estimates, assessment and reporting, benchmarks for consumption of substances under control, and international cooperation and coordination, while concurrently preventing their diversion, abuse and trafficking,

Reiterating that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the world drug problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing, and more specifically that efforts to increase access to internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes contribute to the achievement of target 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which is focused on access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all,

Recalling its resolution 53/4 of 12 March 2010, on promoting adequate availability of internationally controlled licit drugs for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion and abuse, its resolution 54/6 of 25 March 2011, on promoting adequate availability of internationally controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion and abuse, and its resolution 62/5 of 22 March 2019, on enhancing the capacity of Member States to adequately estimate and assess the need for internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes,

Recalling also its resolution 61/11 of 16 March 2018, on promoting non-stigmatizing attitudes to ensure the availability of, access to and delivery of health, care and social services for drug users, and guided by the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, in which Member States reiterated their resolve to prevent social marginalization and promote non-stigmatizing attitudes and to encourage the voluntary participation of individuals with drug use disorders in treatment programmes, with informed consent, where consistent with national legislation, and develop and implement outreach programmes and campaigns, involving drug users in long-term recovery, where appropriate, to prevent social marginalization and promote non-stigmatizing attitudes, as well as to encourage drug users to seek treatment and care, and take measures to facilitate access to treatment and expand capacity,

Deeply concerned that the undertreatment of pain is still a significant challenge in the majority of countries, with children being disproportionately impacted, and that global disparity and imbalance in terms of access to internationally controlled substances, particularly in developing countries, remain, despite all efforts,⁶ and stressing the harms and risks associated with the lack of access to safe, effective, high-quality and affordable medicines,

Fully aware of the challenges posed by the misuse or non-medical use of opioids affecting some parts of the world, which underscores the need for a balanced and comprehensive approach to the problem at all levels,

Emphasizing that tens of millions of people currently require palliative care every year,⁷ foreseeing the increased need for palliative care among ageing populations and the rise of non-communicable and other chronic diseases worldwide, considering the importance of palliative care for

⁶ Supplement to the *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2018*, World Health Organization, “Guideline for the management of chronic pain in children” (January 2020) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Technical guidance: increasing access and availability of controlled substances” (March 2018).

⁷ World Health Assembly resolution 67.19 of 24 May 2014, preambular paragraph 10.

children, and in this regard acknowledging that Member States should have estimates of the quantities of internationally controlled substances needed for medical and scientific purposes, including medicines in paediatric formulations,

Affirming that access to internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for palliative care and emergency medical care, contributes to the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health,

Recalling that the International Narcotics Control Board, within its treaty-based mandates, collects statistical data provided by Member States, estimates of their legitimate requirements of narcotic drugs and assessments of their legitimate requirements of psychotropic substances, as well as data on licit manufacture and trade in such substances, and endeavours to ensure their availability for medical and scientific purposes,

Noting that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, within its mandate, and in cooperation with Governments, collects statistical data provided by Member States on access to and the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes,

Taking note of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime publication entitled “Technical guidance: increasing access and availability of controlled medicines”, in which it is underscored that increasing access to and the availability of controlled medicines requires an integration of actions within three core areas, namely, the strengthening and integration of systems, education and awareness, and supply chain management, while taking into account the following five cross-cutting themes: economic structure, consistent messaging, patient-centred care, prevention of diversion and non-medical use, and data and research,

Recalling the supplement to the *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2018* entitled *Progress in Ensuring Adequate Access to Internationally Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes*, in which it is noted that Member States have increasingly reported the lack of training and awareness among health-care professionals as a major impediment to the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including the fact that only 62 per cent of reporting countries have medical schools that offer palliative care courses,

Emphasizing the important role of the scientific community, non-governmental organizations and civil society, including health-care professionals, in improving access to and the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes,

Bearing in mind the important work and concerns of the World Health Assembly on improving access to, and the availability of, internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, particularly for the relief of pain and suffering, and, in particular, on strengthening palliative care as a component of comprehensive care throughout the life course, on addressing the shortage of global medicines and vaccines and on cancer prevention and control in the context of an integrated approach,⁸

Acknowledging the expertise and support provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, within their respective mandates, in this area,

⁸ See World Health Assembly resolutions 67.19 of 24 May 2014, 69.25 of 28 May 2016 and 70.12 of 31 May 2017.

Recalling the memorandum of understanding of February 2017 between the World Health Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,

Noting the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to coordinate and ensure effective United Nations inter-agency collaboration to support the implementation of international drug control policies and to promote the scientific, evidence-based implementation of international commitments, particularly with regard to access to and the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes,

Noting with appreciation the joint global programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization and the Union for International Cancer Control on access to controlled drugs for medical purposes while preventing diversion and abuse, and the global learning project implemented by the International Narcotics Control Board on improving the implementation of the international drug control conventions through strengthening capacity for the control of illicit activities related to narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals,

Noting with appreciation also the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime integrated strategy on the global opioid crisis, including the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs, which, inter alia, promotes the rational use of, and access to, opioids for medical and scientific purposes,

1. *Reaffirms* all relevant international drug policy commitments, in particular those to effectively implement the operational recommendations contained in the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”,¹⁸ on ensuring the availability of and access to controlled substances exclusively for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion, and in particular the recommendation to take measures, in accordance with national legislation, to provide capacity-building and training, including with the support of relevant United Nations entities such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, targeted at competent national authorities and health-care professionals, including pharmacists, on adequate access to and use of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including the relief of pain and suffering, consider the development and wider implementation of relevant clinical guidelines on the rational use of controlled medicines, and conduct appropriate awareness-raising campaigns under the coordination of relevant national health authorities and in cooperation with other relevant stakeholders;

2. *Reiterates* that a key objective of the international drug control system is to ensure the availability of and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their non-medical use or diversion into illicit channels and that to this end efforts are needed to address all the existing barriers, including those related to legislation, regulatory systems, health-care systems, affordability, the training of health-care professionals, education, awareness-raising, estimates, assessments and reporting, benchmarks for consumption of substances under control and international cooperation and coordination;

3. *Stresses* the importance of a comprehensive, strategic approach to improving access to and the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and their rational use, including for emergency medical care;

4. *Encourages* Member States to make use of the technical support and guidance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, within their existing mandates, in improving access to and the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and their rational use, including for emergency medical care;

5. *Encourages* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization and the Union for International Cancer Control to continue their work on the joint global programme, and invites the International Narcotics Control Board to continue, within its existing mandate, its work on the global learning project and the regional training seminars conducted in cooperation with the World Health Organization and the Office;

6. *Encourages* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, together with the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, within their existing mandates, to continue to develop the module on access to medicines of the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs to include information and resources on ensuring access to and the availability of controlled substances, and to operationalize and disseminate the information about the interventions included in the Toolkit by incorporating them, as appropriate, into the technical assistance and capacity-building programmes of the Office;

7. *Encourages* Member States to adopt measures for awareness-raising, which includes the provision of objective and adequate information to all relevant persons, including patients, family members and caregivers, and stresses the importance of the education and training of health-care professionals, such as physicians, pharmacists and nurses, on the essential role and rational use of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and the negative outcomes associated with non-medical use and diversion;

8. *Calls upon* Member States to promote the adequate provision and implementation of evidence-based guidelines and tools, comprehensive education and training programmes, and targeted awareness-raising initiatives, including the provision of objective and adequate information, on the essential role and rational use of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes;

9. *Encourages* Member States to include in their education, awareness-raising and training programmes information on how cultural attitudes towards the management of health conditions, as well as the relief of pain, are acting as an impediment to access to and the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical purposes, including palliative care, for all those in need, including drug users;

10. *Urges* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board, and invites the World Health Organization, to continue strengthening and improving their inter-agency cooperation in this area and, within their respective mandates, to continue to provide multidisciplinary technical support to Member States, including with regard to education, training and awareness-raising, and also to continue to provide objective and adequate information on the essential role and rational use of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes;

11. *Encourages* Member States and regional and international organizations to undertake initiatives that strengthen and facilitate cooperation and the exchange of information among competent national

authorities, the scientific community, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, including in the private sector, with a view to improving access to and the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and their rational use;

12. *Encourages* Member States, and invites the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board, the World Health Organization and other relevant international organizations, in accordance with their respective mandates, to facilitate, upon request, the provision of technical assistance to the States most affected by insufficient access to and lack of availability of international controlled substances for pain relief, in particular developing countries;

13. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to report to the Commission at its sixty-sixth session on the implementation of the present resolution, taking into account the work of and including its collaboration with the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, within existing reporting obligations;

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