

Statement delivered by Dr. Tania Pastrana, President of the Latin American Association for Palliative Care (ALCP), on the occasion of the Fourth Intersessional Meeting of the 59th Commission on Narcotic Drugs

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ALCP would like to thank CND member states for the practical recommendations in the UNGASS Outcome Document requiring governments to improve access to controlled essential medicines such as morphine for the relief of pain and suffering. Latin America has more than 500 million inhabitants and have an opioid consumption of 7.4 MEQ mg per capita, far under the global media. In Latin America, three important initiatives are in process:

- 1) Workshops aimed at eliminating barriers to the availability and accessibility of opioids for patients with legitimate needs led were by the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC) and were conducted in 13 Latin American countries. The workshops were based on the concept of balance of ensuring access to those with legitimate needs and preventing diversion for abuse. The workshops facilitated interaction and collaboration between drug regulators and prescribers, and resulted in an agreed action plan for each country.

Data shows that the Action plans resulted in the elimination of unduly restrictive barriers in laws and regulations as well as improvements in communication and collaboration between regulators and prescribers. However, reported opioid consumption has not yet changed significantly in the countries where the workshops were implemented. This tells us that education and increasing access is an ongoing, multi-year process that must be supported with sustainable government budgets. We have to undo the legacy of decades of opiophobia, or irrational fear of medical use.

- 2) The Initiative *Transforming the System* aims for the integration of palliative care into the undergraduate curricula of medical and other health care professions. This initiative began in Colombia and will continue in Argentina, Panama and Brazil. A core component of the curricula is rational opioid prescription. Future professionals will be able to prescribe strong opioids appropriately, while mitigating abuse potential and risks of diversion.
- 3) Argentina was able to achieve free distribution of morphine and methadone in the country by manufacturing the amount necessary to meet their national estimates. The steps taken by the government with the guidance of palliative care experts have ensured the availability of the medications as well as access to patients in need.

We are continuing to develop our advocacy in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 3, and Target 3.8 which requires universal coverage and access to essential medicines, which CND and INCB are assisting with.