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Rise in use of non-controlled substances fundamentally challenges way gov'ts approach precursors control, says UN



In Bangkok at the Precursors Control Conference in Asia, from left: Dr. Viroj Sumyai, INCB board member; Mr. Jeremy Douglas, UNODC Regional Representative Southeast Asia and the Pacific; INCB President Mr. Raymond Jans; Mr. Rossen Popov, Deputy Secretary INCB; and Ms. Rachanikorn Sarasiri, Deputy Secretary General ONCB

Bangkok (Thailand) 3 December 2013 – Looking for ways to combat trafficking of the chemicals that enable manufacture of illicit drugs and new psychoactive substances, UNODC and International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), in cooperation with the Government of Thailand, organised a high level conference in Bangkok, Thailand from 2-4 December 2013.

The conference brings together high-level representatives from government and international organisations and national experts to address the challenges posed to countries in Asia and beyond by groups smuggling precursor chemicals. Many of these groups traffic both controlled and non-controlled chemicals, as well as pharmaceutical drugs containing precursor chemicals necessary to manufacture methamphetamine and new psychoactive substances.

Some 100 leading Government officials participants from the Asia region and beyond attended the event to discuss how to address precursors challenges. Speakers included H. E Mr Ibrahim Azhar, Deputy Minister of Counter Narcotics of Afghanistan, INCB President Mr Raymond Jans, and Mr Jeremy Douglas, UNODC's Regional Representative for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. After the first day of high-level political discussion and the adoption of a political declaration, participants today began two days of expert-level panel discussions.

The conference is an opportunity for representatives, senior government officials and experts to share national and organisational experiences on preventing diversion of precursors chemicals and agreeing to multilateral, concrete measures to overcoming precursor related challenges that are common to all.

Agreeing that urgent and coordinated action needed to be taken, high-level officials stressed the need to build on the growing political momentum to address the above problems in a concrete manner. This involved discussing ways to enhance industry-government cooperation to prevent use of precursors and other chemicals in illicit drug manufacture, preventing domestic diversion, targeting of major/high-level trafficking organizations through better information sharing as well as how to overcome the new challenges posed by non-scheduled chemicals and New Psychoactive Substances.

INCB President Mr Raymond Jans expressed his concern about the threat posed by trafficking of new substances not subject to international control and used to manufacture illicit drugs, in parallel with the on-going threat posed by illicit manufacture of amphetamine type substances (ATS): “The rise in use of non-controlled substances fundamentally challenges the way we approach precursors control. While we must continue to use the tools already available, it is time to focus our political will and share our experiences and expertise to combat this menace.”

UNODC Regional Representative for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Mr Jeremy Douglas said the region needed to focus on information exchange and cooperation to launch operations targeting major chemical trafficking organizations.

He highlighted the need for an multilateral mechanism to help officials exchange information in a timely manner on the appearance of new substances and the modus operandi used by traffickers in order for authorities in Asia and beyond to be more aware of the issues and effectively target traffickers and illicit manufacturing: “As this region rapidly integrates, there needs to be planning for the downside of integration. Precursor controls need to be improved and strengthened across our region.”