

Resolution 62/4

Advancing effective and innovative approaches, through national, regional and international action, to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, particularly synthetic opioids

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs,

Recalling all commitments related to addressing the challenges posed by the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, including synthetic opioids, as contained in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem,¹ the Joint Ministerial Statement of the 2014 high-level review by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the implementation by Member States of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem² and 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”,³ as well as 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 during the ministerial segment of the sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, held in Vienna on 14 and 15 March 2019,

Taking note of General Assembly resolution [73/192](#) of 17 December 2018, in which the Assembly reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to ensuring that all aspects of demand reduction and related measures, supply reduction and related measures, and international cooperation were addressed in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁵ with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, all human rights, fundamental freedoms, the inherent dignity of all individuals and the principles of equal rights and mutual respect among States,

Recalling its resolution 61/8 of 16 March 2018, on enhancing and strengthening international and regional cooperation and domestic efforts to address the international threats posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids, in which it called upon Member States to explore innovative approaches to more effectively address any threat posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids by involving all relevant sectors, such as broadening domestic, regional and international control over synthetic opioids, reinforcing health-care systems and building the capacity of law enforcement and health-care professionals to respond to that challenge,

Stressing with grave concern the international challenge, particularly to public health and welfare and law enforcement, posed by the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, in particular synthetic opioids, and their illicit

¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2009, Supplement No. 8* (E/2009/28), chap. I, sect. C.

² *Ibid.*, 2014, *Supplement No. 8* (E/2014/28), chap. I, sect. C.

³ General Assembly resolution S-30/1, 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 217 A (III).

manufacture, diversion and trafficking, and reaffirming its determination to prevent and treat the non-medical use of such drugs, minimize the adverse health and social consequences associated with their use and prevent and counter their illicit production, manufacture, diversion and trafficking,

Noting with concern that drug traffickers continue to exploit tools of modern commerce to traffic in precursors, pre-precursor chemicals and synthetic drugs, thereby contributing to the increased misuse of these drugs and the adverse consequences of their non-medical use, exploiting, for example, online markets for the illicit sale of such synthetic drugs, in particular synthetic opioids, in addition to exploiting the international mail system and express consignment carrier shipments to distribute such substances,

Underscoring that intensified action at the national level is required to address the international challenges posed by the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, in particular synthetic opioids, including national efforts to implement international scheduling decisions, and stressing that capacity-building at the national level is required for the international community to effectively respond to those multifaceted challenges, and that such action should promote scientific evidence-based, balanced, comprehensive and multidisciplinary approaches, incorporating both public health and supply reduction responses in line with the international drug control conventions and with the international drug control policy framework found in the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, held in 2016,

Noting with appreciation the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to develop, as part of its comprehensive opioid strategy and on the basis of the discussions of the intergovernmental expert group on the international challenge posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids, in collaboration with the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs, comprising technical assistance tools that can support Member States in identifying and addressing national challenges posed by the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, including ways to enhance precursor chemical controls and to strengthen forensic capacity to identify and detect synthetic drugs and regulatory approaches,

Noting the ongoing efforts by some Member States to advance strategic and targeted national action to address the challenges posed by the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, in particular synthetic opioids, including by implementing effective legislative approaches, such as individual listing, generic controls, analogue legislation, temporary and/or emergency controls and effect-based controls,

Recognizing the important role played by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, together with the treaty-mandated roles of the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, in collecting data to inform Member States about the latest trends in drug trafficking and misuse, as well as scheduling recommendations made to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in particular those relating to synthetic opioids,

Reiterating the importance of further strengthening existing international, regional and bilateral cooperation, including through participation in existing online database platforms, with a view to gathering and sharing information, such as those operated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board, on a voluntary basis, on relevant factors to inform the monitoring and

analysis of trafficking and use trends related to the non-medical use of synthetic drugs,

Noting the need for capacity-building to ensure the safety of law enforcement units in pursuing the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic opioids,

Reaffirming that targeted interventions that are based on the collection and analysis of data, including age- and gender-related data, can be particularly effective in meeting the specific needs of drug-affected populations and communities,

Highlighting the importance of including in national drug policies, in accordance with national legislation and, as appropriate, elements relating to the prevention and treatment of drug overdose, in particular, opioid overdose, including the use of opioid receptor antagonists, for example, naloxone, and other scientific evidence-based measures to reduce drug-related mortality,

Reaffirming that the international drug control conventions seek to achieve a balance between ensuring access to and the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances under international control for medical and scientific purposes and preventing their diversion and misuse,

Recalling the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol,⁶ 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 1971,⁷ 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,

1. *Welcomes* the outcomes of the meeting of the intergovernmental expert group on the international challenge posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids, held in Vienna on 3 and 4 December 2018, convened by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, together with the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 61/8, during which it was stressed that advancing national action that incorporated comprehensive, balanced and evidence-based demand reduction and supply reduction initiatives was a key component in addressing that challenge;

2. *Encourages* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, together with the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, to continue developing the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs, and to operationalize and disseminate the information about the interventions included in the Toolkit by incorporating them, as appropriate, into its technical assistance and capacity-building programmes;

3. *Also encourages* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, together with the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, to organize further expert-level discussions on this important topic among their efforts to assist Member States in their implementation of the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs, among other relevant intervention measures;

⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 976, No. 14152.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1019, No. 14956.

4. *Encourages* Member States to make use of the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs to inform and implement national strategic interventions that achieve rapid and effective results in interdicting and significantly reducing the illicit manufacture and marketing of and trafficking in synthetic drugs, including synthetic opioids, specific to national contexts;

5. *Also encourages* Member States to consider advancing regulatory approaches, such as generic controls, analogue legislation and temporary or emergency controls, aimed at enhancing national controls on synthetic opioids for non-medical use, particularly when scheduling fentanyl-related substances by class;

6. *Acknowledges* that falsified or fraudulent substances purporting to be medicine and containing synthetic opioids are a matter of concern because they may endanger the health and welfare of humankind;

7. *Also acknowledges* the increased trend in trafficking in and non-medical use of synthetic drugs, including diverted, falsified or fraudulent medicines, such as oxycodone and tramadol, in some regions, and invites Member States, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, to advance efforts to address that concerning challenge;

8. *Welcomes with appreciation* the list of fentanyl-related substances with no currently known legitimate medical or industrial uses, beyond limited research and analytical purposes, developed by the International Narcotics Control Board, which is a valuable tool used by relevant national authorities and other stakeholders, including the scientific community, academia and the private sector, to help States take appropriate measures to prevent the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in those fentanyl-related substances;

9. *Calls upon* all Member States to increase operational use of article 13 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances of 1988,⁸ to take appropriate measures to prevent trade in and the diversion of materials and equipment used in the illicit production or manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, including, where appropriate, by enacting national legislation to implement that article, that is aimed at preventing the use of materials and equipment in the illicit production or manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, particularly synthetic opioids for non-medical use;

10. *Encourages* the International Narcotics Control Board, within its existing mandate and in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant entities, to provide guidelines on the most effective ways to prevent the diversion of materials and equipment essential for the illicit production or manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the context of article 13 of the 1988 Convention;

11. *Calls upon* Member States to implement the treaty-mandated international scheduling decisions and to consider providing voluntary contributions to support the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board, within existing mandates, to strengthen the capacity of Member States, upon request, and also calls upon Member States to support the World Health Organization in accelerating the process of issuing recommendations for the scheduling of the most prevalent, persistent and harmful synthetic drugs;

⁸ Ibid., vol. 1582, No. 27627.

12. *Also calls upon* Member States to promote cooperation with chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors, as well as those within the international mail system and express consignment shippers and other commercial carriers, to curb the diversion in synthetic drugs and the precursor chemicals used to manufacture them;

13. *Encourages* Member States to strengthen cooperation with information and communications technology companies to prevent, interdict and reduce online trafficking in synthetic drugs, including by advancing partnerships with those companies, such as business-to-business service providers, and by preventing the use of cryptocurrencies in those illicit transactions;

14. *Encourages* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization, within existing mandates, to continue to update existing guidelines, including those relating to prescribing practices, and to strengthen resources to prevent, provide treatment for and minimize the adverse health and social consequences of the non-medical use of synthetic opioids;

15. *Calls upon* Member States to improve access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes by appropriately addressing existing barriers at the national level, including those related to legislation, regulatory systems, health-care systems, affordability, the training of health-care professionals, education, awareness-raising, estimates, assessment and reporting and benchmarks for the consumption of substances under control, as well as to improve international cooperation and coordination, while concurrently preventing the diversion and misuse of and trafficking in such substances;

16. *Encourages* Member States, in accordance with national legislation and in the context of comprehensive and balanced drug demand reduction efforts:

(a) To promote and strengthen regional and international cooperation and share best practices in developing and implementing prevention and treatment-related initiatives, enhancing technical assistance and capacity-building and ensuring non-discriminatory access to a broad range of initiatives, including in order to minimize adverse health and social consequences, such as psychosocial, behavioural and medication-assisted treatment, as appropriate and in accordance with national legislation, as well as access to rehabilitation, social reintegration and recovery-support programmes, including access to such services in prisons and after imprisonment, giving special attention to the specific needs of women, children and youth in that regard;

(b) To share best practices with respect to evidence-based prevention and treatment of infectious diseases associated with the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, in particular synthetic opioids;

(c) To implement, in accordance with the international drug control conventions, effective measures and initiatives aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, particularly synthetic opioids, by raising awareness and promoting increased access to and availability of evidence-based prevention, treatment and recovery services, including access to naloxone, used for the reversal of opioid overdose, and other opioid-blocking medicines and evidence-based measures;

(d) To promote, within national and regional contexts, non-stigmatizing attitudes in the development and implementation of scientific evidence-based policies related to the availability of, access to and delivery

of health-care and social services for drug users and to reduce any possible discrimination, exclusion or prejudice that those people may encounter, in line with Commission resolution 61/11 of 16 March 2018;

17. *Urges* Member States to take further steps to prevent the use and diversion of synthetic drugs for non-medical purposes, including through measures and initiatives addressing the training of relevant health-care professionals and, where appropriate, education and raising public awareness and engaging with the private sector on, inter alia, issues related to marketing;

18. *Calls upon* Member States, where applicable, to continue to provide to the Secretariat, within existing reporting requirements, information on national efforts to address the challenges posed by the use of synthetic drugs for non-medical purposes, particularly synthetic opioids, and requests the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in consultation with the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, within their respective mandates, to report to the Commission at its sixty-third session on any such information received from Member States;

19. *Encourages* Member States, in accordance with national legislation, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, within their mandates, to collect national data, analyse evidence, and share information with respect to the trends in the consumption for non-medical use, illicit production and diversion of and trafficking in synthetic drugs, particularly synthetic opioids, including falsified or fraudulent synthetic drugs, especially using information communications technologies, the international mail system and express consignment carrier shipments, so that the data, evidence and information can be used to enhance the effectiveness of national approaches to curb those developments, including by strengthening legal, law enforcement and criminal justice responses;

20. *Calls upon* Member States to fulfil in a timely manner their reporting obligations to the International Narcotics Control Board concerning the use of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and the diversion of, trafficking in and non-medical and non-scientific use of those substances, as required under the international drug control conventions;

21. *Urges* the International Narcotics Control Board, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization, to continue enhancing understanding among national regulators and health-care professionals, including pharmacists based in rural communities, of the treaty-based requirements to ensure access to and availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, and invites the Board to provide an update on this matter to the Commission at its sixty-third session;

22. *Invites* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board, and the World Health Organization, within existing mandates and upon request, to provide technical assistance to Member States to support their implementation of innovative approaches to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the non-medical use of synthetic drugs, particularly synthetic opioids, including those approaches included in the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs;

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