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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 2016 International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) Annual Report presents an analysis of the global drug control situation and makes recommendations to help States take effective measures to address drug-related challenges. During the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem in April 2016, Governments reaffirmed their commitment to the goals and principles of the conventions and their determination to fulfil their joint responsibilities to cooperate in all fields of drug policy. Like the Governments that have adopted the outcome document of the special session, INCB believes that the international drug control system, founded upon the conventions, continues to provide a flexible basis to meet the world's drug control needs.



This year's thematic chapter is on the topic of women and drugs. It is important that gender aspects be taken into account when examining the world's drug problem, for example in light of the fact that whereas one third of global drug users are women and girls, only one in five drug treatment recipients is female, and an increasing number of women are being arrested for drug-related crimes. Our report shows that, to implement effective and comprehensive policies, the needs of women must be targeted, and the obstacles preventing them from accessing treatment—such as stigma—must be addressed. This chapter can change perceptions and remind people, particularly policymakers, of the importance of protecting the rights of women who use drugs or who have committed drug-related offences and the rights of their families. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations to Member States, such as prioritizing accessible health care for drug-dependent women, ensuring better funding and coordination of efforts to prevent and treat drug abuse among women, and addressing the stigma associated with drug dependence, particularly among women.

The fundamental goal of the international drug control system remains the protection of the health and welfare of humanity. The drug control system has to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their trafficking, illicit cultivation and production and abuse.

The conventions provide for a certain degree of flexibility for their implementation at the national level, particularly with respect to determining appropriate sanctions, including non-punitive or non-custodial measures for minor offences. No obligation stems from the conventions to imprison people who commit minor drug-related offences; instead the conventions promote alternatives to conviction and punishment, such as treatment, education, aftercare, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

However, flexibility has its limits; it does not extend to the regulation of the non-medical use of drugs. This year's report again draws attention to the limited number of countries that have adopted policies that go beyond these limits. States parties now have the responsibility to determine how to respond to the developments in those countries which disregard the treaties by permitting and



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regulating the non-medical use of drugs. This development is expanded upon in chapter II of this Report, which explores the possible effects of the legalization and regulation of non-medical use of cannabis in several jurisdictions.

The regional chapter highlights developments in a number of countries concerning the establishment and operation of “drug consumption rooms”. The Board reiterates that for such facilities to be consistent with the conventions they must aim at effectively reducing the negative consequences of drug abuse and must ultimately lead to treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration measures. This must be done without condoning or increasing drug abuse or encouraging drug trafficking. The report explains that “drug consumption rooms” must operate within a demand reduction framework and that they can not be a substitute for prevention and treatment measures.

In its 2016 report on precursors, INCB provides a comprehensive analysis of the global precursor control situation, spanning the continuum from regulatory controls to law enforcement interventions. Focus areas in this year’s report include the role of law enforcement in the prevention of diversion of chemicals and the challenges arising from a lack of integrity of controls in conflict areas.

INCB will continue to acknowledge and support all drug-related policies and programmes that address drug control challenges in a balanced manner in conformity with the treaties and with respect for human rights.

Werner Sipp

President

International Narcotics Control Board