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EMBARGO:

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INCB URGES GOVERNMENTS AND INDUSTRY TO TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT THE USE OF DRUGS TO FACILITATE CRIME

The International Narcotics Control Board is urging Governments and industry to take urgent action to prevent the diversion and use of medicines for the commission of drug-facilitated crime. In its Annual Report, the Board reveals that drug-facilitated criminal acts have occurred in many countries and regions.

Over recent years, INCB has repeatedly warned the international community about the misuse of drugs such as flunitrazepam to commit sexual assault, and implementation of the recommendations of the Board has contributed to a reported decrease in the use of flunitrazepam for sexual assault. INCB has been increasingly concerned about the misuse of psychoactive substances for other drug-facilitated crimes such as robbery and ownership fraud.

The victims of drug-facilitated sexual assault are mainly young women, and in cases of drug-facilitated robbery and ownership fraud the victims tend to be young men. While the increasing trend in such crimes is worrying, its true extent is unknown as it is believed that the problem is underreported, due to a lack of forensic evidence.

The lack of evidence can stem from a loss of memory that can be caused by such substances. Furthermore, the substances administered are tasteless, colourless and odourless and the victims are therefore unaware that they have been drugged. Feelings of shame and fear may also prevent the reporting of these crimes, especially in societies where there is a stigma associated with being a victim of sexual assault.

Initiatives have already started in cooperation with industry to prevent the diversion and use of drugs to facilitate crime while at the same time preventing a negative impact on the availability of the medicines for legitimate purposes. Many governments have already introduced counter-measures to tackle this problem, as called for in Resolution 53/7 of the Commission of Narcotic Drugs of March 2010. INCB calls on Governments, the international community and industry to build upon these first steps and urges those Governments that have not yet taken action to do so immediately.