

Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria
Telephone: +43-1-26060, Telefax: +43-1-26060-5867 / 5868
E-Mail: incb.secretariat@un.org Internet Address: <http://www.incb.org/>

Check against delivery

**Statement by Ms. Jagjit Pavadia, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

United Nations Economic and Social Council Management Segment

**Item 19 (d): Narcotic drugs
Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2020**

22 July 2021

Mr. Vice-President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the International Narcotics Control Board, it is an honour to present INCB's 2020 Annual Report¹.

The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly demonstrated the necessity of universal access to health care, including access to medicines containing controlled substances.

Concern for health and well-being is at the heart of the international drug control system and the three conventions upon which it is founded. INCB is the independent expert body mandated to monitor compliance with the United Nations drug control conventions. The Board assists governments in implementing the treaties and ensures the functioning of the international drug control system, thereby contributing both directly and indirectly to the sustainable development goals. We are committed to supporting the international community as it works to recover from the pandemic and accelerate progress on the SDGs, particularly goal 3 on good health and well-being, goal 10 on reducing inequalities, and goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. The INCB annual report consists of

- a thematic chapter I,
- chapter II on the functioning of the international drug control system,
- chapter III on global issues and regional developments, and
- chapter IV containing INCB's recommendations to governments, the United Nations, and international and regional organizations.

Chapter I

This year's thematic Chapter is focussing on drug use among older people, which is increasing at a faster rate than among young people. There is an urgent need to address substance use issues among older people with the global population rapidly aging. INCB makes recommendations² in three areas:

1. improving research and data collection, given that most drug use surveys only consider people under the age of 65;

¹ E/INCB/2020/1, available in the six UN languages: <https://www.incb.org/incb/en/publications/annual-reports/annual-report.html>

² As contained in [Chapter I](#) and [recommendation 1 of Chapter IV](#)

2. combating stigma of drug use; and
3. providing age-appropriate care.

Chapter III

In one of the [global issues in chapter III of the annual report](#), INCB presents an analysis of the impact of the pandemic on availability of internationally controlled substances for licit purposes and on illicit drug activity. INCB is drawing attention to the disruption in treatment services for people with substance use disorders and the need to step up evidence-based prevention and treatment services, particularly given the mental health impact of the pandemic.

INCB Learning

INCB works closely with governments on an ongoing basis to ensure uninterrupted international trade in controlled substances, including essential medicines. Through INCB Learning, we are building the capacity of governments to improve the assessment and availability of controlled substances for medical, scientific and industrial use.

GRIDS

Through the GRIDS³ Programme, INCB is building capacity to prevent the exploitation of e-commerce platforms, social media and the Internet, including the dark web, for illicit sales of non-medical synthetic opioids and new psychoactive substances. This is critically important given the increase in opioid-related overdose deaths during the pandemic. We encourage⁴ governments to work with the GRIDS Programme and its public-private partnership initiative to establish and strengthen partnerships with relevant sectors. This will prevent the exploitation of legitimate industry for trafficking in dangerous non-medical synthetic opioids and new psychoactive substances.

Human Rights

The Board has reiterated its concern over serious violations of human rights committed in the name of drug control. These actions contravene internationally recognized human rights standards and are inconsistent with the obligations of Governments under the international drug control conventions. These are highlighted in [recommendations 10 and 11 in Chapter IV of the annual report](#). All drug control actions should be taken with full respect for the rule of law and due process and the principle of proportionality.

Cannabis

INCB is also highlighting the obligation of States Parties to limit the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances exclusively to medical and scientific purposes⁵. The Board expresses its continuing concern over developments in some countries that have legalised the use of cannabis for non-medical and non-scientific purposes. Non-medical use and legalisation of controlled substances are inconsistent with the obligations of States parties to the 1961 Convention. The Board remains in close dialogue with these countries.

³ Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Programme

⁴ [Recommendation 22](#)

⁵ [Recommendation 2](#)

Also, wherever cannabinoids for medical purposes are used Governments should monitor and evaluate the potential diversion to trafficking or other unintended consequences of those programmes.

Precursors

Our 2020 Precursors Report⁶ marks the 30th anniversary of the entry into force of the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

Seizures of internationally controlled precursors used in illicit drug manufacture have declined. This has been made possible by the increased use by Member States of INCB's Pre-Export Notification Online (PEN Online) system, and joint investigations have benefited from information-sharing through the Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS)

We see signs of increased capacity of authorities around the world to identify and seize these substances.

Global action to address the use of non-scheduled chemicals, pre-precursors and designer precursors is still a primary area of concern. INCB is supporting governments in the identification of innovative solutions based on the principle of shared responsibility, including through public private partnerships.

Article 13

In addition to article 12 of the 1988 Convention, we also recommend use of article 13 to prevent trade in and diversion of materials and equipment used in illicit drug manufacture. The Board is working to highlight the need to focus on this area of prevention.

Supplementary Reports

INCB has also issued a supplementary report⁷ analysing the implementation of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, which see their sixtieth and fiftieth anniversaries this year.

The conventions enjoy almost universal ratification and Governments have regularly reaffirmed their commitment to the treaties, in all fora. Despite a great increase in the number of substances controlled and tremendous growth in the volume of international trade, international control of the licit production, trade and consumption of controlled substances has been achieved.

However, much more needs to be done.

There are still inadequate levels of availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes in many parts of the world. Countries need to review their forecasts for demand and highlight the need for more realistic estimates for these substances to the Board.

In closing, the pandemic is far from over. More than four million lives have been lost and progress towards the sustainable development goals has been stalled. We need to bolster efforts to ensure continued access to controlled medicines for all COVID-19-related medical needs and for other ongoing medical needs.

⁶ E/INCB/2020/4 https://www.incb.org/incb/en/precursors/technical_reports/precursors-technical-reports.html

⁷ E/INCB/2020/1/Supp.1 <https://www.incb.org/incb/en/publications/annual-reports/annual-report.html>

INCB is committed to working with the State Parties to address these challenges and contribute to the success of the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you.

* * *