

Check against delivery

**Statement by Prof. Jallal Toufiq, President,
International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)
Sixty-seventh session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

Item 5 (c): International Narcotics Control Board

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Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to present to you INCB's 2023 Annual Report and Precursors Report.

The thematic chapter of the Annual Report focuses on the role of the Internet, including social media, in drug trafficking and use.

In addition to the dark web, criminal groups are also exploiting legitimate e-commerce and other online platforms to traffic drugs and precursors. The online presence of vendors for fentanyl and other synthetic opioids represents a serious public health threat in view of their high potency and the risk of overdose deaths. Moreover, social media is increasingly used as a local marketplace for illicit drugs, with implications for young people, including children, with law enforcement authorities subsequently facing difficulties in monitoring and prosecuting these activities due to encryption and jurisdictional issues.

In addressing these challenges, Governments are encouraged to utilize the INCB real-time counter trafficking tools to develop actionable intelligence that help authorities identify and link traffickers that exploit Internet-related and e-commerce services.

INCB's Internet-based tools, for instance, facilitate licit international trade in controlled substances, and INCB's PICS, IONICS and GRIDS Intelligence systems are supporting Governments in addressing drug and precursor trafficking. Governments are encouraged to work with the INCB GRIDS Programme to facilitate public-private cooperation and the INCB OPIOIDS project's fentanyl-related substances list, as well as the project's other lists of dangerous substances with no known legitimate uses, should be used to encourage industry partners to refrain from manufacture, marketing, import, export or distribution of these substances.

At the same time, the Internet and social media cannot, and should not, be seen solely as a threat. They also present opportunities. Telemedicine, for instance, can improve access to treatment services and social media platforms have the potential to reach young people with prevention advice. INCB recommends that Governments should develop and conduct drug use prevention campaigns utilizing social media.

Chapter two of the annual report reviews the functioning of the international drug control system, including the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, which I will cover under item 5 (d).

Chapter three of the report presents a selection of global issues, including an update on the control status of ketamine, in view of recent developments in its medical use and reports of increasing non-medical use and seizures. Ketamine was one of the target substances in INCB intelligence operations in 2020 and 2023, in which a total of 274 ketamine incidents were reported, and over 500 kg were seized in the most recent operation. In total over 5 tons of seized ketamine have been communicated by Governments through the INCB IONICS system.

A further global issue highlights challenges and opportunities in promoting drug treatment and rehabilitation according to the UNODC and WHO International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders after the COVID-19 pandemic. INCB urges States to ensure access to voluntary, evidence-based treatment services, address systemic disparities and ensure inclusivity, and continue to focus efforts to combat stigma and discrimination. INCB calls on Governments to close compulsory treatment facilities and shift efforts and

resources to evidence-based treatment services and alternatives to incarceration. INCB also encourages collaboration between Governments and the international community to strengthen management and monitoring capacities, data collection and data-sharing, which serve to inform and improve public policies and the provision of treatment and rehabilitation services. INCB urges States to implement continuous review mechanisms directed at licensed treatment facilities in their territories, to ensure compliance with the Standards.

A further global issue highlights the growing evidence of significant linkages between drug-related crimes and the environment. INCB calls on Governments, with the international community's support, to take urgent actions to address environmental threats, prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of local, indigenous and vulnerable populations.

I have already touched upon many of the recommendations contained in the report. However, I would like to briefly emphasize three points.

- Universal adherence to the drug control conventions is critically important and INCB urges States that have not yet become party to one or more of the treaties to take steps to do so without delay.

- Given the substantial proportion of overdose deaths resulting from illicit fentanyl manufacture and newly emerging highly potent synthetic non-fentanyl opioids encountered in drug markets globally, INCB encourages Governments to participate in INCB GRIDS Programme training and utilize INCB tools.
- INCB reiterates its concern regarding the legalization of the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes, recalls the thematic chapter of its 2022 report, and reminds all parties to the 1961 Convention as amended that under article 4, paragraph (c) and under the provisions of the Convention, the production, manufacture, export, import, distribution of, trade in, use and possession of drugs are limited exclusively to medical use and scientific purposes. The apparent tension between these provisions and the trend towards legalization needs to be addressed by the signatories to the drug control conventions.

Moving on to INCB's Precursors Report, the report analyzes the world precursor situation, which is characterized by a fast-changing pace of illicit drug manufacture, with pre-precursors or custom-made precursors increasingly being used to circumvent controls.

The report highlights activities aimed at helping Governments to address the detected trends in illicit drug manufacturing. I will briefly mention some of them:

- Firstly, the report highlights that one of the most important elements of successful industry cooperation is knowledge and understanding of the range of industries that deal with the chemicals used for illicit drug manufacture and thus might – often unknowingly – be targeted by traffickers.
- Secondly, INCB's platforms PEN Online, PEN Online Light and PICS continued to prove their effectiveness. Use of PEN Online Light, launched in 2022, has helped to stop several multi-tonne shipments of GBL in 2023. As in the past, investigations have benefited from real-time information-sharing through PICS.
- The report also analyzed practices in free-trade zones, and the thematic chapter provides an account of the implications of conflict and unresolved territorial disputes for precursor control. Both issues are also covered in the INCB annual report as global issues.
- Lastly, I would like to reiterate the critical importance of the quality and timeliness of data for meaningful analysis, identification of new developments and actions to prevent the diversion of chemicals to illicit laboratories. INCB urges Governments to make every effort to report

complete information on form D, pursuant to article 12 of the 1988 Convention by the deadline of 30 of June.

INCB looks forward to continued cooperation with the Commission and Member States in implementation of the conventions and the recommendations contained in the 2023 reports.

Thank you.