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**Statement of Dr. Lochan Naidoo,  
President of the International Narcotics Control Board,  
at the 2014 African Pain Policy Fellowship training programme**

**Entebbe (via Skype) 23 July 2014**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to interact with you during this important workshop. Ensuring the availability as well as the rational use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical use is at the heart of the United Nations drug control Conventions. It is also a core mandate of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and I am therefore delighted to be associated with this crucial initiative.

Global data collected and analysed by INCB shows that the consumption of drugs for pain relief and other medical purposes is still low in most countries. In fact, access to these drugs is very uneven, with consumption concentrated primarily in countries in North America, Western Europe and Oceania. The reality is that, for example, 92 per cent of the world's morphine is consumed by 17 per cent of the world's population while the rest of the world's population (83 per cent) is left with only 8 per cent.

This imbalance is particularly problematic, since the latest data show that over 70 per cent of cancer deaths actually occur in low- and middle-income countries. Without sustained action, cancer incidence is projected to increase by 70 per cent in middle-income countries and by 82 per cent in lower-income countries by 2030.

The impact of this underuse is significant as it causes unnecessary pain and suffering for many people, including 5.5 million terminal cancer patients, 1 million end stage HIV/AIDS patients or women in labor - there are 110 million births each year.

The World Health Organization estimates that the number of people affected “are in the same magnitude as those afflicted by conditions that are recognized as major contributors to the world’s burden of disease, in particular HIV, malaria and tuberculosis”.

Africa is a region where these substances are particularly underused and this underutilization is a result of diverse, interrelated factors, including concerns about addiction or reluctance to prescribe or stock. Unduly restrictive laws and burdensome regulations are also commonly perceived as playing a significant role in limiting the availability of opioids.

The complex problem of underutilization requires well-thought out strategies and actions and I am glad that the Pain and Policy Studies Group and the African Palliative Care Association (APCA) have joined forces to address this problem by convening this training workshop which should, in the long run, facilitate better and more adequate access of patients to these drugs for medical purposes.

INCB continues to urge Governments to do their part in improving the access to the drugs for medical purposes. The overall goal is a well-functioning national and international system for managing the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances that should provide relief from pain and suffering by ensuring the safe delivery of the best affordable drugs to those patients who need them and, at the same time, prevent the diversion of drugs for the purpose of abuse.

Your contributions at this workshop will be crucial in achieving this objective.

With this, I wish you success in your deliberations and success in translating the knowledge acquired through this activity into effective action in your respective countries.

Thank you for your attention.