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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Natural disasters and emergencies related to climate change and conflict resulted in acute humanitarian needs for medicines containing internationally controlled substances in 2023. The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) has been urging Governments to ensure unimpeded international availability of these medicines, through the use of simplified control procedures in such situations.

The INCB 2023 annual report presents an analysis of the global availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, showing persistent regional disparities in the consumption of opioid analgesics for pain treatment. This is due in part to countries not accurately estimating their medical requirements for these substances, many of which are essential medicines. Levels of consumption of affordable morphine in regions other than Europe and North America are insufficient to address medical needs. INCB is supporting Member States in improving their estimates and thus improving the availability of controlled substances for medical, scientific and industrial purposes through the [INCB Learning programme](#).



Regarding illicit drug supply, illicit opium poppy cultivation and heroin production in Afghanistan declined dramatically. Alternative livelihoods need to be secured as affected farmers may not have other sources of income. Developments in global illicit markets will need to be closely followed, particularly the grave health threat posed by potential substitution of heroin with highly potent synthetic opioids.

INCB has been focusing on tackling trafficking in synthetic drugs and their precursors. To address this global threat to public health, INCB has rolled out new initiatives within the INCB precursor control and Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) programmes. These are aimed at preventing chemicals and equipment being diverted for illicit drug manufacture, and at supporting public-private partnerships to prevent the chemical industry and Internet-based and postal/courier services being exploited for trafficking in new psychoactive substances and non-medical synthetic opioids. Further details on recent trends and initiatives concerning precursor chemicals are contained in the 2023 Precursors Report.

The thematic chapter of the 2023 Annual Report explores the role of the Internet, including social media, in drug trafficking and use. It highlights difficulties faced in addressing online drug trafficking due to encryption technologies and jurisdictional issues, as well as exploitation of legitimate e-commerce platforms. INCB is concerned about the increasing use of social media platforms to market drugs, including to children, and at the same time draws attention to the opportunities offered by social media and the Internet for prevention, awareness-raising and improving access to treatment services. Recommended action for Governments includes engagement with the private sector and INCB operational activities, which are enabling authorities worldwide to share information in real time to prevent highly potent substances from reaching the public.



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Safeguarding health and welfare is the overarching concern of the international drug control treaties. The report reviews the functioning of the international drug control system, including INCB support to Member States to improve treaty implementation and promote health and well-being.

INCB resumed its country missions in the past year, and the Board was pleased to work with the Governments of Canada, Cyprus, Kyrgyzstan, the United States and Uruguay, and to meet with representatives of civil society in those countries. INCB looks forward to continuing this dialogue with Member States, including during the Commission on Narcotic Drugs midterm review of implementation of drug policy commitments, to be conducted in March 2024, and in progressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With 2023 being the midpoint to implement the Goals and the 2030 Agenda, insufficient progress has been made towards SDG 3 on health and well-being. INCB urges Governments and international and regional organizations to implement the recommendations set out in the 2023 annual report. It encourages civil society organizations to integrate these recommendations in their work. Every person has the right to the highest attainable standard of health. To make the health and well-being of all a reality, Governments, supported by the international community and civil society, need to translate their political will and policy commitments into concrete action.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jallal Toufiq'.

Jallal Toufiq

President

International Narcotics Control Board

