

**President of the Economic and Social Council**  
**137<sup>th</sup> session of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**  
**Vienna, 18 May 2023**  
**WebEx**

## **Opening Remarks**

Mr. President, distinguished Board Members,

It is a pleasure to join you at the 137<sup>th</sup> session of the International Narcotics Control Board and continue our conversation.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Toufiq on his election as INCB President and thank Ms. Pavadia for the valuable collaboration during last year. Before moving into more substantive items, let me briefly update you on the progress for filling the two vacant posts. Board members would recall that candidates to the Board are either nominated by governments for election to the Board, or by the Director of the World Health Organization. For the two current vacancies on the Board, there is one vacancy from each category. In keeping with established practice, once candidates have been identified, their candidatures will be submitted to the INCB Secretariat. Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council will hold elections to fill the vacancies. Ad hoc elections are currently scheduled in the Council for late July, and may also take place in the second half of the year, if needed.

I would also like to re-iterate the Council's appreciation for the Board's work in promoting the consistent application of the three drug treaties related to the control of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals.

The work of the Board to facilitate international trade in controlled substances to ensure adequate access and availability for medical and industrial purposes is critical. It is particularly critical in situations of humanitarian emergencies and conflicts as the ones we are facing at the moment.

Moreover, the end of the COVID 19 crisis and the gradual resumption of business as usual have also implied the resumption of both illicit drug use patterns and international trafficking. In this respect the complexity of our societies and the globalization of their markets are well reflected by the evolution of illicit drug manufacturing and spreading of new drugs, as well as the trend towards the legalization of cannabis for non-medical purposes in some countries.

I commend you for seamlessly delivering on the responsibilities of the Board in an increasingly complex environment and for your continuous efforts to demonstrate how the work of the Board intersects with that of others, including the interlinkages with the SDGs. All of this can only serve to enhance the synergies among the work of the ECOSOC system.

I particularly commend the voice and the role of the Board in highlighting the grave injustice resulting from the lack of medicines containing narcotic drugs in some countries and the emphasis on the need for all drug control policies and actions to be adopted in line with international human rights obligations, including promoting equality and non-discrimination towards people who use drugs.

I look forward to learning more about your work on these important issues, including on progress on the SDGs, in particular SDG 3 on health and well-being, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and SDG 10 on reducing inequalities. I also want to hear some of the key issues of concern to the Board and how you are using your highly specialized expertise to support Member States in implementing the drug control conventions and addressing those concerns.

Your work will also help Member States in taking stock of key issues during the midterm review of implementation of all international drug policy commitments, to be held next year during the sixty-seventh session of the CND, as well as the midterm review of the 2030 Agenda this year in September 2023.

In preparation for the Summit, I look forward to the Board's contributions to the High-Level Political Forum in July 2023. This will be a great opportunity to bring the most innovative ideas that can help us speed up achievement of the Goals. In addition to SDGs 3, 10 and 16, the Board may also have contributions to other Goals, through their interlinkages with its work, such as Goals 6 on water, 9 on infrastructure and 17 on global partnerships, and perhaps several more.

On behalf of the Council, I reiterate our commitment to working with the Board in promoting the consistent application of the international drug control treaties and I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you.

### **Closing Remarks**

Thank you very much for this fruitful exchange.

I look forward to the presentation of the INCB annual report to the Council at the 2023 June Management Meeting. It is very important to ensure more regular interaction between the INCB and the Economic and Social Council. I am keen to make sure that your work is fully understood and appreciated by the Council, the General Assembly and the public.