



**REMARKS**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. COLLEN V. KELAPILE  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

**AT**

**132<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL  
BOARD (INCB)**

**VIENNA, 18 NOVEMBER 2021**

**Madame President,**

**Distinguished Board Members,**

**1.** It is a great pleasure to join you at the 132<sup>nd</sup> Session of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). I was pleased to chair ECOSOC Management Segment Meeting in July, when INCB's 2020 reports were presented to the Council by Ms. Pavadia.

**2.** The Council is grateful for the work the Board does in monitoring the implementation of the three drug control conventions and the support to the international system for the control of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and precursor chemicals. Your technical expertise in the area of drug control is unrivalled, and thus a sound basis for policy-making.

**3.** As you know, the Council continues to focus its attention on COVID-19 recovery. This year, the theme of the ECOSOC cycle is "***Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development***". The entire ECOSOC system, including its Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies are also expected to contribute to its analysis and policy recommendations.

**4.** The pandemic has demonstrated the need to ensure uninterrupted international trade in essential products. In this regard, the role of the Board in facilitating international trade in controlled substances, including medicines containing controlled substances, is essential for people's wellbeing. I would like to hear more about how the Board is assisting governments in ensuring access to these important substances during emergency situations.

**Madame President,**

**5.** The Board has raised awareness about the need to improve the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. It has drawn attention to the significant disparities and inequities in their availability, within and between regions. The thematic chapters of the Board's Annual Reports – on drug use among young people, women and most recently on the hidden epidemic of drug use among older persons - have drawn attention to the importance of prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services as well as the barriers to accessing these services, including stigma. Action in these areas is a prerequisite to making progress on SDG 3 on health and wellbeing.

**6.** The pandemic has also impacted on illicit drug use. I note with interest that the theme for the 2021 report of INCB is "***Illicit financial flows through drug trafficking – impact on development and security***". This is indeed a topic of continued attention by many Member States.

**7.** This year marked the 60<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances. The Council took note of the supplementary report prepared by the Board, which reviewed the achievements in the implementation of these treaties and the challenges faced.

**8.** The challenges are many. We still see significant levels of drug trafficking and non-medical drug use, with devastating consequences. At the same time, we also see that a few States are regulating and legalizing the non-medical use of cannabis. I would be interested in hearing the Board's views about this challenging situation and today's responses, as well as how the Council can potentially actively engage on this matter.

**Madame President,**

**9.** Although the information is scarce, we are also aware that many African countries are becoming key conduits for drugs, as their efforts are undermined by governance deficits and conflicts. Your annual reports also point out that the lack of data from many countries in Africa on the trafficking in and use of drugs remains a major impediment and hinders the ability of these countries and the international community to respond to the challenges. I hope that we find a creative way to address this challenge, including through working with the other technical bodies of ECOSOC such as the Statistical Commission.

**10.** I am particularly eager to find a way to provide as much information as we can to contribute to the conflict prevention activities across the entire United Nations system, including by working with the Peacebuilding Commission and the Security Council.

**Madame President,**

**11.** Another issue on the global agenda is that of the fast-moving technological train. Despite the many benefits brought about by digital technology and new communication platforms, such as social media, new technologies also provide opportunities for exploitation – the illicit sale of drugs, the promotion of non-medical drug use and for organized crime. The darknet poses an even more challenging problem.

**12.** I would like to hear the Board's views on what action Member States could take to safeguard citizens, especially young people, from harmful substances and dangerous behaviors.

**13.** Let me conclude, **Madame President**, by emphasizing that it is essential that the international community accelerates progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Board represents a source of highly specialized independent expertise, and I hope that this can be leveraged in supporting Member States.

**14.** The relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the International Narcotics Control Board is set out in the conventions and resolutions of the Council. I hope that meetings such as these can translate this into concrete action and cooperation for the benefit of Member States and humankind.

**I thank you.**