

Resolution 53/4

Promoting adequate availability of internationally controlled licit drugs for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion and abuse

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs,

Stressing the importance of promoting adequate availability of internationally controlled licit drugs for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion and abuse,

Recalling the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol,¹ in which the parties recognized that the medical use of narcotic drugs continued to be indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and that adequate provision must be made to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs for such purposes,

Recalling also the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971,² in which it is recognized that the use of psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes is indispensable and that their availability for such purposes should not be unduly restricted,

Recalling further Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/25 of 22 July 2005, on treatment of pain using opioid analgesics,

Recalling its resolution 48/5, in which it called for increased international cooperation to counter the diversion of substances via the Internet and their abuse,

Affirming that the international drug control conventions seek to achieve a balance between ensuring the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances under international control for medical and scientific purposes and preventing their diversion and abuse,

Reaffirming the important role entrusted to the International Narcotics Control Board to ensure, in cooperation with Governments, the availability of narcotic drugs for medical and scientific purposes and prevent illicit trafficking in and use of drugs, as set out in article 9, paragraph 4, of the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol,

Concerned that, although there is sufficient supply of licit opiate raw materials to meet global requirements, as highlighted in the annual reports of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2008³ and 2009,⁴ access to opioid-based medications is non-existent or almost non-existent in many countries and regions,

Noting the concern expressed by the International Narcotics Control Board in its annual report for 2009 that some Governments

¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 976, No. 14152.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 1019, No. 14956.

³ *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2008* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.XI.1).

⁴ *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2009* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.XI.1).

need to take specific measures to ensure that their populations have adequate access to opioid-based medications in line with the international drug control conventions,

Underscoring the fact that the submission of estimates and statistical returns by Governments is critical to the actions taken by the International Narcotics Control Board for the implementation of treaty provisions regarding the adequate availability of internationally controlled licit drugs for medical and scientific purposes,

Acknowledging that an increase in the licit supply of internationally controlled substances may raise the risk of diversion and abuse of those substances and that in its annual reports for 2008 and 2009, the International Narcotics Control Board encouraged Governments to increase their vigilance regarding trafficking in and abuse of prescription drugs containing internationally controlled substances and consider enacting enhanced laws to counter trafficking in such prescription drugs,

Noting the medical and scientific needs for internationally controlled substances worldwide to be met within a regulatory and legal framework that prevents their diversion and abuse,

Also noting that the survey of Governments carried out by the International Narcotics Control Board in 2007 identified concern about addiction to narcotic drugs to be the primary factor in the underutilization of essential medicines, followed by the factors of insufficient training of health-care professionals and the existence of restrictive laws that did not take into account the need to ensure the medical availability of narcotic drugs,⁵

Further noting that in the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem,⁶ Member States called for continued cooperation among Member States, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization to ensure the adequate availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances under international control, including opiates, for medical and scientific purposes, while concurrently preventing their diversion into illicit channels, pursuant to the international drug control conventions,

Acknowledging the efforts of the World Health Organization, in consultation with the International Narcotics Control Board, to implement activities, under the Access to Controlled Medications Programme, to address impediments to the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical purposes,

Noting with appreciation the efforts of the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization to

⁵ *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board on Follow-up to the Twentieth Special Session of the General Assembly* (United Nations publication, Sales. No. E.09.XI.7), paras. 10-12.

⁶ A/64/92-E/2009/98, sect. II.A.

develop guidelines on estimating requirements for internationally controlled substances,

Also noting with appreciation the efforts of non-governmental organizations and civil society in continuing to highlight the importance of the issue of adequate availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes as set out in the international drug control conventions,

1. *Decides* that the agenda for the fifty-fourth session of the Commission will include an agenda item on adequate availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes in accordance with the international drug control treaties, in order to examine the impediments to adequate availability encountered and the efforts to prevent the diversion and abuse of those drugs and substances;

2. *Calls upon* Member States to fulfil in a timely manner their reporting obligations to the International Narcotics Control Board and the Secretary-General, as appropriate, concerning the use of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and the diversion of, trafficking in and abuse of those substances, as required under the international drug control treaties;

3. *Encourages* Member States to regularly examine, and report to the International Narcotics Control Board for inclusion in its annual report, trends in their countries in the use of internationally controlled licit substances for medical and scientific purposes, as well as trends in the diversion of, trafficking in and abuse of those substances and to take appropriate action, if necessary;

4. *Supports* recommendation 39 of the International Narcotics Control Board contained in its annual report for 2009,⁷ in which the Board called on Governments to promote access to and rational use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, to adopt measures against unlawful medical practice and to ensure that domestic distribution channels were adequately controlled, and Board recommendation 40, in which the Board requested Governments of countries in which factors such as knowledge limitations and administrative barriers stricter than the control measures required under the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961⁸ affected the availability of opioid analgesics to identify the impediments in their countries to the access and adequate use of opioid analgesics for the treatment of pain and to take steps to improve the availability of those narcotic drugs for medical purposes, in accordance with the pertinent recommendations of the World Health Organization;

5. *Encourages* Member States to include in public awareness campaigns, as appropriate, the issue of the increased risk of diversion of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and their abuse, particularly among young people;

⁷ *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2009* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.XI.1).

⁸ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 520, No. 7515.

6. *Also encourages* Member States, where necessary, to educate regulators and health-care professionals, including through targeted awareness-raising campaigns, to recognize that the medical use of narcotic drugs continues to be indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and that adequate provision must be made to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs for such purposes, taking into account the pertinent recommendations of the World Health Organization and in line with the international drug control conventions;

7. *Supports* recommendation 22 of the International Narcotics Control Board contained in its annual report for 2009, in which the Board encouraged Governments concerned to introduce or expand programmes for monitoring the domestic distribution of prescription drugs and recommended that in order to reduce the problem of improper prescription practices, Governments should consider carrying out programmes, to be targeted appropriately, to inform health-care professionals and the general public of the dangers of misusing prescription drugs containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; and noted that programmes for medical professionals should include information on the risk of diversion, including secondary access to prescribed medications by family members and friends of the intended user, appropriate prescription practices and attempts by individuals to illegally obtain prescriptions from multiple doctors through fraudulent methods (“doctor shopping”);

8. *Invites* the International Narcotics Control Board, as in previous years, to include in its annual report for 2010, to be presented to the Commission at its fifty-fourth session, information on the consumption of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances used for medical and scientific purposes worldwide, including an analysis of impediments to their adequate availability and actions to be taken to overcome those impediments and, when available, specific information about the status of and progress made by countries;

9. *Requests* the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to continue its efforts to ensure the adequate availability of internationally controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes, cooperating, as appropriate, through the Access to Controlled Medications Programme of the World Health Organization, while continuing its activities to prevent diversion and abuse;

10. *Encourages* Member States to consider working with the International Narcotics Control Board and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to update policies and legislative frameworks, as appropriate, to ensure adequate availability of internationally controlled substances and to prevent the diversion and abuse of those substances, in line with the provisions of the international drug control treaties;

11. *Invites* Member States to ensure that the International Narcotics Control Board and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are funded adequately, as appropriate, to support their activities to ensure adequate availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, including the

development and implementation of guidelines to assist Governments in estimating their requirements for internationally controlled substances and to address the risk of the diversion and abuse of those substances;

12. *Also invites* Member States to consider ways to leverage existing health and development programmes in countries without adequate availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, including by building the capacity of those countries through training;

13. *Recognizes* that the Internet can offer increased access to information about narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and can lead to the diversion of those substances, and accordingly invites Member States to consider the implementation of the International Narcotics Control Board *Guidelines for Governments on Preventing the Illegal Sale of Internationally Controlled Substances through the Internet*.⁹

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12 March 2010*

⁹ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.XI.6.