INCB calls for increased focus on improving substance use prevention and treatment services for young people

In its 2019 Annual Report, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB):
• Highlights the connection between the use of alcohol & tobacco and the use of psychoactive substances like cannabis, opiates and cocaine by children and adolescents;
• Focuses on the physical, emotional and social impact that psychoactive drugs have on young people between the ages of 15-24;
• Urges governments to improve services using evidence-based prevention and treatment interventions for young people;
• Expresses concern about the fast-changing global landscape of illegally manufactured designer-precursors tailored to a diverse and online market;
• Addresses injustices related to the availability of controlled medicines from over-prescription in some countries to limited access in other countries;
• Reminds governments to respect human rights in the implementation of drug policies and in compliance with the three international drug control conventions.

Nature and extent of substance use among young people
The 2019 INCB Annual Report raises concern about psychoactive substance use among young people citing findings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report 2018. Substance use and associated health consequences are highest among young people, with cannabis being the most widely used substance. UNODC estimates that in 2016, cannabis use affected 5.6 per cent or 13.8 million young people aged 15-16 with rates varying by region. The highest rates were in Europe (13.9 per cent) followed by the Americas (11.6 per cent), Oceania (11.4 per cent), Africa (6.6 per cent), and then Asia (2.7 per cent). Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO)
Global Health Estimates 2015 show that while deaths from all causes account for only 4.8 per cent in the age group 15-29, they account for 23.1 per cent of deaths attributed to drug use disorders.

The INCB President says: “Of internationally controlled substances, cannabis continues to play the most prominent role among both adolescents and adults. We pay special attention to this development […] and highlight our concern over the situation in a few countries that have moved to permit the use of controlled substances, namely cannabis, for non-medical use contrary to the provisions of and their obligations under the drug control treaties.”

**Relationship of alcohol and tobacco with the use of psychoactive substances**

The INCB Annual Report highlights that the use of alcohol and tobacco by children and adolescents is closely linked to starting to use psychoactive substances. Often, the use of alcohol and tobacco precedes the use of cannabis and other controlled substances. Longitudinal studies that followed children into adulthood have revealed that the earlier the onset of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use during the ages of 16-19 years, the greater the likelihood of the use of opiates and cocaine in adulthood.

**A new framework for the causes of substance use**

Research has shown that young people are particularly vulnerable to habitual use of drugs, leading to the risk and protective factors being reviewed. The need for prevention and treatment for children and adolescents should take into account the individual and environmental influences on young people and their development.

**Evidence-based prevention interventions that work**

According to the UNODC–WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention, evidence-based prevention programmes for children and adolescents should include the following elements:

- A focus on family and parenting skills; encourage positive involvement in children’s lives; effective communication including setting rules and limits.

- School curricula to develop personal and social skills for youth, including decision-making, goal-setting and analytic skills so young people are informed correctly on the effects of psychoactive substances and can resist pro-drug influences.
• Use of schools for screening and assessment with referrals for counselling and follow-up.

• Strict enforcement of regulations to limit access to medications with psychoactive qualities and reduce accessibility to tobacco, alcohol and cannabis for children and adolescents.

The Standards also identify ineffective prevention approaches that influence youth to initiate substance use and presents specific recommendations for the treatment of adolescents who are substance users.

**Recommendations to governments**
The INCB Annual report calls on governments to establish national epidemiological data systems to monitor changing trends in psychoactive substance use among young people. This will enable evidence-based prevention to be implemented prior to the age of initiation of use (pre-natal, early/middle childhood, and early adolescence).

Governments should invest in the development of professional expertise in the field of substance use prevention and treatment with a focus on the needs of young people. This should include national training and credentialing systems for prevention and treatment professionals involved in decision making, planning and programme implementation.

**Pace of emergence of non-scheduled substitute chemicals tests international precursor controls**
The use of non-scheduled chemicals as substitutes for scheduled drug precursors is steadily increasing around the world and with a virtually unlimited variety of chemicals being used. Substance-by-substance scheduling continues to lag behind the speed of innovation of drug traffickers, while many substances have no known legitimate uses and cannot easily be monitored. The INCB urges Governments to continue the wider policy discussion initiated in 2019 on options to respond to these challenges and put in place a global framework to address non-scheduled substances more effectively.

**INCB recommends designer precursor for international scheduling**
The INCB recommends the international control of methyl alpha-phenylacetoacetate (MAPA), a pre-precursor of amphetamine and methamphetamine. MAPA has no known legitimate uses beyond limited research and analytical purposes and can be classified as a designer precursor, made specifically to circumvent existing precursor controls. In March
2020, upon the recommendation of the INCB, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs will vote on placing the chemical under international control, through inclusion in Table I of the 1988 Convention

**Continued support to Afghanistan**
In 2018, there was a substantial reduction in the total area under illegal opium poppy cultivation and the estimated amount of opium produced in Afghanistan due to severe drought. However, the estimated size of the opiate economy remains substantial, exceeding the value of the country’s legal exports of goods and services. The INCB will continue to consult the Government of Afghanistan with a view to facilitate the delivery of assistance in addressing drug control challenges in the country.

In its 2019 report, the INCB reiterates the need to prioritize measures to address the illegal drug economy in Afghanistan, which should be part of the overall effort to build peace, establish security and achieve sustainable development in the country. The INCB is calling on the international community to take part in this process through comprehensive, local, national, regional and international assistance efforts.

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**FAO**
PRESS RELEASE

**Pakistan and FAO to join hands to fight the Desert Locust emergency**

25 February 2020, Islamabad – FAO representative in Pakistan Minà Dowlatchahi met Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research,
Makhdooom Khusro Bakhtiar in Islamabad today following the first national locust coordination meeting on Friday. The discussion focused on better understanding of unusual behavior of the locust in Punjab, options for chemical and biological control measures and locust surveillance system being introduced by FAO.

Minà Dowlatchahi, FAO Representative in Pakistan said that FAO as a neutral coordinator is organizing a meeting of locust affected countries in the region including Pakistan, India, Iran and Afghanistan next month. Federal Minister, Khusro Bakhtiar appreciated the efforts of FAO and stressed on the need for developing an integrated work plan for controlling the locust without any time lag.

The meeting followed FAO Director-General QU Dongyu’s three-day official visit to Pakistan from 14-16 February during which he pledged to help Pakistan fight its Desert Locust emergency after seeing first-hand the unusual impact of the upsurge in the country’s Punjab province.

FAO Director-General, QU Dongyu and Minà Dowlatchahi, FAO Representative in Pakistan were joined by Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Khusro Bakhtiar while visiting Okara district in the South-West region of Punjab province where locust swarms have invaded various areas with threats to livelihoods and food security of vulnerable farmers.

The Ministry of National Food Security & Research and FAO last week also signed a $500,000 Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) to make FAO’s technical expertise available to national experts in order to strengthen their capacities to combat the Desert Locust infestation and improve locust management.

Locusts are the oldest migratory pest in the world. They have a high capacity to multiply, form groups, migrate over relatively large distances and, if ecological conditions become favourable, rapidly reproduce.

FAO operates a Desert Locust Information Service that receives and analyzes data from locust-affected countries to assess the current locust situation, provide forecasts and if necessary issue warnings and alerts in order to keep the global community informed of locust developments and threats. FAO’s elocust system is helping to improve early warning by enabling rapid detection of locust outbreaks and green vegetation likely to become sites of locust
infestations. FAO is supporting the Ministry of National Food Security & Research to ensure availability of locust surveillance data in real-time. The locust surveillance data is being made part of the regular Food Security Nutrition and Information System for early warning and early action. Locust monitoring and timely control operations are vital to ensure food security and protect agriculture.

For media inquiries, please contact Mehr Hassan, FAO Pakistan at mehr.hassan@fao.org

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UNODC
PRESS RELEASE

Government of Sindh launches a counter-terrorism project in collaboration with the European Union and UNODC

26 Feb 2020 – In their resolve to support the efforts of Government of Sindh to counter the threats of terrorism, the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Country Office Pakistan, have launched a 18 months technical assistance programme to strengthen the criminal justice to terrorism with a specific reference to Sindh Province.

The project will improve the investigative processes and promote the use of forensic evidence during the prosecution stages of terrorism related cases. It will also strengthen the co-ordination between Sindh Province including Police, Prosecution and Judiciary while enhancing information sharing with NACTA and other federal entities.

With the financial support of 4 million euros by the European Union, “Pakistan’s Action to Counter Terrorism with a special reference to Sindh” (PACT) project was developed by the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) on behalf of Government of Pakistan in collaboration with the UNODC. During the project development stages both provincial and federal stakeholders were closely consulted to ensure that project objectives directly contribute to the needs of each institution.
In his opening remarks the Member Policy, NACTA Mr. Asif Paracha appreciated and recognized the role of the international community particularly the European Union and UNODC in working closely with NACTA in delivering technical support to Pakistan to prevent and counter terrorism.

More than ever there is a need for strong international collaboration to counter terrorism. It remains a top priority in the EU’s security dialogue with Pakistan and PACT Sindh falls under the framework of our common objectives and showcases our strong partnership said H.E. Androulla Kaminara, EU Ambassador to Pakistan in her key remarks.

The Officer-in-Charge of UNODC Mr. Danilo Campisi in his remarks highlighted the importance of the project and mentioned that “UNODC has been collaborating with the Government of Pakistan for over 40 years for delivering technical assistance in areas of priority to the host government and it is the evident success of PACT that led to an invitation from the Government of Pakistan for its expansion to the Sindh Province.

Home Secretary Sindh Dr. Usman Chachar appreciated the financial contribution of the European Union and stated that we are committed to working with our international partners in overcoming the challenges posed by terrorism and its financing.

The Chief Guest on the occasion Honorable Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah acknowledged the ongoing support of UNODC and the European Union in various areas and highlighted that PACT project would complement the Government of Sindh’s efforts under Rule of Law roadmap.

The Government of Pakistan is in the process of implementing a National Action Plan against terrorism and the objectives of PACT Sindh project would directly contribute towards its implementation.

About UNODC

UNODC is the key United Nations entity with the mandate and expertise to deliver counter-terrorism legal technical assistance to Member States for the ratification, legislative incorporation and implementation of the international legal instruments against terrorism.

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