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**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE  
CONTROL COMMISSION**

**CICAD**

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

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**DIRECTOR SASHA KASANOF'S OPENING REMARKS FOR THE  
67TH SESSION OF ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES,  
INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION**

**Director Kasanof's Opening Remarks for the  
67<sup>th</sup> Session of Organization of American States,  
Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission,  
Friday, July 17, 2020, 10:20 a.m. (5 minutes)**

- Good morning. I am pleased to join everyone today for CICAD 67!
- This is my first time speaking in a virtual meeting such as this one, with simultaneous interpretation. While I wish we could meet in person under the new meeting format agreed to in Miami last November, I am pleased we have this virtual option. I continue to be impressed by everyone's seamless adaptation to these new virtual interfaces.
- You may be wondering where Rich Glenn, our typical representative, is - he has departed the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs for his new assignment as Deputy Chief of Mission to Chile. I will fill in for him today, and want to start by thanking all delegations for their continued support of CICAD's, even in the context of an unprecedented pandemic.
- This morning we will adopt the annual report and resolution. I will speak to the resolution later today, but at the outset I want to express appreciation for the thoughtful and valuable Member State contributions to the resolution negotiation process, even as we all adapt to working remotely.
- COVID-19 has turned the world upside down, but transnational criminal groups have always adapted quickly to shifting circumstances, and this situation is no different. According to UNODC, restrictions on movement of goods resulted in drug trafficking routes shifting from land to sea. While the shifting routes slowed the flow of precursor chemicals necessary for some illicit drug production, such as methamphetamine and fentanyl, these criminal groups are rapidly adapting.
- Recently, the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) detected the emergence of the opioid isotonitazine (eye-soh-tone-it-uh-zeen) in the illicit market. This NPS, which is already present in six EU member countries, is causing heightened concern due to its high toxicity and potential for fatal overdosing, particularly to drug users who are unaware of its effects. We must remain hyper vigilant to these concerning trends, which may only increase during this time.
- Even before this pandemic, traffickers were exploiting the anonymity and convenience of communications technologies such as Internet, dark web, and encrypted peer-to-peer messaging apps, to market and sell drugs aggressively to clients all over the world. This is ever more pressing as UNODC predicts dark web usage only stands to increase during the pandemic.
- We were already struggling to keep pace with these ever-evolving criminal organizations and our efforts are being further exacerbated by the pandemic. I hate to paint this bleak

picture, but I want to underscore that now, more than ever, we must double down to combat these criminal organizations. We cannot let the pandemic present a safe haven for drug crimes to flourish.

- In the United States, the pandemic has accelerated overdose deaths due to increased anxiety, isolation, and depression.
- For example, we know the drug naloxone can reverse nearly 90 percent of overdoses. However, someone must be on-site to deliver it to the user. Because of social distancing guidelines, more people are using drugs alone, putting them at higher risk of death. Additionally, many treatment modalities, including medication-assisted treatment, inpatient residential treatment, and group therapies, require face-to-face interactions that increase the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- Domestic analysis illustrates an 11.4 percent year-over-year increase in overdose fatalities in the first four months of 2020, and this trend appears to be worsening as the threat from coronavirus continues.
- So what do we do? Here in my country, we continue to prioritize demand reduction efforts and ensure treatment remains available and accessible. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and Department of Health and Human Services are partnering to temporarily increase flexibility in the medical system to allow for remote prescribing of medications, such as buprenorphine (byoo-pruh-nor-feen), which are critical to helping patients with substance use disorders avoid relapse. Additionally, to decrease the frequency of visits to healthcare facilities, patients are allowed access to up to 28 days' worth of take-home medications.
- Technology enables our frontline healthcare providers to continue to reach out to the most vulnerable populations. The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has provided telehealth training to over 5,000 healthcare providers, allowing substance use disorder treatment to continue for some patients with minimal interruption. Additional training on how to access these telehealth services is being provided to patients in rural communities, and healthcare coverage for telehealth services has also expanded.
- The United States also remains committed to fighting drug trafficking in our hemisphere. On April 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, the President launched enhanced counternarcotics operations with 22 partner nations to combat the flow of illegal narcotics across the Western Hemisphere. Last week during his visit to SOUTHCOM, the President highlighted the seizure of 122 metric tons of cocaine and 18,000 pounds of marijuana under these efforts. More than 70 percent of these interdictions included partner nation participation. The Department of Justice has charged more than 60 individuals in U.S. courts on drug trafficking-related charges, showing we are not only taking drugs off the street but we are prosecuting those responsible. While criminals are using the pandemic as an opportunity to change their tactics, this enhanced operation shows when we work together, the results are impressive.

- In addition, we are adapting trainings to online formats to continue the vital work of strengthening the capacity of international partners to stop the flow of illicit drugs and precursors.
- Our colleagues at the International Narcotics Control Board hosted a comprehensive e-week under the GRIDS, or Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances program. During GRIDS e-week, INCB hosted daily webinars, each looking at a different aspect of synthetic drug trafficking, covering topics from the use of online platforms to market and sell dangerous substances, to partnering with the private sector to address synthetic drug trafficking models. These webinars were open to participation from INCB's government focal points around the world and rang the alarm on the dangerous new synthetic opioid I mentioned earlier, isotonizatene (eye-soh-tone-it-uh-zeen).
- It is vital, now more than ever, that we continue to share information and best practices to reduce both the supply of and demand for illicit drugs.
- This brings me to the Hemispheric Strategy. CICAD and the United States, as Chair, have been working since March to revise the Strategy and its accompanying Plan of Action to better reflect today's threats.
- Thank you for your patience as we work on these documents. This year, the Strategy takes on a new approach, and we want to get it right.
- I want to take a second to outline the vision behind the revised Strategy. Now is the right time to adopt a new approach to the Hemispheric Strategy on Drugs. Specifically, we see great value in revising and shortening the strategy to encompass our two most pressing challenges in the hemisphere: supply and demand. This approach will yield higher impact and offer countries greater direction in tackling our collective challenges
- The 2010 Strategy encompassed five sections: institutional strengthening, control measures, international cooperation, and supply and demand reduction. The revised Strategy incorporates these five components within the two primary challenges of supply and demand. Additionally, the introductory section on the strategy's "core principles" now takes into account some of the ideas that do not fit neatly into demand or supply reduction, such as international cooperation. The result is a streamlined and focused document which addresses the fundamental drug control challenges within our hemisphere and directs our efforts toward those areas where they will have the greatest impact.
- We look forward to sharing both documents with everyone in the coming weeks and receiving your input and feedback.
- As I am speaking multiple times this morning, I will conclude here, but look forward to providing additional comments throughout the morning.