

**Statement for INB7 Agenda item 2: Proposal for negotiating text ([A/INB/7/3](#))**

**Access to essential medicines for relief of serious, health-related suffering in pandemics**

The IAHPC calls for explicit reference to be made to **essential medicines** under “pandemic-related products” (**Article 1, item f**) and reiterates that [access to essential medicines is a basic human right](#). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed [vulnerabilities in medicine supply chains](#) in high, middle and low-income countries. Action to ensure an adequate supply of medicines, as set out in the [WHO Model Lists of Essential Medicines](#), must be an explicit component of pandemic planning and response. This includes access to internationally controlled medicines, including opioids and benzodiazepines, for the relief of serious health-related suffering.

The [International Narcotics Control Board \(INCB\)](#) reminds governments and the international community that the need for pain relief and palliative care rises during and after health emergencies, such as pandemics. Unduly restrictive regulations and poor workforce training limit rational opioid prescribing everywhere, including during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This results in unnecessary and preventable suffering. The INCB encourages competent authorities in both exporting and recipient countries to [exercise the highest degree of flexibility and discretion in their application of control measures on the international trade of controlled substances during emergency situations](#). The IAHPC urges the INB drafting group to make provision for this important and specific issue, following INCB guidance, as a distinct sub-section in **Article 13, item 3** to ensure controlled medicines are available during and after pandemics.

All healthcare workers should have access to guidelines on the safe prescribing, administration and storage of essential medicines, particularly those which are subject to international control legislation. We therefore request the INB drafting group to consider making explicit reference to strengthening safe medicines management in **Article 6, item 2**.

Morphine and midazolam are safe, affordable and highly effective palliative care medicines included on the WHO Model Lists of Essential Medicines for adults and children. They should be prioritised over novel and more expensive alternatives with only marginal additional benefits, following the example of models such as [Stockholm County Council’s “Wise List”](#).

The IAHPC welcomes the whole-of-society approach, as set out in Article 17, and we offer our skills and expertise in pain and symptom management and palliative care to the INB and Member States.

We thank you.