World Health Organization

20, AVENUE APPIA – CH-1211 GENEVA 27 – SWITZERLAND – TEL CENTRAL +41 22 791 2111 – FAX CENTRAL +41 22 791 3111 – WWW.WHO.INT

Tel. direct: +41 22 791
Fax direct: +41 22 791
E-mail :

In reply please refer to:
Your reference:

His Excellency
Mr António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York, NY 10017
USA

27 November 2025

Dear Mr Secretary-General,

I have the honour to refer to the forty-eighth meeting of the World Health Organization (WHO) Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD), convened in Geneva on 20–22 October 2025.

WHO is mandated by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961), as amended by the 1972 Protocol and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971), to make recommendations to the United Nations Secretary-General on the need for and level of international control of psychoactive substances. To assess the appropriate international control measures that should be applied to psychoactive substances prioritized for review, WHO convenes the independent scientific advisory body, the ECDD. The ECDD conducts scientific assessments to consider the abuse and dependence liability of a substance under review, as well as its need for medical and scientific purposes.

The forty-eighth WHO ECDD considered changes in the scope of international control of three novel psychoactive substances, comprising one synthetic cannabinoid and two novel synthetic opioids. These substances had not previously been formally reviewed by WHO, and none are currently under international control. Information was brought to WHO's attention that these substances are clandestinely manufactured, of risk to public health and society, and of no recognized therapeutic use by any Party.

In addition, the forty-eighth WHO ECDD considered changes to the scope of international control of coca leaf. The scientific review was initiated after notification by a Party to the 1961 Convention concerning scheduling of the substance. Preparations for the ECDD scientific assessment of coca leaf were initiated in 2023 upon receipt of the formal notification and concluded with recommendations made by WHO to the United Nations Secretary-General based on the assessment and conclusions of the forty-eighth ECDD.

A critical review was undertaken for each of the aforementioned substances for the ECDD to consider whether the information available justified a change in the scope of international control under the 1961 or 1971 Convention.

ENCL: (1)

With reference to Article 3, paragraphs 1 and 3 of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961), as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and Article 2, paragraphs 1 and 4 of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971), WHO endorses and submits the following recommendations of the forty-eighth Meeting of the ECDD:

To be added to Schedule I of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961):

- ***N*-pyrrolidino isotonitazene**
  IUPAC name: 5-Nitro-2-[4-(2-propoxy)benzyl]-1-[2-(pyrrolidin-1-yl)ethyl]-1H-benzo[d]imidazole
  Alternative names: isotonitazepyne

- ***N*-desethyl etonitazene**
  IUPAC name: 2-[(4-Ethoxyphenyl)methyl]-N-ethyl-5-nitro-1H-benzimidazole-1-ethanamine

To be retained in Schedule I of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961):

- **coca leaf**
  IUPAC name: n/a

To be added to Schedule II of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971):

- **MDMB-FUBINACA**
  IUPAC name: Methyl 2-{[1-(4-fluorobenzyl)indazole-3-carbonyl]amino}-3,3 Dimethylbutanoate

The assessments and findings on which these recommendations are based will be set out in detail in the forty-eighth meeting report of the WHO ECDD. A summary of the assessments and recommendations made by the forty-eighth ECDD is contained in Annex 1 to this letter.

Furthermore, I take this opportunity to recall that the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is a fundamental right of every human being. Countries have a legal obligation to develop and implement legislation and policies that guarantee universal access to high-quality health services and address the root causes of health disparities, including poverty, stigmatization and discrimination.

I am pleased with the ongoing collaboration among WHO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board and, in particular, how this collaboration has benefitted the work of the WHO ECDD and, more generally, implementation of the operational recommendations of the UN General Assembly Special Session 2016.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General