

For immediate release

**LATEST REPORT FROM UNITED NATIONS DRUG CONTROL BODY  
MISSES THE MARK**  
***INCB's policy prescriptions are misguided and dangerous***

**TORONTO, March 4, 2008** — The latest criticisms of Canada by the UN's International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) are misguided and undermine effective responses to HIV and hepatitis C among people who use illegal drugs, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network said today.

"Yet again, the INCB shows itself to be dangerously blinkered by ideology and out of step with common sense, good science and sound public policy when it comes to dealing with drugs," said Executive Director Richard Elliott. "The Board refuses to recognize that drug use is primarily a public health issue, requiring a public health response. It continues to urge more of the same 'war on drugs' that has failed so spectacularly, rather than supporting services that have proven to be effective in protecting and promoting the health of communities and of some of the most marginalized people in Canada."

In the INCB's annual report to be released tomorrow, the Board again criticizes Canada for permitting the operation of Insite, the supervised injection facility in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

"Sadly, the body responsible for overseeing the UN's drug conventions keeps getting the law wrong," said Elliott. The INCB's claim that supervised injection facilities breach the conventions is contradicted by the UN's own legal advisors, who have concluded that such sites are legal under the treaties.

Elliott also slammed the INCB for launching a new criticism against Canada with its claim that Canadian cities are similarly violating the UN treaties by distributing safer crack kits to prevent injury and the spread of disease.

"This is plainly illogical. These programs are the same as needle exchange programs that make sure people don't have to share or re-use dirty needles when injecting," said Elliott.

People who smoke crack can get oral sores, cuts and burns on their lips and mouths, resulting from the use of makeshift crack pipes made from sharp-edged materials, such as pop cans. The sharing of crack pipes creates a further risk of transmission of infectious diseases such as hepatitis C.

“By including materials such as glass pipe stems and rubber mouthpieces, safer crack kits mean that people are less likely to suffer wounds to their lips and mouth or get infected through sharing their pipes. This is a sound public health practice that the INCB seems unable to grasp,” concluded Elliott.

A year ago, the Legal Network and the Open Society Institute released *Closed to Reason: The International Narcotics Control Board and HIV/AIDS*, a detailed report highlighting the ways in which the INCB stresses the enforcement of criminal laws on drugs at the expense of public health and human rights. The report is available on-line at [www.aidslaw.ca/drugpolicy](http://www.aidslaw.ca/drugpolicy).

#### **About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network ([www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)) promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research, legal and policy analysis, education, and community mobilization. The Legal Network is Canada’s leading advocacy organization working on the legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS.

– 30 –

For more information, please contact:

*Disponible en français*

Vajdon Sohaili  
Communications Specialist  
Telephone: +1 416 595-1666 ext. 227  
E-mail: [vsohaili@aidslaw.ca](mailto:vsohaili@aidslaw.ca)  
Website: [www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)