

Annex I

Letter from the Secretary of State of the United States of America to the
Secretary-General of the United Nations dated 4 October 2021

“The United States has information which we believe warrants the inclusion of the fentanyl precursor chemicals 4-AP, boc-4-AP, and norfentanyl in the tables of the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (the 1988 Convention). The latest provisional data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 93,000 American lives were lost to overdoses in the United States in 2020, with synthetic opioids such as illicitly manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogues accounting for over 60 percent of those deaths. Since 2013, overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids have risen over 1,700 percent. Although the international community has had much success in placing international controls on fentanyl-related substances, drug traffickers are now circumventing existing international controls by adjusting their chemical synthesis methods to utilize precursor chemicals that are not under international control. The United States is not alone in this crisis and we need help and collaboration from the international community to address this issue head on.

While overdoses involving fentanyl-related substances are largely a North American phenomenon, the non-medical use of illicitly produced synthetic opioids is a global threat. According to the 2020 World Drug Report the non-medical use of synthetic opioids is increasing in Europe. Furthermore, for the third time in the past five years, the quantities of pharmaceutical opioids seized has eclipsed that of heroin, with fentanyl and fentanyl analogues accounting for more than half of those pharmaceutical opioids seized in terms of doses. Fentanyl has had an outsized and far-reaching impact on the international illicit drug trade, as drug traffickers utilize increasingly complex trafficking routes and synthesis methods trying to evade detection.

Often these precursor chemicals originate in East Asia, are transported internationally alongside legitimate goods via express consignment shipping and other modalities of modern commerce, before being manufactured into fentanyl and fentanyl analogues and introduced along traditional trafficking routes. This global problem clearly requires international cooperation and action.

To address this problem and continue to work with other UN Member States plagued by the threat of synthetic drugs, we ask that you initiate steps to evaluate the following three fentanyl and fentanyl analogue precursor chemicals for possible inclusion in the tables of the 1988 Convention, in accordance with the procedures described in Article 12 of that convention: 4-AP, boc-4-AP, and norfentanyl. Controlling the precursor chemicals is a critical step in ensuring traffickers cannot use them as a substitute for other controlled precursor chemicals such as NPP and ANPP. This request includes supplemental information describing (1) the extent, importance, and diversity of the licit commercial use of these chemicals, and (2) to what extent these chemicals are used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs responsible for serious public health and social harms so as to warrant international

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action. Supplemental information on fentanyl and fentanyl analogues, the three precursor chemicals to be listed in the tables of the 1988 Convention, and the number of known suppliers of each precursor chemical are enclosed.

The Government of the United States urgently requests your assistance in expediting this chemical control action. Specifically, I ask that you pass this request and its supplemental information to the International Narcotics Control Board for evaluation as soon as possible, with a view towards providing a recommendation at the 65th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in 2022. Bearing in mind the urgency of our country's ongoing opioid overdose crisis, my government is committed to doing our utmost to expedite this process to allow for the Commission to consider this request during its 65th session.

Thank you in advance for your assistance on this important issue. My government looks forward to its continued collaboration with the United Nations.

[signed]

Enclosures: As stated