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EMBARGO:

**2 March 2011,
1100 hours CET**

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Africa

The Annual Report 2010 of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) states that cocaine smuggling through Africa to Europe is on the rise again. After a decline in cocaine trafficking in the region in the past two years, trafficking has resumed as indicated by several large-scale seizures in 2010.

In June last year, a record seizure of 2.1 tons of cocaine was made in the Gambia. In May, members of a trafficking network were arrested in Liberia for attempting to smuggle at least 4 tons of cocaine to Europe. A serious danger posed by cocaine is its enormous value relative to the size of the local economies. Traffickers have the resources to bribe officials to protect their operations. In March 2010, eleven senior officials of Gambian law enforcement agencies were arrested in connection with drug trafficking.

Cannabis is still the drug most widely produced, trafficked and abused in Africa. Annual prevalence rates of abuse on the continent among the population aged 15-64 fluctuate between five and ten per cent, representing about double the global average rate. Morocco remains among the world's largest producers of cannabis resin, but reports a significant reduction in plant cultivation (from 134,000 ha in 2003 to 56,000 ha in 2009) and resin production (from 3,070 tons to 820 tons over the same period).

East Africa is the main transit route for smuggling heroin from Asia to Africa, mainly through the major airports of Addis Ababa and Nairobi. According to estimates, about 35 tons of heroin are smuggled into Africa each year, of which more than half (25 tons) are used to supply Africa's population of drug addicts (an estimated 1.2 million people) with the remainder being shipped on to other regions, in particular Europe.

The Board is concerned about the fact that the abuse of almost all types of drugs has increased in Africa over the past few years. This is particularly alarming as in many countries national health-care systems do not have the resources for treatment of drug-dependent persons.

While the trafficking of precursor chemicals needed to produce drugs is on the decline, counterfeit medicines remain a major problem. In many African countries fake pharmaceutical products are available on street markets and pose a high risk for public health.

Americas

Central America and the Caribbean

The Central America and Caribbean region continues to be used as a major transit point for the large-scale trafficking of illicit drugs because of its location at the crossroads of the main producing countries in South America and the consumer markets in North America and Europe. While the total amount of cocaine smuggled to North America has declined due to reduced demand, the proportion transiting through Central America has increased.



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Endemic corruption, poverty and high unemployment have exacerbated drug-related crime despite considerable efforts made by Governments in the region to combat the problem. It is estimated that the street value of all drugs transiting through the Caribbean exceeds that of the legal economy.

In Central America, drug-related violence continues to plague El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras: these countries have the world's highest homicide rate.

In the Caribbean, the Government of Jamaica declared a state of emergency in the summer of 2010 after a stand-off between gang members and police, who were attempting to arrest the alleged head of a drug trafficking ring. Jamaica remains the largest producer and exporter of cannabis in Central America and the Caribbean, with 30 per cent of the region's total amount produced in the country.

Before the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, the country was already a major transit area for illicit drugs. The loss of capacity of the Haitian State due to the destruction caused by the quake has raised concerns that the country will be increasingly targeted by drug traffickers. Almost 30 per cent of the cannabis seized in the Dominican Republic in 2009 originated in Haiti, with the overall amount significantly increasing from 885 kg in 2008 to 1,400 kg in 2009. Dominican authorities also reported a sharp increase in cocaine seizures in 2009 to 3,400 kg, 64 per cent of which was accounted for by five large seizures.

While in most countries in the region drug injection is not the major source of HIV infection, Puerto Rico is a notable exception: in 2009, drug injection accounted for 40 per cent of new HIV infection cases among men and 27 per cent of cases among women.

The Board recognizes that the central problem for prevention and treatment programmes in the region is a lack of capacity to collect relevant data and encourages greater international support to that end.

North America

The United States is the main destination for illicit drug shipments. Drug trafficking organizations based in Mexico dominate the market for cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine in the United States. In 2009, an increase in the abuse of all drugs except cocaine was reported in the United States. From 2007 to 2009, several agencies reported the abuse of prescription drugs as the greatest drug-related threat.

In Mexico drug trafficking organizations responded with unprecedented violence to vigorous law enforcement measures by the Government to disrupt trafficking operations. Since 2006, more than 28,000 people have been killed in drug-related incidents in the country.

Mexico-based criminal organizations strengthened their position as suppliers of illicit drugs for the United States market while the influence of Colombia-based criminal organizations has diminished. In the United States, the retail distribution of illicit drugs is controlled by about 20,000 street gangs. Alliances with Mexico-based criminal organizations enabled the gangs to expand their influence at the expense of independent drug dealers.

Canada remains one of the world's primary sources for illicitly manufactured synthetic drugs, particularly MDMA ("ecstasy") and methamphetamine.



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In the United States, about 38 million people used illicit drugs in 2009, an increase of 2.5 million over 2008. From 1999 to 2007, the number of drug-related deaths doubled to 38,371 (2007). In some states, the number of drug-related deaths has surpassed the number of deaths from motor vehicle accidents. Cannabis remains the most commonly abused drug (28.5 million people in 2009).

In Canada, drug abuse declined among young people (15-24 years old): the abuse of cannabis went down from 32.7 per cent in 2008 to 26.3 per cent in 2009; cocaine and MDMA abuse almost halved over the same period of time.

South America

In 2009, the total area under coca bush cultivation in South America decreased for a second consecutive year, due to a significant reduction of that area in Colombia. In Bolivia and Peru the area under coca bush cultivation increased for the fourth consecutive year.

While the market for cocaine has decreased in North America (about 40 per cent market share), it continues to grow in Europe (30 per cent). The Southern Cone only accounts for 10 to 20 per cent. The Central American and the Caribbean region continues to be a major trafficking route for illicit drugs originating in South America and destined for North America and Europe. Colombia remains the primary source of cocaine for Europe, with Peru becoming increasingly important.

In past years, the use of semi-submersibles for smuggling drugs has significantly increased, as has the capacity of such vessels to carry drugs. In 2008 and 2009, law enforcement authorities seized 34 semi-submersibles. A submarine seized in Ecuador in July 2010 was able to carry 14 tons of drugs. There are also signs of increased cocaine trafficking through Africa by large cargo planes.

Almost 10,000 coca-processing laboratories were destroyed in 2008 in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. However, in the past years, cocaine laboratories were also dismantled in Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile and Ecuador. In October 2009, the Ecuadorian authorities dismantled one of the largest cocaine manufacturing laboratories ever in the country, which had the capacity to manufacture 20 tons of cocaine per month.

The area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in South America accounts for less than 1 per cent of the total area under such cultivation worldwide. In Colombia, the country in which most of the illicit opium poppy cultivation in South America takes place, such cultivation has gradually declined from 6,500 ha in 2000 to 356 ha in 2009.

Potassium permanganate remains the key oxidizing agent used to manufacture cocaine in South America. In 2009, 22.8 tons of potassium permanganate seized in Colombia accounted for the smallest total quantity of the substance seized in the country in the past decade. In Colombia, a portion of seized potassium permanganate has been illicitly manufactured in clandestine laboratories in the country. The amount of potassium permanganate illicitly manufactured in the country is believed to satisfy most of the traffickers' needs for the substance.



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Asia

East and South-East Asia

The manufacture, trafficking and use of synthetic drugs has significantly increased in East and South-East Asia since 2008. Illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants has taken place where the required precursor chemicals were easily accessible. Important quantities of methamphetamine were trafficked from the Islamic Republic of Iran and neighbouring countries to the region as a recent trend.

In 2009, 6.6 tons of methamphetamine and 1.1 million ecstasy tablets were seized in China. The importance of Europe as a source of MDMA decreased and more countries outside Europe reported domestic manufacture. For example, China and the Netherlands were indicated as sources of MDMA seized in Indonesia.

The progress in reducing opium production in the region has been reversed, due to a significant 11 per cent increase in Myanmar, which accounts for 95 per cent of the total production in East and South-East Asia. Despite the increase, only five per cent of global illicit opium production originates in the region.

Heroin continues to be the primary drug of abuse in China, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Viet Nam, with most countries in the region reporting declining or stable trends in heroin abuse.

Increasing abuse of methamphetamine has been reported from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. Methamphetamine is already the main drug of abuse in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand and the second most commonly abused drug in Cambodia and China.

An estimated 25 per cent of all injecting drug abusers in the world live in East and South-East Asia. The risk of an HIV epidemic in the region remains high. The Board underlines the importance of providing assistance for HIV prevention, treatment, support and care for drug dependent individuals in East and South-East Asia.

South Asia

South Asia has become one of the main regions used by drug traffickers to obtain the chemicals needed for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine, namely ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.

Indian law enforcement agencies seized 1.2 tons of ephedrine in 2009. Criminal networks are increasingly targeting Bangladesh as a source of pharmaceutical products containing these precursor chemicals. Pseudoephedrine from India is also formed into tablets in Bangladesh before being sent to Central America and the Caribbean.

India increasingly uncovers facilities where methamphetamine destined for markets in other countries is illicitly manufactured.

Pharmaceutical products containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are widely abused in South Asian countries. In Bangladesh, 18,600 ampoules containing buprenorphine, a painkiller,



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were seized in 2009—a significant increase compared to 2006. India is one of the main sources of psychotropic substances sold through illegal Internet pharmacies.

Cannabis is cultivated on a large scale throughout South Asia. For example, in 2009, law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh seized 2.1 tons of cannabis herb.

West Asia

Illicit opium production was almost cut in half in the region in 2010 compared to 2009. The sharp decline to now 3,600 tons was mainly due to a fungus affecting the poppy plants. The extent of the area under illicit cultivation remained the same as in the previous year.

Opium stockpiles in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries total some 12,000 tons, equivalent to 2.5 years of global illicit demand for opiates. The fact that illicit opium production decreased in 2010 does not mean that there will be a decline in heroin manufacture on the illicit market, as sufficient stocks of opium are available.

As opium prices exploded, with one kilogramme of dry opium now being sold for US\$ 207 compared to US\$ 78 in 2009, there is a possibility that Afghan farmers may consider growing even more opium poppy in 2011.

Almost all of the illicit opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is concentrated in the southern and western parts of the country. In the province of Helmand, 53 per cent of the land available for agriculture is used to grow opium poppy. A stable 20 out of the 34 Afghan provinces are free of opium poppy, with the northern region maintaining its poppy-free status achieved in 2009.

Drug abuse in the country itself has increased dramatically. There are now nearly 1 million drug users in Afghanistan, roughly 8 per cent of the population aged 15-64 years. Compared to 2005, opium use increased by 53 per cent and heroin use by 140 per cent.

Afghanistan could also be the world's largest producer of cannabis resin ("hashish") with a production capacity of between 1,500 and 3,500 tons a year. The extremely high yield of cannabis resin in Afghanistan (145 kg per ha) is more than three times the yield in Morocco (40 kg per ha).

While crop eradication campaigns did not have a vast impact, law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan were successful in their fight against drug trafficking, seizing 2.5 tons of heroin, 7.5 tons of morphine, 59 tons of opium, 23 tons of cannabis resin and more than 400 tons of solid precursor chemicals.

Afghan opiates are smuggled predominantly through the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia. The countries along the trafficking routes are faced with a wide range of problems related to large-scale drug trafficking, such as organized crime, corruption and a high demand for opiates in-country. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, for example, an estimated 2.8 per cent of the population between the ages 15-64 is dependent on opiates.

The shortest route for smuggling Afghan opiates to Europe is through the Islamic Republic of Iran. An estimated 37 per cent of Afghan heroin is smuggled through the country each year, with the remainder going through Pakistan or through the Central Asian route of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. The Middle East is mainly used as a transit area for heroin smuggled from Afghanistan into Arab countries.



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Abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants has grown dramatically in the region. There was a 60 per cent increase in the amount of seized amphetamine-type stimulants in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2009. Tablets sold as Captagon, which contain predominantly amphetamine but also caffeine, are produced in Syria and Turkey and smuggled into Saudi Arabia, the largest illicit market for Captagon, and Iraq.

Europe

The abuse of cocaine is spreading from Western Europe into other parts of the region. In some countries, cocaine may be replacing amphetamine and ecstasy as a drug of abuse, for example in Denmark, Spain and the United Kingdom, where increases in cocaine abuse occurred at the same time as decreases in the abuse of amphetamines.

Western Europe is the world's largest market for heroin, with approximately 60 per cent of regional consumption being accounted for by four countries (United Kingdom, Italy, France and Germany). European countries consume almost half of the heroin abused worldwide. The Russian Federation has the highest level of opiate abuse (1.6 per cent) in Europe. Almost all heroin available in Europe originates from Afghanistan.

Overall in Europe, cannabis use seems to be stable and in some countries even on the decline. 1.2 per cent of European citizens used cocaine in the previous year; Spain reports the highest rate with 3.1 per cent.

Eastern Europe is one of the few areas in the world where HIV prevalence is on the rise. Severe and spreading epidemics are reported from the Russian Federation and Ukraine. At over 1.6 per cent, the rate of HIV infection among adults in Ukraine is the highest in Europe. The use of contaminated equipment for drug injection was the source of over 50 per cent of the newly diagnosed HIV cases in Eastern Europe.

Oceania

Cannabis continues to be the drug most often used in Oceania. The annual prevalence of cannabis abuse in New Zealand is among the highest worldwide, with 14.6 per cent of the population aged 14-64 years. Lifetime prevalence of cannabis abuse in Fiji and Papua New Guinea was about 47 and 55 per cent respectively. As there is extensive cultivation within the region, smuggling into Oceania remains at a low level.

The use of ecstasy in Oceania has been increasing steadily in recent years, Australia having the highest annual prevalence of such abuse worldwide.

Recent seizures indicate that the region is increasingly used as a trans-shipment area for drugs and precursors.

In Australia, the amount of amphetamine-type stimulants seized at the border has increased by 58 per cent over the past two years. New Zealand has given high priority to fighting against manufacture and abuse of methamphetamine and in 2010, law enforcement agencies reported a number of seizures of the drug being smuggled in from China by air passengers.