

## D. Europe

### Major developments

510. Cannabis remains the most commonly abused drug in Europe and is increasingly being cultivated and trafficked in the region. The Board is concerned about the widespread experimental and recreational abuse of cannabis among young people in Europe, particularly in Western Europe, as revealed in several epidemiological studies. A trend towards promoting the drug, through the media, and the significant expansion of drug abuse, particularly in recreational settings, have resulted in the abuse of cannabis being perceived as less risky than it really is, especially among young people.

511. The cocaine market in Europe continues to be one of the world's biggest, second only to that of North America. The volume of cocaine seizures in Europe has constantly increased over the past few years. The abuse of all forms of cocaine, including crack cocaine, has also steadily increased in several countries in Western Europe; however, the abuse of crack cocaine appears to be confined to metropolitan areas of some Western European countries.

512. Heroin abuse has been spreading in countries in Central and Eastern Europe, replacing the abuse of locally produced opiates in most of those countries. As a result of two years of bumper crops of opium poppy in Afghanistan, it is expected that heroin trafficking along the Balkan route and in Central Europe will increase and stocks, which were drastically depleted during the years of reduced opium poppy cultivation, will be replenished. This may also lead to the reversal of the declining trends in the abuse of heroin and the number of heroin-related deaths in Western Europe, in spite of efforts to treat and rehabilitate drug abusers. Law enforcement authorities continue to play an important role in reducing the availability of illicit drugs, while health authorities have focused on drug abuse prevention. The spread of HIV infection among injecting drug abusers remains alarmingly high in the Baltic States, as well as in the Russian Federation and Ukraine; the Board urges those States to increase their efforts aimed at reducing illicit drug demand.

513. Europe remains a major producer of synthetic drugs. The Netherlands continues to be the source of the vast majority of MDMA seized worldwide. The Government of the Netherlands has been implementing measures targeting the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in MDMA and other synthetic drugs; that has resulted in a significant increase in MDMA seizures. As synthetic drugs cannot be manufactured without chemicals, the Board calls on the Governments of all European countries, as well as the European Commission, to strengthen the control of precursors and increase their cooperation with other countries in preventing the shipment of the required chemicals.

514. Ambiguity towards drug abuse is common in countries in Western Europe. Drug abuse prevention campaigns call on young people to refrain from drug abuse; in practice, however, authorities do not take measures against incitement of drug abuse, and drug abuse may even be promoted through certain media or other channels. Drug abuse prevention strategies should therefore take into greater consideration the fact that drug abuse is often, directly or indirectly, willingly or unwittingly, encouraged in the environment of young people and should be aimed at the improvement of critical skills so that young people may learn to take a stand against drug abuse.

### Treaty adherence

515. Since the last report of the Board was published, Albania has become a party to the 1971 Convention. Of the 44 States in Europe, 43 are parties to the 1961 Convention, 43 are parties to the 1971 Convention and 41 States and the European Community are parties to the 1988 Convention.

516. Andorra is the only country in Europe that is not a party to the 1961 Convention or to the 1971 Convention.

517. The Board regrets that the Holy See, Liechtenstein and Switzerland have not become parties to the 1988 Convention.

### Regional cooperation

518. At the Conference on Drug Routes from Central Asia to Europe, organized by the Government of France in Paris in May 2003, ministers of foreign affairs from 55 countries seriously affected by the traffic in opium and heroin produced in Afghanistan

reconfirmed their commitment to assist Afghanistan and transit countries in combating opium poppy cultivation and trafficking in opiates, most of which are destined for illicit markets in Europe. The Board calls on Governments to meet their commitments.

519. The Board notes the efforts made by Greece, the State that held the rotating Presidency of the European Council during the first half of 2003, to forge a common European Union drug control policy—efforts exemplified by, inter alia, the holding of a conference on the theme “Towards an effective policy on drugs: scientific evidence, day-to-day practice and policy choices” in Athens in March 2003. Since all States members of the European Union are parties to all of the international drug control treaties, such a common policy must be based on full implementation of the provisions of the treaties. The Board notes that, during the ministerial segment of the forty-sixth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, held in April 2003, the representative of Greece, speaking on behalf of the European Union member States, expressed support for the treaties and their full implementation.

520. In April 2003, the European Parliament rejected a report that contained a proposal to amend the international drug control treaties. Instead, the European Parliament called for the full implementation of the treaties and reaffirmed the central role of preventing drug abuse.

521. The Board notes the efforts of the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction to integrate the 10 States that are expected to join the European Union in 2004 into the European Information Network on Drugs and Drug Addiction (Reitox) in the framework of a Phare project launched in November 2002.

522. The Board notes the mid-term evaluation of the European Union Action Plan on Drugs (2000-2004), which provides guidelines for activities to be undertaken to implement the European Union Drugs Strategy (2000-2004). The Board also notes that the Council of Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs of the European Union adopted an implementation plan on action against the illicit supply of synthetic drugs in November 2002. The plan outlines a series of measures that should be taken to address the issue of synthetic drugs. The Board urges the member States of the European Union to ensure the implementation of the plan.

523. A workshop on the implementation of provisions of the international drug control treaties in the national legislation of CIS member States, organized jointly by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of CIS, was held in the Russian Federation in March 2003. The Board urges the Governments of the 12 CIS member States to remain committed to bringing their national legislation in line with the treaties.

524. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia continued to cooperate with each other in various areas, such as in the area of information systems on treatment for drug abuse, in the training of providers of treatment for drug abuse, in the training of drug-detecting dogs and in the area of law enforcement cooperation in Central Europe.

525. In September 2003, government ministers of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden adopted the Lund Declaration, which lays down common political objectives and priorities for long-term partnership between the Nordic States and the Baltic States on drug policy issues and which foresees closer cooperation in all aspects of the drug problem, including drug abuse prevention and treatment and law enforcement. The States involved will also develop a joint strategy based on the international drug control treaties.

#### **National legislation, policy and action**

526. In December 2002, the Government of the United Kingdom presented its Updated Drug Strategy. Using the main elements of the 10-year strategy entitled “Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain”, the Updated Drug Strategy places renewed emphasis on education, prevention, enforcement and treatment. In addition, the new strategy focuses on cocaine, heroin and MDMA (Ecstasy), with a view to reducing both their abuse levels and their availability. The new strategy also includes an action plan on crack cocaine that will be implemented in the years 2003 and 2004. The Board notes that the targets with respect to the reduction of drug abuse have been revised downwards.

527. In January 2003, a new drug action plan entered into force in Norway. The new plan is to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement and to improve community-based prevention programmes, early intervention programmes, assistance to drug addicts

and coordination and cooperation. The plan calls for a performance measuring system to evaluate results.

528. In June 2003, the Government of Germany adopted a national action plan on drugs and addiction, thereby replacing a similar action plan dating back to 1990. The new action plan sets out the strategy on the basis of which addiction problems should be addressed in the future. Some of the areas emphasized in the action plan are prevention based on target groups, international cooperation in the fight against drugs and action against the abuse of prescription medicines containing psychotropic substances.

529. There have been several developments regarding the control of cannabis in Western European countries. In Belgium, a new law on cannabis entered into force in June 2003, according to which possession of up to 3 grams of cannabis will be punishable by a police fine unless there are other aggravating circumstances, such as abusing the drugs in the presence of minors. In the Netherlands, in September 2003, cannabis became available in pharmacies, where it is sold as a prescription drug. The Board notes that the Government of the United Kingdom reaffirmed that its bill to reclassify cannabis, which was approved in October 2003 by Parliament, in no way underestimates the harmfulness of cannabis. The supply and possession of cannabis will remain illegal. Indeed, there will be legislation to increase the maximum penalty for Class C drugs to 14 years of imprisonment, as well as the power to arrest for the possession of a Class C drug. The Government's emphasis on prevention, treatment and education alerts young people to the harm of all drugs, including cannabis, ensures that young people understand what will happen to them if they are found to be in possession of cannabis or any other illegal drugs. Ways must be found to inform young people that cannabis is harmful, but without damaging the credibility of the messages about other drugs.

530. The Board notes that the project for the revision of the Swiss law on narcotic drugs, which included legislation on cannabis not in line with the provisions of the international drug control treaties, was rejected by the second chamber of the Swiss Parliament in September 2003. The Board trusts that any new proposals will be in line with the treaties.<sup>50</sup>

531. According to a study financed by the European Commission on the abuse of drugs in recreational

settings there has been a significant expansion of drug abuse in recreational settings, particularly among young people. The study also noted a cultural dynamic towards the direct and indirect promotion of drugs that has resulted in a positive perception image of drugs being installed in the minds of young people, which acts to attenuate preventive discourse. The Board calls on Governments to take the results of the study into account when devising activities for drug abuse prevention.

532. The Board is concerned about any relaxation of controls over cannabis in Europe, which might promote further illicit cultivation and abuse in Europe and counteract required efforts of eradicating illicit cultivation and combating trafficking in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

533. In December 2002, the Government of Ireland presented the report of the Benzodiazepine Committee, which had been set up by the Minister for Health and Children in June 2000 to examine the current prescribing and use of benzodiazepines. In the report, the Committee recommends that monitoring systems be established in order to be able to analyse prescribing patterns and allow appropriate action where there is a suspicion of irresponsible prescribing. Since the abuse of benzodiazepines and other prescription medications containing psychotropic substances is a problem in many countries in Europe, the Board encourages other Governments to take similar steps. The Board also calls on Governments to take into consideration Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 44/13, entitled "Contribution to the appropriate use of benzodiazepines".

534. The Board welcomes the decision by the Government of Spain to use funds generated by the forfeiture of assets seized in drug trafficking cases for supporting drug control activities carried out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Spain is only the second country in the world (after Luxembourg) to implement article 5, paragraph 5 (b) (i), of the 1988 Convention, in which parties to the Convention are invited to consider contributing proceeds generated by the forfeiture of assets in drug trafficking cases, including money-laundering, to international organizations specializing in the fight against drugs. The Board encourages Governments to use such funds in a similar way for demand reduction.

535. The Board notes with disappointment that in Bosnia and Herzegovina the law on the classification of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and plants has not yet been adopted. The legislation has been in draft form since a mission of the Board visited that country in October 2000. The Board calls on the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina to make every effort to strengthen its currently weak legal and institutional capacities. The Board notes efforts in countries on the Balkan route, in particular Serbia and Montenegro, to thwart the diversion of precursor chemicals from international trade for the illicit manufacture of drugs, in Europe and elsewhere.

536. The 10 European States that are to become members of the European Union in 2004 have continued to strengthen their drug control legislation and administrative and coordination structures. Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia adopted multi-disciplinary national drug control strategies in 2002 and 2003, in close cooperation with European Union member States.

537. In the Russian Federation and Ukraine, as well as in the Baltic States, HIV continues to spread, particularly among young people, mainly through needle-sharing. In St. Petersburg, almost all of the 100,000 people with HIV were infected through injecting drug abuse. In the Baltic States, in a high percentage of HIV cases, the virus was transmitted through drug-injecting behaviour, in particular injecting drug abuse, and the HIV infection rate has continued to grow. The Board urges the Governments concerned to allocate adequate resources to contain the epidemic and fight the disease in the context of drug abuse.

538. To address the high-risk behaviour among injecting drug abusers, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovakia have introduced programmes for the exchange of needles and syringes. In the Russian Federation, the number of programmes for the prevention of HIV infection and for the treatment of injecting drug abusers has been increasing continuously. In order to allow more comprehensive demand reduction and HIV prevention programmes, legislative changes may be necessary.

539. In December 2002 and January 2003, legislation against money-laundering was amended in Ukraine. The Government also adopted a programme of action

against money-laundering, which outlines, with a detailed time frame, the measures that have to be carried out in 2003 in order to establish an effective system of action against money-laundering. As a result of that action, the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering decided to withdraw its countermeasures with respect to Ukraine. The Board welcomes the programme for the implementation of state policy to combat illicit trafficking, covering the period 2003-2010, which was approved by the cabinet of ministers of Ukraine.

540. The State Committee of the Russian Federation for Control over Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was established in March 2003 to spearhead and coordinate all drug control activities. The upgrading of Russian drug control authorities will include a significant increase of staff. The Board calls on the Government of the Russian Federation to complete the restructuring as quickly as possible. The Board urges the newly established State Committee to give priority to the development of a drug control strategy to address the problems associated with narcotic drugs, as well as the related spread of HIV infection, without delay. The Board also urges the Committee to develop measures to prevent the spread of drug abuse through both law enforcement and demand reduction activities.

541. The Board welcomes the progress made by the Government of Romania in strengthening its national drug control system. In addition to the establishment of a national drug control coordination committee, the Government has intensified cooperation among its national law enforcement agencies, which has resulted in a significant increase in heroin seizures in the country. The Board calls on the Government to implement the other recommendations made by the Board following missions to that country in 1997 and 2002.

### **Cultivation, production, trafficking and abuse**

#### *Narcotic drugs*

542. Over the past few years, cannabis herb has been increasingly cultivated in Europe. In Switzerland, it is estimated that between 300 and 500 hectares are being cultivated for the production of cannabis and that 50-200 tons of cannabis herb are being produced in the country every year, enough to satisfy local demand. Furthermore, cannabis products are being sold in about



400 cannabis shops in Switzerland, particularly in areas bordering other countries. A study undertaken in the United Kingdom estimated that about 50 per cent of all cannabis abusers grow their own cannabis. Cannabis seeds are available without restriction in most countries. Albania remains a large supplier of cannabis herb, which is smuggled into some countries in Europe and West Asia. Cannabis seizures have shown a stable or upward trend in many countries in Europe. Cannabis accounts for almost three quarters of all drug seizures in the United Kingdom.

543. Cannabis is widely available in Europe, especially among young people. According to one study, 46.2 per cent of young people (persons between 15 and 24 years of age) in the European Union had been offered cannabis and 28.9 per cent reported having abused cannabis at some point in their lives. More than 10 per cent of the young people had abused cannabis in the previous month in France (19.8 per cent), Spain (15 per cent), the United Kingdom (13.4 per cent), Denmark (12.2 per cent) and the Netherlands (12.2 per cent). The countries least affected were Austria, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden.

544. National prevalence studies undertaken in the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland show that the number of people who abused cannabis during the previous month has significantly increased. In the Netherlands, that number increased from 2.5 per cent in 1997 (326,000) to 3.0 per cent in 2001 (408,000). In Spain, the estimated proportion of the population that abused cannabis during the previous month almost doubled from 12.2 per cent in 1994 to 22 per cent in 2002. In Switzerland, an estimated 11,000 young people aged 15-16 abuse cannabis more than 40 times a year. Cannabis abuse is also on the increase in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

545. There are indications that the volume of cocaine from South America smuggled into Europe every year continues to increase. Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom remain the three main ports of entry for cocaine in Europe. Spain ranks third in the world (after the United States and Colombia) for the volume of cocaine seized. The volume of cocaine seized in Spain has more than doubled over the past 10 years.

546. Many countries in Europe report that the abuse of cocaine is on the rise. Stable or declining levels of cocaine abuse were reported in several countries in the

middle of Europe, such as Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

547. In Europe, the illicit market for heroin is primarily supplied by heroin of Afghan origin, which is mainly smuggled into the region either on the Balkan route or, to an increasing extent, via Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and the Russian Federation (on the so-called "Silk route"). The growing importance of the "Silk route" for heroin originating in Afghanistan is a development that continues to be reflected in seizure statistics. In July 2003, 420 kg of heroin were seized in the Russian Federation in a single operation. In contrast, in most countries in Western Europe, heroin seizures have remained stable or declined. Therefore, the existence of significant heroin depots in several transit countries must be assumed. Heroin seizures are expected to increase in Western Europe, in view of the increasing amount of heroin produced in Afghanistan.

548. The Board notes the recent removal from the illicit traffic of 41 kg of fentanyl and the dismantling of three laboratories in Ukraine. Authorities fear that the locally produced illicit opium poppy extracts and the heroin from Afghanistan could be replaced by the synthetic opioid, which is more than 100 times more potent.

549. In South-Eastern Europe, trafficking in heroin continues via the Balkan route. The northern branch of the Balkan route leads through Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria; the southern branch leads through Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, partly to Italy, Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The worrying trend is that, in addition to those countries being used as transit countries because they are situated on the main drug trafficking routes, drug abuse in those countries has shown an upward trend.

550. For several years, the abuse of heroin has remained stable or declined in member States of the European Union. The decline in the number of heroin abusers has been most pronounced in Spain, which had a very high rate of heroin abuse in the 1980s. The number of persons dependent on opiates in the Netherlands is the lowest in all member States of the European Union. The recent strengthening of drug abuse prevention and treatment efforts in Western Europe has contributed to that positive development. In

countries in Eastern Europe, however, the abuse of heroin continues to increase.

#### *Psychotropic substances*

551. Europe retains its leading position in the area of illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs. While synthetic drugs produced in Asia and Latin America are primarily manufactured for local illicit markets, synthetic drugs manufactured in Europe, particularly those of the MDMA variety, are trafficked all over the world. While MDMA and related drugs are mostly manufactured in and distributed from Belgium and the Netherlands, amphetamine is increasingly being manufactured in other parts of Europe as well. For example, the number of uncovered clandestine laboratories has been on the increase in Ukraine. The illicit manufacture of amphetamine continues to take place in Poland, and there are also reports that it is taking place in the Baltic States, as well as in Romania. Home-cooked methamphetamine (pervitin) continues to be manufactured in the Czech Republic and trafficking in the substance is no longer confined to the local illicit markets, as the substance is often smuggled into Austria, Germany and Slovakia, where it is frequently sold as "crystal speed".

552. The percentage of abusers of amphetamine-type stimulants is highest in Ireland, the United Kingdom (England and Wales only) and the Netherlands (in that order). In Finland, France, Portugal and Sweden, the prevalence of abuse of those drugs in the previous month does not exceed 1 per cent. Amphetamine-type stimulants are also widely available and frequently abused in the tourist centres in Europe, for example, on the Spanish island of Ibiza.

553. As synthetic drugs cannot be manufactured without the necessary chemicals, the Board urges Governments of European countries to take more action to control the chemicals used in illicit drug manufacture. Over 100 tons of 3,4-methylenedioxyphenyl-2-propanone, a precursor for MDMA with almost no legitimate uses, are smuggled into Europe out of China each year. The Board encourages the European Community, which, in this case, is the responsible competent authority for precursors, to cooperate with the authorities of China, in order to stop this type of trafficking.

554. Ketamine, a substance which is widely used in veterinary medicine but which is not under

international control, is abused in some countries in Europe, where it is often sold as Ecstasy or combined with amphetamines, ephedrine and MDMA in Ecstasy tablets.

#### **Missions**

555. In March 2003, a mission of the Board visited the Czech Republic. The Board notes with appreciation the political commitment and activities of the Government of the Czech Republic to deal with problems of drug abuse and trafficking. The Board was informed about the consideration of amending the criminal code in order to introduce different penalties for possession of different types of drugs. The intention is to reduce social impacts of excessive criminalization and to enhance proportionality of punishment to the nature of the crime.

556. The existing legal framework covers all areas relating to drug trafficking and drug abuse, as well as the manufacture of and trade in controlled drugs and precursors in accordance with the provisions of the international drug control treaties. The existing national lists of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances of the Czech Republic fully correspond to the schedules of the 1961 Convention and the 1971 Convention. If the Government considers a possible rearrangement of those national lists, the Board would recommend harmonizing them with lists applied by and in line with most other European countries.

557. The Board is of the opinion that the present legislation on precursors in the Czech Republic is in line with its recommendations and would rather welcome the intended strengthening of controls by European Union member States than a weakening of the Czech legislation to the present level of the European Union. With regard to cultivation of opium poppy for alkaloid extraction, the Board recommends that all countries include in their existing national licensing systems measures that allow for limitation, if so required, of the area under opium poppy cultivation.

558. The Government of the Czech Republic intends to expand substitution treatment provided by special medical facilities. The introduction of drug injection rooms does not constitute a part of the official national drug control policy. Drug testing has been the subject of debate at the official level as part of a broader discussion on the abuse of synthetic drugs. Drug

testing at dance-floor parties is carried out at the level of non-governmental organizations. In that respect the Board repeats its opinion that such programmes are against the provisions of the international drug control conventions.

559. At the invitation of the Government of Germany, the Board sent a mission to that country in July 2003. The primary objective of the mission was to visit drug injection rooms in operation in that country and to discuss with the authorities the Board's concerns regarding such facilities. The Board also viewed numerous facilities in several cities for the treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent persons.

560. The Government had underlined that the drug injection rooms in operation in Germany were not in contravention of the international drug control treaties, as they were subject to stringent regulations and had been incorporated into the general health system. In this regard, the Government had argued that the drug injection rooms served an important function in ensuring that drug-dependent persons who otherwise could not be reached by the authorities were referred to therapy and other public services.

561. The Board notes the efforts of the German authorities to ensure that drug injection rooms are integrated into the general health-care services for drug addicts and are well maintained and clean. The Board also notes that the establishment of such injection rooms is perceived as a success by a large part of the local authorities and the local population. However, the Board also notes that, according to the data collected by the Government, there is little evidence that drug injection rooms actually serve to ensure that the drug-dependent persons undergo treatment and that their existence contributes to a reduction in drug-related deaths. The Board reiterates its views that, insofar as they serve as forums in which drugs acquired on the illicit market can be abused, they are not in compliance with the international drug control treaties. The existence of facilities aimed at ensuring that drug-dependent persons are encouraged to undergo treatment is desirable, but such facilities must be in compliance with the treaties. The Board urges the Government to take the necessary measures to ensure compliance with the international drug control treaties.

562. The Board reviewed progress made by the Government of Ireland in the implementation of the Board's recommendations pursuant to its mission to

that country in 2000. The Board notes that the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008, launched in May 2001, contains 100 individual actions to be taken by the Government of Ireland under the four pillars of supply reduction, prevention, treatment and research. In particular, the Strategy includes a number of actions providing education and prevention programmes for young people, with abstinence from all substances of abuse being the primary aim. The Board hopes that the results of a mid-term review, to be undertaken in 2004, will be carefully reviewed by the Government to ensure an efficient implementation of the Strategy.

563. The Board notes with concern that there continue to be a number of controlled substances under the 1961 Convention and the 1971 Convention that have yet to be placed under adequate national control in Ireland. The Board urges the Government to adopt, as soon as possible, legislative provisions required by the two conventions in order to ensure that all required regulatory controls are in place, including the timely inclusion of substances in the national control regime whenever the Commission on Narcotic Drugs decides on the scheduling of substances.

564. A mission of the Board visited Poland in February 2003. The Board commends the Government for taking a balanced approach in combating illicit activities related to drugs, as evidenced by law enforcement successes and recently upgraded treatment services for drug addicts. The legislative basis for drug control appears to be adequate. The Board encourages the Government to expedite the planned establishment of a national centre for drug law enforcement and a unified system for the collection of drug law enforcement data. In view of the fact that the clandestine manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants is taking place at significant levels in Poland and that the stimulants are subsequently abused in the country or smuggled into neighbouring countries, the Board recommends to the Government to take appropriate steps, in particular, for more effective repression of the manufacture of and trafficking in such substances.

565. Controls over the licit manufacture of, trade in and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in Poland are reasonably well implemented. The Board is confident that controls over precursor chemicals will soon be adjusted to meet European Union standards.

566. In January 2003 the Board made a technical visit to Slovakia. Cooperation between the Slovak authorities and the Board is functioning well, as is cooperation between the various government offices responsible for drug control matters in Slovakia. In recent years, two major legislative acts on narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals have been adopted. Legislation presently in force in Slovakia for the cultivation of opium poppy and for poppy straw is in line with the position of the Board that all countries cultivating opium poppy should have a strict licensing system for opium poppy and strict control measures for poppy straw. The Board is of the opinion that the present legislation on precursors is in line with its recommendations; the Board would, therefore, strongly discourage any weakening of the existing legislation, especially at a time when European Union member States intend to strengthen controls further.

567. In recent years, Slovakia has been targeted for diversion of and trafficking in psychotropic substances, including flunitrazepam and temazepam. The Board appreciates the efforts of the Slovak law enforcement authorities, in cooperation with their Czech counterparts, in counteracting such illicit activities. Diversion of and trafficking in pharmaceutical products have to be considered by the judiciary with the same priority as trafficking in other drugs of abuse.

## **E. Oceania**

### **Major developments**

568. Australia and New Zealand remain among the main destinations for shipments of heroin and amphetamine-type stimulants from South-East Asia. The Board notes that both countries have strengthened legislation and action aimed at detecting and preventing the clandestine manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants and to intercept consignments of such stimulants and their precursors. Cannabis abuse has declined but remains at a high level; cannabis continues to be the drug of choice in Australia and New Zealand. In Australia, 72 per cent of all drug-related offences relate to cannabis. More sophisticated hydroponic growing techniques are contributing to increasing cannabis yields.

569. In recent years, successful law enforcement operations in Australia have led to a sharp reduction in the supply of heroin to illicit markets. This has resulted in price increases, lower purity levels and a decline in the rate of heroin overdose deaths. At the same time, there has been an increase in the abuse of cocaine and synthetic drugs, which have continued to be widely available despite record seizures at borders.

570. The Board notes the progress made in several Pacific island States to prevent money-laundering. Those States continue to be vulnerable to the drug transit traffic and to drug abuse.

### **Treaty adherence**

571. Of the 15 States in Oceania, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are not parties to any of the three international drug control treaties. All nine of the remaining States in the region are parties to the 1961 Convention and eight of them are also parties to the 1971 Convention; however, only Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Tonga are parties to the 1988 Convention. The Board urges the States that have not yet acceded to the international drug control treaties to do so without delay.

### **Regional cooperation**

572. The Pacific Islands Forum continues to play an active and essential role in coordinating drug control efforts in Oceania. The leaders attending the thirty-fourth session of the Forum held in Auckland, New Zealand, in August 2003 agreed to increase awareness among law enforcement officials about the spread of trafficking in and abuse of drugs, in particular amphetamine-type stimulants. The Board notes the increasing use of the Customs Asia Pacific Enforcement Reporting System, the Internet-based secure communication platform for customs administration, which makes possible the exchange of information to help detect and prevent transnational crime, including drug trafficking.

573. The Board notes the signing of a memorandum of understanding in March 2003 by Australia and Indonesia for cooperation in the exchange of information to better enforce customs laws.

574. The Board welcomes the key role played by the Australian Federal Police and the New Zealand Police in terms of regional technical assistance. The police