

international organizations provide technical and financial assistance to the Government in developing drug prevention programmes, intelligence services and modern detection methods, including law enforcement and laboratory detection techniques, that will enhance the capacity of law enforcement authorities to intercept illicit drug consignments.

258. During a joint technical visit by the secretariat of the Board and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to Mauritania in June 2004, the action taken by the Government pursuant to the recommendations made by the Board after its mission to that country in March 1999 was discussed. Consultations with the authorities of Mauritania are continuing with regard to the improvement of the reporting obligations of Mauritania, as required under the international drug control treaties.

259. The Board notes the various difficulties encountered by the Government of Mauritania in complying with its treaty obligations. However, the Board appreciates the efforts of the Government to rectify the situation and notes with satisfaction the measures taken by the authorities to strengthen the current national drug control legislation. The Board looks forward to the development of a comprehensive national drug control system and hopes that the new draft legislation will soon be adopted, thus providing for better control of the distribution of pharmaceutical products, including internationally controlled substances.

260. The Board notes with appreciation that, despite limited technical and human resources, the national office for the fight against the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances is regularly making seizures of illicit consignments of cannabis and psychotropic substances in Mauritania. However, the Board notes that better coordination between the different bodies involved in the fight against drug trafficking and abuse is required if sustained drug control is to be achieved in the country. Therefore, the Board strongly encourages the Government of Mauritania to reinforce the interministerial commission for drug control coordination in order to enable it to carry out its functions of coordination and promotion of efficient cooperation and the sharing of information between the various drug control authorities.

261. In June 2004, the Board sent a mission to South Africa to assess the progress made by the Government

in implementing the recommendations made by the Board following its 1993 mission to that country. While the mission did not have the opportunity to make full assessment of the drug control situation in the country, the Board appreciates the commitment of the Government to international drug control. The legal framework for drug control in South Africa is comprehensive and in compliance with the provisions of the 1961 Convention, the 1971 Convention and the 1988 Convention. Sufficient controls are being exercised over licit narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals. However, implementation is hampered by lack of coordination.

262. The Board notes that the Government of South Africa is currently in the process of developing a new national drug control master plan, based on an evaluation of the results achieved under the master plan for the period 1999-2004. The Board urges the Government to ensure improved coordination and cooperation among the regulatory and law enforcement institutions and agencies responsible for drug control issues. The Board looks forward to the implementation of the new master plan, including at the local level, particularly in the areas of prevention and treatment of drug abuse. The Board also looks forward to the Government of South Africa providing rural communities with programmes for sustainable development that discourage cannabis cultivation.

263. The Board notes the active role played by the Government of South Africa in fostering cooperation in the field of drug control at the international and regional levels, in particular among the countries in Southern Africa within the framework provided by SADC. The Board also notes the continued support provided by the Government to the three international operations launched by the Board for preventing the diversion of key chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of heroin, cocaine and amphetamine-type stimulants.

B. Americas

264. The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organization of American States remains the main regional forum for coordinating drug control issues in the Americas. Under its aegis, the third evaluation round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism was launched in

December 2003. A total of 34 countries participated in that round, the main aim of which is to assess the implementation of previous recommendations. The information gathered from participating countries is to be compiled and evaluated at intergovernmental meetings, one of which is to be held in January 2005.

265. Intergovernmental working groups held a meeting under the auspices of CICAD in November 2003. One of the working groups presented a report on maritime drug trafficking. According to the report, 90 per cent of the cocaine manufactured in South America—590 tons out of an estimated total of 655 tons in 2003—is trafficked by sea, mainly through the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico; moreover, in many States in the region, there is insufficient funding and a lack of human and material resources and none of the required mechanisms for coordination at the national and regional levels to deal with the situation in an effective manner. The working group recommended the establishment within CICAD of an expert group on maritime control to draft model maritime control legislation and regulations and to develop best practices and strategies for maritime drug control in CICAD member States.

266. A second intergovernmental working group reviewed the control over precursors in the Americas and concluded that there was a need for several States to strengthen their existing legislation and regulations in that area.

Central America and the Caribbean

Major developments

267. The region of Central America and the Caribbean continues to be affected by large-scale cocaine trafficking and abuse; serious drug abuse problems have emerged in countries in the region. In the past year, law enforcement agencies in several countries reported increased seizures of cocaine, as well as stricter controls over precursor chemicals. There are, however, indications that drug trafficking organizations are adapting their methods in order to overcome law enforcement efforts.

268. In countries in Central America, many youth gangs have been involved in violent crime and drug trafficking. Though there is no agreement on the number of persons involved in such gangs, it is

estimated that at least 70,000 persons are members of youth gangs. The majority of them are in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Stringent measures have been adopted against youth gangs in several countries, including El Salvador, where new legislation penalizing membership in a youth gang has been widely criticized. At a summit held in March 2004, the heads of government of Central American countries agreed to cooperate in the fight against youth gangs.

269. A new Government was formed in Haiti, following upheaval and armed conflict in early 2004. The drug control situation in Haiti has for many years been characterized by ineffective law enforcement and widespread corruption, resulting in the country becoming a key drug trafficking hub in Central America and the Caribbean. The Board urges the new Government of Haiti, with the assistance of the international community and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), to ensure that drug control is a priority in its national reconstruction programme and to take the measures necessary to combat drug trafficking and the increasing drug abuse in the country.

Treaty adherence

270. All States in Central America and the Caribbean are parties to the 1961 Convention, the 1988 Convention and, with the exception of Haiti and Honduras, the 1971 Convention. The Board calls on Haiti and Honduras to accede to the 1971 Convention and to implement the provisions in that convention without delay. The Board also calls on Nicaragua to ratify the 1972 Protocol amending the 1961 Convention without delay, as it remains the only State in the region that has not yet done so.

Regional cooperation

271. Cooperation between law enforcement agencies in countries in Central America and the Caribbean and elsewhere in the Americas has resulted in the arrest of major drug traffickers. For example, in March 2004, the leader of a major drug trafficking organization in the Dominican Republic was arrested. According to the United States Government, the organization had moved shipments containing several hundred kilograms of cocaine into Puerto Rico and the United States from the British Virgin Islands, the Dominican Republic and unspecified countries in South America.

272. In April 2004, approximately 30 persons were arrested in several countries as a result of cooperative efforts between the law enforcement agencies of Colombia, the Netherlands Antilles and the United States. According to the law enforcement officials involved, the arrests were the result of unprecedented coordinated efforts between the countries involved, including joint activities enabling law enforcement officials to track down persons involved in all stages of the drug trafficking operation, from the sources of supply to the wholesale and retail dealers.

National legislation, policy and action

273. During the past year, steps were taken in several countries in Central America and the Caribbean to strengthen the control of precursors. In January 2004, the Government of Panama recorded a major seizure of ephedrine at the international airport in that country. Given the importance of Panama as a trans-shipment point, the Board encourages the Government of that country to pursue its efforts in strengthening precursor control, in cooperation with other Governments in the region.

274. In Guatemala, the Government adopted new regulations on the control of precursors and established a new inter-ministerial committee to coordinate its action in that area. In Honduras, the Government started to implement the national action plan to strengthen precursor control. In Jamaica, the Government is implementing stricter controls over the shipment of controlled chemical substances at authorized ports of entry, including airports and container freight stations; however, the Government faces serious difficulties in pursuing such operations, including a lack of financial and other resources.

275. In nearly all countries in Central America and the Caribbean, national drug control plans have been adopted in recent years. The Board notes with satisfaction that the Government of the Bahamas has adopted a national drug control plan covering the period 2003-2008, which the Board called for in its report for 2003.³⁹ The Board also notes that, as part of that plan, the Government is in the process of establishing a national drug observatory and is creating minimum standards of care for the treatment of drug addicts. The national drug control plan adopted by Costa Rica provides for institutional restructuring to strengthen efforts in drug control. In El Salvador, a

newly adopted drug control law strengthens penalties for a wide range of drug-related offences.

276. In February 2004, a select committee of the Parliament of Jamaica recommended that national legislation be amended so that the possession and abuse of cannabis in small quantities in private would be minor offences, subject to a moderate fine. The committee recommended that cannabis abuse in public spaces remain subject to criminal sanctions. The committee also recommended that other measures be taken to reduce the abuse of cannabis, including an intensive demand reduction campaign directed at young persons and the strengthening of efforts to eradicate the illicit cultivation of cannabis. The recommendations of the committee were sent to the Parliament for adoption.

277. The Board wishes to stress that cannabis is a harmful drug, requiring strong control under the 1961 Convention. The Board urges the Government of Jamaica to ensure that a clear and correct message is sent to the public regarding the dangers of cannabis abuse.

278. The Government of Belize has developed a national programme for alternative sentencing, whereby, in cases involving drug abuse, first-time and juvenile offenders are given sentences of community service in conjunction with drug treatment or counselling.

279. The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has recently conducted a national survey of drug abuse in schools and is currently in the process of analysing the results. A similar survey in Guatemala indicated that abuse of illicit drugs, including cannabis and cocaine, had increased over the previous five years. Such surveys have also been conducted in Costa Rica and Panama.

280. A national survey conducted on drug abuse in El Salvador was completed in June 2004. The survey indicated that 16 per cent of the population had abused an illicit drug at least once and 7 per cent had done so in the previous year. The survey also showed that the age of initial use of crack and cannabis was approximately 13 years, which indicated a need to ensure adequate drug abuse prevention programmes for children 12 years old and younger.

281. Concrete information on drug abuse in many countries in Central America and the Caribbean

remains scarce. The Board encourages Governments of countries in the region to continue their efforts to collect and analyse data in that area.

Cultivation, production, manufacture, trafficking and abuse

Narcotic drugs

282. Cocaine is trafficked in large quantities throughout Central America and the Caribbean. The authorities of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba seized almost 5,000 kg of cocaine in 2003, an increase from approximately 2,000 kg in 2002. There are indications that drug trafficking organizations in the Netherlands Antilles are increasingly paying individual drug carriers ("mules") not in cash but in MDMA or cocaine, thereby increasing the level of drug abuse and drug-related crime and exacerbating the adverse social situation in the territory.

283. In Honduras, the total amount of cocaine seized increased from an average annual level of approximately 1,500 kg in the period 1997-2000 to over 5,000 kg in 2003. In August 2004, a truck containing 1,600 kg of cocaine was seized by the authorities in Nicaragua near the border of that country with Honduras.

284. In 2003, the Government of Bahamas seized a total of over 4,000 kg of cocaine, the highest level recorded since 1997. The amount of cocaine seized in Guatemala totalled over 9,000 kg in 2003, reaching previous high levels of 1998 and 1999. The Government of Costa Rica seized a total of 2,900 kg of cocaine in 2002, 4,200 kg in 2003 and 4,300 kg in the first six months of 2004 alone.

285. In response to rigorous efforts by law enforcement agencies, drug trafficking organizations in some countries are changing their modus operandi. In Honduras, there appears to have been an increase in the use of air and sea routes for drug trafficking. In Jamaica, drug traffickers are increasingly using small boats to transport illicit consignments, and drug trafficking organizations were making reconnaissance flights with small aircraft to ensure that sea lanes were clear before dispatching their boats.

286. Cocaine abuse appears to be increasing in Central America and the Caribbean. In Panama, the annual prevalence rate is 1.4 per cent, though that figure is based on data collected in 1997. Barbados, Guatemala,

Nicaragua and Saint Lucia are all estimated to have an annual prevalence rate of 1 per cent. In the Dominican Republic and Haiti, cocaine abuse, though still minimal, is also increasing.

287. Cannabis cultivation takes place in most countries in Central America and the Caribbean; most of the cannabis produced is abused locally or smuggled into neighbouring countries. Governments in the subregion have continued their cannabis eradication programmes.

288. Jamaica has reported considerable success in the elimination of illicit cannabis cultivation, the total area under such cultivation in that country having fallen from 900 hectares in 1999 to 400 hectares in 2003. The total amount of cannabis seized by the authorities in Jamaica in the same period fell from 74,000 to 36,000 kg. Despite those successes, Jamaica continues to be a major source of cannabis in the region. The Board encourages Jamaica to continue its efforts, including the collection of data to assist in monitoring the situation. The Board calls on Jamaica's partners to support those efforts through financial and technical assistance.

289. Heroin abuse in Central America and the Caribbean is relatively low, but the situation is changing as drug trafficking throughout the region is increasing. An increase in heroin abuse has been reported in the Dominican Republic and El Salvador.

290. Females account for an increasing proportion of drug abusers in Central America and the Caribbean. The Board urges Governments in the region to ensure that, in efforts to combat drug abuse, adequate programmes are in place to ensure that special attention is given to female drug abusers.

Psychotropic substances

291. Surveys indicate that the abuse of pharmaceutical medications containing psychotropic substances is at a high level in certain countries in Central America and the Caribbean. One study shows that psychotropic substances, in particular flunitrazepam and diazepam, are the main drugs of abuse among street children in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. Those substances are diverted from the licit market or international donations or are smuggled from Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, the Netherlands Antilles, Panama and Venezuela. CICAD has noted that the control of

psychotropic substances remains problematic in several countries in Central America and the Caribbean. The Board urges Governments of countries in the region to ensure that adequate controls are in place for pharmaceutical medications, in accordance with the provisions of the international drug control treaties.

North America

Major developments

292. The North American region is, collectively, the largest market in the world for illicit drugs. Large-scale trafficking and illicit manufacture of drugs are also a grave concern, and the abuse or misuse of prescription drugs appears to be a growing phenomenon. At the same time, the countries in the region devote a large amount of resources to deal with their drug problems, both within and beyond their individual countries. Collaboration between the countries of the region, in particular in the field of law enforcement, is excellent.

293. The first national survey on drug abuse since 1994 was launched in Canada in December 2003. The survey represents the first step in ensuring that comprehensive data on current trends are available, as recommended by the Board. Debate continued in Canada regarding proposed legislation that would reduce the sanctions for possession of small amounts of cannabis from criminal prosecution to a fine.

294. The Government of Mexico continued its law enforcement efforts against drug trafficking, recording several major successes, including the arrest of high-ranking members of drug trafficking organizations. Mexico also acted as host to the High-level Political Conference for the Purpose of Signing the United Nations Convention against Corruption, held in Merida in December 2003.

295. The United States, the world's largest single market for illicit drugs, continued to be a major partner in international drug control efforts, in particular in the area of law enforcement. As a result of law enforcement efforts, including joint operations involving the United States and other countries, eight major international drug trafficking organizations were dismantled during the past year and seven others were severely disrupted. The United States also continued its efforts to address the high level of drug abuse on its territory; consequently, there was a significant decline

in drug abuse among secondary-school students. However, the abuse of some pharmaceutical medications containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances appears to be an increasing problem in the country.

Treaty adherence

296. All three States in North America are parties to the three international drug control treaties.

Regional cooperation

297. The three countries in North America continued their excellent cooperation in the area of law enforcement and achieved a number of successes against international drug trafficking organizations. In March 2004, Canada and the United States dismantled an organization that had been engaged in illicit drug manufacture and trafficking on a large-scale; as a result of that operation, more than 130 persons in the United States and 50 persons in Canada were arrested. In May 2004, the authorities of Canada, Colombia, the United Kingdom and the United States dismantled a large-scale money-laundering ring, which had laundered millions of United States dollars of proceeds from the sale of Colombian cocaine.

298. A large number of high-ranking members of drug trafficking organizations were also arrested in Mexico, often as a result of joint operations and the sharing of intelligence with other countries in Central America and/or North America. Mexico extradited 31 persons to the United States, 19 of whom had been charged with drug-related offences. Prosecutors in Mexico and the United States participated in a cooperation programme to identify practical methods to improve extradition procedures.

299. All three States in North America are members of CICAD and participate in the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism. The thirty-fourth regular session of CICAD was held in Montreal, Canada, in November 2003 and the thirty-fifth regular session was held in Washington, D.C., in April 2004. The Board encourages the three States in North America to continue their active participation in that regional forum.

National legislation, policy and action

300. The Board welcomes that, pursuant to its recommendation, in December 2003, the Government

of Canada commenced the first national survey on drug abuse since 1994. Until the current survey, information on drug abuse in Canada had been incomplete. The Board hopes the findings of the survey will be utilized by the Government of Canada in developing programmes to combat drug abuse in that country.

301. The Board notes that legislation proposed by the Government of Canada to revise penalties for cannabis-related offences remains the subject of debate. While, under the proposed legislation, the possession of cannabis would remain a criminal offence, the possession of small amounts of that substance would not result in a criminal record. The Board is concerned that any revision should not contribute to the mistaken perception that cannabis is a harmless substance. The proposed legislation would also increase penalties for the production of cannabis in certain cases.

302. Mexican law enforcement authorities arrested high-ranking members of major drug trafficking organizations in the past year. For example, in April 2004, members of the Mexican police force arrested a Guatemalan national alleged to have been the head of one of the largest drug trafficking organizations in Central America and, in August 2004, Mexican authorities arrested the leader of an organization alleged to be responsible for having trafficked approximately half of the cocaine entering the United States from Mexico. The Government of Mexico also continued its efforts against corruption, which in many cases was connected to drug trafficking. For example, in April 2004, the Government took action in a state in central Mexico against a large number of police officers who had been accused of transporting cocaine in police vehicles.

303. In July 2004, the Government of Mexico indicated that some of the main drug trafficking organizations had been significantly weakened. The Board encourages the Government to continue its efforts against drug trafficking, especially as there are indications that drug trafficking organizations are becoming more decentralized, with a larger number of smaller organizations.

304. The Board notes that cannabis and opium poppy illicitly cultivated in Mexico, though not on a large scale, have posed problems in North America for some years. As part of its demand reduction efforts, the Government of Mexico continued to establish

municipal committees against drug addiction. The Board notes that the large amount of drugs trafficked through Mexico leaves the country vulnerable to the spillover effect, which has already taken place in other countries. In addition, the Board notes that there are high rates of abuse for some drugs in the northern part of the country. The Board encourages the Government to continue strengthening its efforts in demand reduction, and it hopes that the municipal committees will prove to be a useful tool in combating drug abuse.

305. The Government of the United States continued to give top priority to combating drug trafficking and drug abuse. Besides its efforts on its own territory, the United States is also a major partner in international drug control, having allocated US\$ 731 million for the year 2005 to support drug control efforts in countries in South America, including support for law enforcement, the eradication of illicitly cultivated crops, institution-building, alternative development and demand reduction programmes. The Government also plays a leading role in Project Prism, a global operation initiated by the Board in 2002 to address the diversion of precursors used in the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants.

306. Though recent official data show that the rate of drug abuse among the general population of the United States has remained stable since 2002, there has been a significant decrease in the abuse of illicit drugs among secondary-school children, the first such decline in more than a decade. The perception of the risks involved in the abuse of drugs, in particular cannabis, among young persons also appears to have increased—a development that may be attributed in part to the effectiveness of media campaigns.

307. The Board notes with concern that, despite the above-mentioned positive developments, the rate of drug abuse in the United States remains disturbingly high: the prevalence of illicit drug abuse in the past month is 8.2 per cent. The Board encourages the Government to continue its efforts in drug abuse prevention. The Board notes that the rate of drug abuse varies widely among the major ethnic groups in the country, and it encourages the Government to take those differences into account in formulating and implementing demand reduction programmes.

308. The Board notes that experience in several countries and jurisdictions has shown that drug courts

may be effective in ensuring that non-violent drug offenders undergo treatment, and it encourages countries to continue exploring that option in addressing drug abuse and related problems. The Board welcomes the significant increase in the funding available for drug courts in the United States, which was announced by the Government. The Board also notes the efforts by the Government to establish mandatory minimum standards for drug addiction treatment in the country and encourages it to continue those efforts.

309. In July 2004, law enforcement authorities in the United States closed down several web sites that had been used to sell controlled psychotropic substances. The web sites had made it possible for such drugs to be sold to thousands of customers worldwide. The Board has repeatedly expressed concern about the growing phenomenon of the sale of controlled substances over the Internet, and it urges Governments to take adequate measures to ensure compliance with the international drug control treaties. The Board convened an expert meeting on the subject in October 2004, the major conclusions and recommendations of which are reflected in paragraphs 170-184 above.

310. A panel of experts convened by the Government of the United States concluded in February 2004 that the increase in methadone-related emergency room visits and deaths in the period 1995-2002 had not been attributable to any diversion from methadone substitution treatment but had been associated mainly with the use of methadone as medication prescribed for pain.

Cultivation, production, trafficking and abuse

Narcotic drugs

311. Cannabis remains the most abused drug in North America and is produced in significant amounts in all three countries in the region. The Government of the United States estimates that approximately 2,500 tons of cannabis is produced in that country; over 3.3 million cannabis plants were eradicated by the Government in 2002, which represents a slight increase over the level of the previous year.

312. Law enforcement agencies in all provinces of Canada report that illicit cannabis cultivation is one of their main drug law enforcement problems; in several provinces, such cultivation has reached levels that could be deemed epidemic. Despite some reports

regarding the widespread cultivation of high-potency cannabis in Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police points to research indicating that the potency of cannabis cultivated in Canada remains stable. As noted in paragraph 317 above, the Government of Mexico is currently establishing a mechanism for the estimation of illicit drug crop cultivation on its territory.

313. Cocaine is trafficked in large quantities throughout North America; that is largely a result of the fact that the United States is by far the world's largest market for the drug. The abuse of cocaine also takes place in Canada and, to a lesser extent, Mexico. According to the assessment of the Government of Canada, much of the cocaine entering the country from the United States appears to be connected to the smuggling of Canadian cannabis into the United States, indicating that drug trafficking organizations are engaging in a form of barter trade.

314. The total amount of cocaine seized by the Government of Mexico increased significantly, from 12,600 kg in 2002 to approximately 21,000 kg in 2003. There are indications that drug trafficking organizations are using Mexico as a transit point for cocaine destined for Europe. The Board urges the Government of Mexico, in cooperation with other Governments, to make every effort to deal with that new development. The Board is also concerned about recent indications that drug trafficking organizations are beginning to change their methods in Mexico, perhaps targeting the country as an emerging market. That is perhaps evidenced by the recent seizure of a large amount of stored cocaine and the dismantling of a large laboratory for cocaine manufacture, both in Mexico City.

315. A recently published national household survey shows that the rate of cocaine abuse in Mexico, which is concentrated mainly in the states in the northern part of the country, decreased slightly in the period 1998-2002, after having increased for roughly a decade. The Board encourages the Government to continue its efforts in demand reduction.

316. In the United States, cocaine (in powder or crack form) continues to be regarded as the drug that poses as the greatest threat and that most contributes to violent crime.

317. The Government of Mexico estimates that opium poppy cultivation has remained stable in 2003.

According to estimates of the Government of the United States, 4,800 hectares of illicit opium poppy were cultivated in Mexico in 2003. The Board notes that the Government of Mexico is in the process of establishing a system for estimating the quantity of drugs illicitly produced in Mexico. The Board encourages the Government to continue its efforts to obtain an accurate estimate of the scope of illicit crop cultivation on its territory.

318. Data released in 2004 in the United States show an increasing problem involving the abuse or misuse of some prescription drugs under international control, including oxycodone and hydrocodone. Those drugs, which are used for pain treatment, are also abused by young persons. The majority of prescription drugs abused in the country are diverted from the licit market and obtained through Internet pharmacies.

319. Recent research indicates that drug abuse in Mexico is increasing at a faster pace among women than among men: while there were 13 male drug abusers for every female drug abuser in 1998, there were four male drug abusers for every female drug abuser in 2002.

Psychotropic substances

320. The illicit manufacture of methamphetamine in North America has continued on a large scale and appears to be increasing. In 2003, over 9,000 clandestine laboratories used for methamphetamine manufacture were dismantled in the United States—more than in any other country in the region; in the same year, 37 such laboratories were dismantled in Canada and 20 were dismantled in Mexico.

321. The abuse of methamphetamine remains at a high level in the United States, though recent research indicates a gradual decline in the abuse of this drug among young people. In Canada, the abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants, including MDMA (Ecstasy) and methamphetamine, is increasing among young people. There are also indications of increasing use of those drugs among adults. The total amount of MDMA (Ecstasy) seized by Canadian authorities has increased dramatically in recent years, and the number of clandestine MDMA (Ecstasy) laboratories dismantled by the Government has also increased.

South America

Major developments

322. Significant positive developments have occurred in South America during the past year. Drug control in South America continues to be an issue of considerable political importance, not only to the region itself, but also to the rest of the world. That is evidenced by the ongoing discussion on how to maintain the assistance provided by the United States for alternative development and to strengthen institutions and develop social infrastructure in countries in the Andean subregion. Those issues were addressed at the sixth high-level meeting of countries in Latin America and the European Union, held in Dublin in May 2004; at the meeting, Peru was elected President of the coordination and cooperation mechanism in drug matters between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean. In South America, the total area under illicit coca bush cultivation was reduced during 2003 for the third consecutive year. The Governments of several countries in the region have had considerable success against drug trafficking networks, as evidenced by, among other things, increased drug seizures. Strengthened regional and bilateral cooperation in interdiction efforts have contributed to that success. Most notably, in June 2004, as a result of a joint operation involving national law enforcement agencies and the United States and other countries outside of the region, the head of one of the largest drug cartels in Colombia was arrested (see para. 330 below). In Colombia, the Government has made progress in combating drug trafficking and guerrilla and paramilitary groups involved in drug trafficking.

323. At the same time, heightened social disturbances and violence related to illegal drugs have continued, particularly in Peru in the first half of 2004. Although there are numerous effective alternative development schemes currently under way, there are still far too many coca bush farmers in Bolivia and Peru who are dependent on income from such illicit cultivation. Insufficient support and implementation of sustainable alternative development programmes in some coca bush cultivation areas might have contributed to this. Drug trafficking, and the money-laundering and corruption associated with it, continues to endanger stability in the region. As in the recent past, drug traffickers have attempted to intimidate public prosecutors, demonstrating once again the close links

between drug trafficking and organized crime. Drug traffickers have responded to interdiction efforts by using different trafficking routes, by entering into new strategic alliances with trafficking organizations from other regions (such as the alliance involving Colombian and Moroccan organizations) and by merging organizations previously concentrating only on either cocaine or heroin.

324. Open clashes between farmers who cultivate coca bush and the Government, which has made an effort to reduce such cultivation, continue in Bolivia; in Peru, the frequency and the level of violence of such clashes have increased. In Peru, where, in 2003, 40 per cent of the reduction in coca bush cultivation was undertaken voluntarily, some federations of coca bush growers are demanding new legislation that would make such cultivation completely legal and would contain no more provisions for drug crop eradication or alternative development. The Government of Peru has found such demands to be unacceptable. The Board urges the Governments of Bolivia and Peru to ensure that the provisions of the 1961 Convention concerning illicit crop cultivation and illicit drug production and trafficking are fully implemented in their countries.

325. The Board is concerned about recent developments in the cultivation of coca bush and the manufacture of cocaine, since a reduction in the total area under cultivation might be offset by increasing yields in most producing countries. At the same time, coca bush cultivation is being moved to areas previously not affected. The increasing seizures of cocaine in and outside the region and the diversification of trafficking routes indicate that there is no shortage of that drug in illicit markets, despite the significant reduction in coca bush cultivation and other achievements of interdiction efforts.

326. Since coca bush cultivation is often found in areas where poverty prevails, the Board is convinced that measures to alleviate poverty are extremely important to achieve a continuous reduction in the production of coca leaf and other narcotic drugs in South America.

Treaty adherence

327. All States in South America are parties to the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the 1971 Convention and the 1988 Convention.

Regional cooperation

328. In South America, countries continue to participate actively in multilateral cooperation mechanisms of CICAD. For example, in a pilot project in South America undertaken by CICAD, Uruguay has been chosen to develop activities related to a programme on estimating the human, social and economic costs of illicit drugs in America (see also para. 336 below). In addition, many States with common geographical characteristics or shared borders have entered into bilateral or multilateral agreements and have continued to adhere to those agreements; for instance, the third meeting of the Executive Committee of the Andean Cooperation Plan for the Control of Illegal Drugs and Related Offences was held in Cuenca, Ecuador, in April 2004. Other examples include the cooperation between Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Uruguay in a subregional system for the prevention and treatment of drug abuse. In February 2004, the military forces of Brazil, Colombia and Peru signed an agreement aimed at suppressing drug trafficking and arms smuggling; it was the first agreement of its kind and involved three countries in the Amazon area.

329. At the Thirteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Salvador, Brazil, in October 2003, representatives expressed their Governments' concern over the increased manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants, in particular methamphetamine, and the increasing abuse of such stimulants in the region. The Meeting noted that the use of postal and courier services in drug trafficking had been increasing. The Meeting agreed that Governments should strengthen cooperation with postal and courier services to facilitate the detection and prevention of the use of the postal system for drug trafficking and, where appropriate, to facilitate controlled delivery operations.

330. In June 2004, a joint operation involving the law enforcement agencies of the Bahamas, Canada, Colombia, Jamaica, Panama and the United States led to the arrest of the head of one of the largest drug cartels in Colombia, as well as over 50 members of the cartel. The operation also resulted in the seizure of 6,539 kg of cocaine, 1,209 kg of cannabis and more than US\$ 25 million in currency and seized assets.

331. The United States and countries in Europe continue to provide resources for drug control in South America through bilateral and multilateral agreements in various fields, such as law enforcement, criminal and fiscal investigation and judiciary matters, alternative development and educational programmes for drug abuse prevention.

National legislation, policy and action

332. In Bolivia, the integrated strategy to fight drug trafficking for the period 2004-2008 was approved by the Government in September 2004. The strategy includes promotion of sustainable alternative development, eradication of illicit crop cultivation and control of precursor chemicals, prevention of the diversion of coca leaf into illicit channels, prevention of illicit drug manufacture and trafficking and prevention of laundering of proceeds obtained from illicit activities involving drugs. The strategy also introduces a new focus on the prevention of drug abuse and the treatment and social reintegration of addicts. The national plan for alternative development for the period 2004-2008, which is based on the principles of sustainability, integrity and social participation, was approved by the Government of Bolivia in May 2004. In Peru, the national drug control strategy for the period 2002-2007 was approved in January 2004. In Ecuador, the new decree on the national policy to fight drugs strengthens the role of the competent authority, the Consejo Nacional de Control de Sustancias Estupefacientes y Psicótropicas, and provides for a balanced approach between activities aimed at reducing the demand for and supply of illicit drugs.

333. In Colombia, a reform of the criminal procedure code will enter into force on 1 January 2005 as part of the overall reform of the criminal justice system; during 2003, an updated law on controlled substances, covering narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, was issued and judges were trained in legislative measures relevant to their work in the prevention of trafficking in drugs and precursors. In Brazil, a new law amending Act No. 6.368 of 21 October 1976 is currently awaiting adoption by the Federal Senate; if adopted, the new law would remove mandatory prison sentences for drug abuse offences, directing addicts to treatment, and would increase penalties for drug trafficking. The Board trusts that the new law will be in line with the provisions of the international drug control treaties.

334. With regard to action taken to prevent money-laundering, the Board notes that, in Chile, Law No. 19.913 on money-laundering was enacted in 2003, establishing a financial intelligence unit and replacing or strengthening laws against money-laundering dating back to 1995. In Colombia, according to the Government, stricter measures to facilitate forfeiture of property originating from illegal activities have resulted in a significant increase in such forfeitures since mid-2002. The Government of Paraguay reported law enforcement successes vis-à-vis illegal foreign exchange providers and in strengthening judicial and fiscal units; a draft law against money-laundering is still being examined by the parliament. In Peru, the parliament adopted a law strengthening the role of the newly created financial intelligence unit in July 2004. A national strategy to combat money-laundering was adopted in Brazil in January 2004.

335. For precursor control, activities aimed at controlling and combating the use of chemicals for the manufacture of cocaine and heroin continued under Operation Seis Fronteras, a regional initiative involving Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, as well as the United States. Governments also cooperated in Operation Purple, the international tracking programme for prevention of the diversion of potassium permanganate (used for the illicit manufacture of cocaine) and Operation Topaz, the international tracking programme for prevention of the diversion of acetic anhydride (used for the illicit manufacture of heroin). In Peru, a new precursor law was adopted in July 2004, strengthening controls and providing for stricter sanctions in the event of non-compliance.

336. Programmes for the prevention and treatment of drug abuse, including relevant training, are coordinated among countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay). Those programmes include giving special attention to raising awareness about the risks of injecting drug abuse, which might result in the spread of HIV/AIDS, and drug abuse by pregnant women. In Chile, an interim report on the implementation of the national strategy covering the period 2003-2008 shows that prevention programmes have been carried out according to plan in schools, public enterprises, places of work, large communities and the armed forces. The Board notes that the Government of Uruguay is undertaking a survey on drug abuse among persons detained by the police; in

addition, drug abuse prevention activities at schools and correction centres are being evaluated with a view to developing a new consolidated prevention strategy for the country.

Cultivation, production, manufacture, trafficking and abuse

Narcotic drugs

337. Illicit cultivation of cannabis mainly to be used locally or in other countries in South America continues to be detected in most countries in the region and appears to be increasing in several of those countries. For example, cannabis is cultivated in the north-eastern part of Brazil. In Paraguay, more than 5,500 hectares are under cannabis cultivation, and most of the cannabis produced is destined for the Brazilian market. Operation Aliança, a campaign to eradicate illicit cannabis cultivation in the border area between Brazil and Paraguay, is carried out jointly by those two countries on a yearly basis. The eradication of cannabis cultivation has also been reported in Ecuador. Seizures of cannabis have increased in the region.

338. In 2003, the total area under coca bush cultivation in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru decreased by 11 per cent compared with 2002, to 154,000 hectares, the lowest level in a decade. However, as stated in paragraph 325 above, recent developments in coca bush cultivation indicate that reduction in the total area under cultivation in South America appears to be offset by increasing agricultural yields. Although the total area under coca bush cultivation decreased more in Colombia than elsewhere in the region, from 102,000 hectares in 2002 to 86,000 hectares in 2003, such cultivation actually increased in certain parts of that country and is no longer confined to remote areas with no infrastructure. In addition, a shift towards smaller plots has been identified, possibly in an attempt to make it more difficult to carry out eradication efforts involving crop spraying. Moreover, it appears that high-yield varieties of coca bush have been introduced in Colombia.

339. In Peru, it has been found that the reduction of the area under coca bush cultivation in 2003 by 5 per cent compared with 2002, to 44,200 hectares, was at least partly offset by higher yields resulting from improved farming techniques such as increased plant density and the use of fertilizers. According to estimates by the United Nations Office on Drugs and

Crime, there were 23,600 hectares under coca bush cultivation in Bolivia in 2003 and there are worrying signs that such cultivation might have increased during that year. The use of irrigation and fertilizers to cultivate coca bush is now common in Bolivia; for that reason, the agricultural yield of coca leaf in that country was also higher in 2003 than in previous years.

340. In addition, illicit coca bush cultivation continues to be reported in Ecuador and in Venezuela, close to those countries' borders with Colombia; however, the extent of coca bush cultivation in those countries is small compared with that of the major producing countries. In Venezuela, such cultivation is reportedly partly attributable to farmers who leave Colombia as a result of conflict in that country. The Board reiterates its appeal to all States in South America to cooperate with each other in order to prevent the displacement of illicit crop cultivation.

341. In all the above-mentioned countries in South America, illicit coca bush cultivation is being eradicated, mostly manually; only in Colombia is it being eradicated mainly through crop spraying. In Colombia, the reduction in illicit coca bush cultivation is believed to be mainly due to strict law enforcement and crop spraying, since in 2003 spraying activities reached a record high level, although bad weather impeded crop spraying at the end of 2003. In contrast, in Bolivia and Peru, such eradication is carried out, to a great extent, voluntarily. The Board wishes to re-emphasize that continued reduction of illicit coca bush cultivation, either on a voluntary basis or as a result of interdiction efforts, will depend on the ability to offer sustainable alternative livelihood to farmers in the producing countries. It is therefore essential for the international community to continue to support and expand alternative development initiatives in those countries.

342. Based on the estimated cultivation of coca bush, the potential total manufacture of cocaine in South America in 2003 was estimated at 655 tons, compared with 800 tons in 2002. It should be noted that the figure for 2003 has been calculated according to past agricultural yields, which may no longer be valid at times of increasing agricultural yields. In addition, there are indications that cocaine manufacture from coca leaf has also become more effective, since traffickers have begun using better methods for extracting cocaine from coca leaf and have become

more experienced in the use of precursors. The bulk of the cocaine continues to be manufactured in Colombia, but illicit manufacture of cocaine is known to take place or to have taken place in recent years also in all other countries in South America except Paraguay and Uruguay. In Colombia, strengthened law enforcement efforts during 2003 and 2004 resulted in increased detection and dismantling of clandestine laboratories used for cocaine manufacture.

343. Seizures of coca leaf, predominantly reported in the countries in South America where illicit coca leaf production exists, doubled in 2003 compared with 2002, due to strengthened interdiction efforts. Cocaine trafficking in the region continues to consist mainly of transit trafficking: the transport of cocaine consignments destined for the United States or, increasingly, Europe. Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela are the countries in South America most affected by cocaine trafficking, although transit trafficking has increased in other countries in the region, such as Argentina and Chile. Increasing amounts of cocaine from Brazil and Colombia are smuggled through Portugal into Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, primarily Angola and Mozambique, and into South Africa. There are also reports that cocaine from South America is being trans-shipped via several African countries to Europe. During 2003 and the first half of 2004, seizures of cocaine increased or remained stable in most countries in South America; increased cocaine seizures were reported in a number of countries in the region, in particular, in Colombia and Venezuela. In Suriname, 341 kg of cocaine were seized from a clandestine airstrip in November 2003.

344. In the recent past, the low level of oxidation of the cocaine seized was evidence of the success of Operation Purple, the international tracking programme for the prevention of the diversion of potassium permanganate. Governments of countries participating in that operation were identifying the legitimacy of end-users and determining the actual requirements of those companies, in order to ensure that no diversion from domestic distribution channels was taking place. In 2003, as in 2002, clandestine laboratories used for the manufacture of potassium permanganate continued to be detected and dismantled in Colombia, indicating that traffickers had found other ways to obtain the chemical in the quantities that they needed. It is not surprising that an increase in the purity of seized cocaine has been reported in Colombia

and Paraguay, although the purity level is not yet comparable to the levels attained in the mid-1990s.

345. While possible methodologies for making sound estimates of the illicit cultivation of opium poppy and the illicit production of opium in South America are still being explored, the Government of Colombia believes that around 4,000 hectares were used for that purpose in 2003, based, inter alia, on the total area of opium poppy eradicated, which amounted to almost 3,000 hectares. It is assumed that the total area under opium poppy cultivation has not changed much in recent years, despite eradication efforts involving crop spraying. Eradication efforts targeting illicit opium poppy cultivation also continue to take place in Peru and Venezuela.

346. Heroin manufacture continues to take place in South America, mainly in Colombia; the majority of the heroin manufactured is destined for the United States. Seizures of heroin in the region have been increasing; the country most commonly reported to be the source of the heroin seized is Colombia. While, in 2003, Colombia continued to report the highest level of heroin seizures in South America, the level of such seizures in Venezuela increased significantly in 2002 and has remained high since then, which may be an indication that that country is on one of the main transit routes used for smuggling heroin out of the region.

347. According to the Government of Colombia, more than 95 per cent of the chemicals used in illicit drug manufacture in that country have been smuggled into the country and only 5 per cent have been diverted from domestic licit distribution; that highlights the need for neighbouring countries to remain vigilant and prevent the smuggling of those chemicals into Colombia. The Governments of many countries in South America, including that of Colombia, indicated that in 2003 they had effected an increased number of seizures of such chemicals and in 2003 and 2004 had dismantled several clandestine laboratories used in illicit drug manufacture. The Board is greatly concerned that Colombia did not submit to it information on seizures of such chemicals or any information related to the origin or destination of the chemicals in question. The Board wishes to re-emphasize that seizures of precursors should be investigated with a view to identifying the trafficking routes used. The results of such investigations should

then be shared with the Board, in order to alert other Governments, where necessary.

348. Although cannabis herb and resin are widely abused in South America, they are not necessarily the primary drugs of abuse. In Venezuela, for example, cannabis abuse is reported to be second only to cocaine abuse, whereas in Brazil cannabis abuse ranks second after the abuse of benzodiazepines. Cannabis and cocaine, in that order, were identified as the main drugs of abuse in a national survey on drug abuse conducted in Uruguay in 2003. While several countries in the region have reported increasing drug abuse, in Chile the prevalence of drug abuse continues to be decreasing or stable, as indicated by a national survey on secondary-school students undertaken during 2003 and a study conducted during 2002. According to data collected by CICAD for a comparative study of the use of illicit drugs in selected countries in Latin America, there are considerable differences in the perceived accessibility of such drugs among the selected countries; the accessibility of such drugs is considered to be more difficult in Ecuador and Uruguay than in Paraguay and Venezuela.

Psychotropic substances

349. There is limited illicit manufacture of psychotropic substances in South America. In 2003, clandestine laboratories used to manufacture MDMA (Ecstasy) were dismantled in Argentina and Suriname; illicit manufacture of MDMA (Ecstasy) has also been reported in Venezuela. Seizures of stimulants, mainly smuggled out of Europe, continue to be effected in countries in the region. The diversion and over-prescription of a variety of psychotropic substances continue, reflecting the need for Governments to strengthen control over the prescription of controlled pharmaceuticals and to inspect records relating to the sales of such pharmaceuticals, as requested repeatedly by the Board.⁴⁰ Seizures of diverted pharmaceuticals were reported for 2003 only by Brazil and Chile, indicating that law enforcement authorities in other countries in the region may have to pay more attention to that area.

Missions

350. The Board sent a mission to Brazil in December 2003 and found that the Government had made efforts to implement the provisions of the international drug

control treaties. At the same time, the mission found a number of areas of concern about the current status of the government policies on countering drug abuse and trafficking. The Board encourages the Government to continue to attach high priority to drug control issues and, in particular, to ensure that all bodies involved in drug-related issues have adequate resources to enable them to carry out their functions.

351. The most recent epidemiological study on drug abuse undertaken in Brazil shows that prescription medicines such as benzodiazepines or medications containing codeine are frequently abused in Brazil. In order to learn more about that problem and to be in a position to address it properly, the Board strongly encourages the Government to monitor and analyse prescription patterns more closely in order to establish the reasons behind that high rate of abuse of such drugs. The Board recommends that a nationwide initiative be launched to educate members of the medical profession, as well as the public, on the rational use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and to promote sound medical prescription practices.

352. While efforts have been made to strengthen control of chemicals that are often used in the illicit manufacture of drugs, the competent authorities for precursor control have not established a working relationship and there is no coordination or exchange of information between those entities. The Board wishes to emphasize that an effective system for precursor control requires active cooperation and a good working relationship between the different regulatory and enforcement authorities involved. The Board therefore urges the Government to ensure cooperation between the regulatory and law enforcement authorities involved in the control of precursors and to request all those authorities to establish functioning channels for exchanging information on a regular basis.

353. The Board notes both the efforts made by Brazil to fight drug trafficking and the recent increase in cocaine seizures in that country. Nevertheless, the absence of cooperation between federal and state police forces seriously limits the effectiveness of those efforts. The Board therefore encourages Brazil to continue to intensify cooperation and exchange of information between state and federal police forces, in order to be able to address drug trafficking in a more coordinated and effective manner.