

second national study on persons with problems resulting from the consumption of alcohol and other drugs in treatment centres and self-help groups, conducted in 2012, substances of first-time abuse are primarily alcohol followed by tobacco, cannabis, smokable forms of cocaine, cocaine, solvents, anxiolytics, anti-depressants, amphetamine-type stimulants, opiates and others.

494. Through an integral drug abuse prevention plan, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reported reaching over 4.6 million people in 2014 by organizing more than 35,000 activities with a focus on communities, children and adolescents at risk. The plan is based on a strategy of decentralization, the adoption of a people-centred approach and the scaling-up of prevention activities that strengthen life skills and promote healthy lifestyles, also targeting workplaces, prison settings and indigenous communities.

## C. Asia

### East and South-East Asia

#### 1. Major developments

495. With an increasing diversification of trafficking routes and a significant increase in the amount of seizures, the manufacturing, trafficking and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants show no signs of abating. It has been noted that drug trafficking syndicates in other regions, attracted by the size of the markets in East and South-East Asia, have recently become involved in a number of the region's countries. In addition, regional initiatives that facilitate the freer flow of goods and services might be exploited by some criminal groups.

496. The region continues to face the threats posed by the proliferation of new psychoactive substances and non-scheduled precursor chemicals. Exploiting gaps in legislation and creating the illusion of legality, new psychoactive substances are marketed as "legal highs". Although in recent years some countries have made greater endeavours to place new psychoactive substances under national control, drug trafficking syndicates have responded and adapted by producing substances not yet under control, thus hindering drug control efforts. The abuse of ketamine and its trafficking remain another area of concern for countries in the region.

497. The illicit cultivation of opium poppy and the manufacture of heroin continue in the countries of the Golden

Triangle (Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand). The total area of illicit opium poppy cultivation in the region was estimated to be 63,800 hectares (ha) in 2014, and production of opium estimated to be 762 tons. While the amount of illicit cultivation remains steady, a declining trend in the abuse of heroin in some East and South-East Asian countries has been reported. The scope of cocaine-related activities within the region remains limited compared with other regions and compared with other drug types.

498. The growing amount of methamphetamine being trafficked into East and South-East Asia from other regions suggests that new trafficking routes have been established connecting previously unrelated markets. In recent years, methamphetamine originating in Africa, West Asia and, more recently, the Americas, has been trafficked into the region. The more timely sharing of intelligence and better collaboration among law enforcement agencies across the region are essential for the early detection of these new trafficking routes and the implementation of measures to address them.

#### 2. Regional cooperation

499. Multilateral cooperation among the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) continues, as the regional multilateral body formulates its next approach, subsequent to the prior goal of making the ASEAN region free of illicit drugs by 2015. A ministerial statement adopted at the third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters, held in Indonesia in December 2014, underscored the political commitment to further strengthening regional cooperation. In September 2014, the ASEAN Narcotics Cooperation Centre was launched in Bangkok as a coordinating platform to further the pursuit of that goal of regional cooperation. The 12th meeting of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Fact-Finding Committee to Combat the Drug Menace, held in Kuala Lumpur in June 2015, provided an opportunity for the exchange of information on the latest national developments. A resolution adopted at the meeting emphasized the significance of taking a people-centred approach in the delivery of effective demand and supply reduction programmes. Through another platform for multilateral cooperation, the 36th ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Drug Matters, held in Singapore in August 2015, various issues related to illicit drugs in the region were discussed.

500. Faced with the increasing connectivity of drug trafficking organizations across the globe, some regional meetings discussed major region-specific challenges in the

context of the global evolution of such criminal groups. The joint INCB-UNODC international conference on precursor chemicals and new psychoactive substances held in Bangkok in April 2015 highlighted the global challenges posed by precursor chemicals and new psychoactive substances and examined approaches to address those challenges at both the global and regional levels. Bringing together countries of the Asia-Pacific region, the 20th Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference, held in Tokyo in February 2015, focused on international cooperation in drug law enforcement to counter the threat of amphetamine-type stimulants.

501. A ministerial meeting, held in May 2015, of the signatories to the 1993 memorandum of understanding on drug control of the Greater Mekong subregion reiterated their continued commitment and stated that the memorandum had proven to be a constructive mechanism for better regional cooperation in law enforcement efforts against drug trafficking in the subregion. The evolving drug situation specific to the countries concerned, such as the greater flow of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals, was highlighted and discussed.

### 3. National legislation, policy and action

502. Confronted with the continued and rapid emergence of new psychoactive substances, countries in the region have placed additional substances under temporary listing and/or extended the scope of drug control to defined groups of substances. For instance, the Republic of Korea announced the temporary control of 10 new psychoactive substances (6 synthetic cannabinoids, 2 phenethylamines and 2 other miscellaneous substances) for three years in December 2014, which brought the number of new psychoactive substances currently under temporary control to 86. Under that country's Act on the Control of Narcotics, the possession, management, trade, assistance in the trade, or the giving or receiving of materials that contain a temporary scheduled substance are prohibited. In Macao, China, the anti-drug law (Law 17 of 2009) was amended in 2014 to control five more substance groups: piperazine derivatives, synthetic cannabinoids, derivatives of cathinone (excluding bupropion), *Salvia divinorum* and salvinorin A. In China, the Non-Medical Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substance List Regulation, which listed 116 non-medical narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, entered into force on 1 October 2015.

503. After the listing of *alpha*-phenylacetonitrile (APAAN) as an internationally controlled precursor in October 2014, several countries have placed it under their

national control. On 14 May 2014, the Government of China scheduled APAAN and 2-bromopropiophenone (a known intermediate in the synthetic manufacture of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine from propiophenone) as first-class controlled precursors, requiring import and export permits for its international trade. Similarly, the Government of Thailand listed APAAN and its optical isomers in Schedule 4 (precursor chemicals) of the Narcotics Act. In Hong Kong, China, APAAN has also been controlled under the Control of Chemicals Ordinance (chap. 145). INCB reminds countries that have not yet done so to place APAAN under national control without delay pursuant to the related Commission on Narcotic Drugs decision 57/1 of 19 March 2014.

504. To improve the effectiveness of law enforcement and expand the scope of drug control, new legislative and administrative changes have been introduced by the Government of the Philippines. In July 2015, amendments were made regarding the custody and disposition of illegal drugs, in particular the requirement to conduct an inventory after seizure operations by law enforcement authorities and the need for witnesses. Under the prior legislation, law enforcement officers had been required to conduct an inventory of the seized illegal drugs and chemicals immediately after confiscation in the presence of the suspects and representatives of the Department of Justice, elected public officials and the media as witnesses. Under the amended law, law enforcement officers can now conduct the inventory at the nearest office of authorities or police station in the case of a warrantless arrest as long as the integrity and evidentiary value of the seized items are properly preserved. A law penalizing driving under the influence of alcohol, dangerous drugs or similar substances was also adopted in 2014.

505. In the Philippines, a new national anti-drug programme of action for the period 2015-2020 and a timeline for its implementation have been drafted. The action plan outlines strategies in five main areas (demand reduction, supply reduction, alternative development, civic awareness and response, and regional and international strategies) and is intended to guide the country's drug control efforts. Similarly, the Thai Government has developed a national drug control strategic plan for the period 2015-2019 to offer holistic solutions for drug control beyond 2015. The strategic plan contains eight primary strategic focus areas and provides the mechanism for its implementation and the monitoring and review of that implementation. The Government of Myanmar is implementing the last phase of its 20-year drug control plan for the period 1999-2019 for achieving an illicit drug-free status by 2019. While the eradication of opium poppy cultivation was the main priority in the initial phase,

other objectives, such as the rehabilitation of drug abusers, the establishment of further special counter-narcotics task force units and the participation of local communities in the implementation of drug control activities, have now become the current priorities.

## 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

### (a) Narcotic drugs

506. Since the mid-1980s, the illicit cultivation of opium poppy in the region has been concentrated in the Golden Triangle, which was once the main world supplier of heroin. The considerable increases in illicit cultivation in Afghanistan, combined with the eradication efforts of the countries of the Golden Triangle (Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand), have significantly reduced the share of illicit opium that is produced in that area. However, illicit cultivation of opium poppy in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar has recently started to increase, after reaching its lowest level in recent years, with less than 25,000 ha of illicit cultivation in 2006. In 2014, the total area of illicit opium poppy cultivation reached 63,800 ha, most of it in Myanmar (90 per cent) and a small amount in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (10 per cent). The total amount of opium produced in the region was estimated to be 762 tons.

507. Heroin illicitly manufactured in Myanmar has been trafficked overland into China through Yunnan province. At the same time, precursor chemicals required for the illicit manufacture of heroin have been smuggled into Myanmar from China. There is a risk that two-way trafficking for the manufacture and consumption of heroin may grow as drug trafficking syndicates exploit the easier movement of people and capital resulting from initiatives enhancing regional integration within the ASEAN community. In the light of such challenges, INCB encourages close cooperation and collaboration among the ASEAN member States for the timely exchange of intelligence.

508. Heroin seizures in the region rose each year from 2011 to 2013, reaching 11.8 tons in 2013, with more than 70 per cent being seizures reported by China. With total seizures of 9.5 tons in 2014 (9.4 tons in China, 89 kilograms (kg) in Hong Kong, China, and 3.5 kg in Macao, China), China continues to account for most of the seizures in the region. Reductions in seizures have recently

been reported by other countries such as Cambodia and Thailand. The total amount of heroin seized in Cambodia and Thailand dropped significantly in 2014 (1.8 kg and 371 kg, respectively), back to its longer-term average level.

509. Illicit cannabis cultivation and significant cannabis seizures continue to be reported by Indonesia and the Philippines. To avoid the eradication efforts of the authorities, illicit cannabis cultivation in the Philippines is usually located in high-altitude and mountainous areas of the country that are difficult to access. In 2014, 68 tons of cannabis herb were seized in Indonesia, more than three times the amount seized in 2012. The amount of cannabis seized in transit in Thailand increased from 27 tons in 2013 to 33 tons in 2014, following an upward trend that began in 2012. In 2014, 164 kg of cannabis herb and 576 kg of dried cannabis were seized in the Philippines. Increases in cannabis herb seizures were moderate for Hong Kong, China, and for Singapore.

510. The misuse of cocaine in East and South-East Asia remains limited, as evidenced by a relatively low level of seizures compared with other regions. The latest data point towards a further decline in the amount of cocaine seized within the region. In Hong Kong, China, the quantity of cocaine seized dropped by more than half, from more than 700 kg in 2012 to less than 300 kg in 2014. Similarly, reported seizures in Japan and Macao, China, declined by more than 90 per cent, down to 2 kg and 3 kg respectively in 2014. In Cambodia, cocaine seizures fell from around 13 kg in 2013 to less than 8 kg in 2014. China (excluding Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions) and the Philippines reported cocaine seizures of 113 kg and 70 kg respectively.

### (b) Psychotropic substances

511. Growing availability and the prevalence of amphetamine-type stimulants in the region persist, as demonstrated by the continued upsurge in methamphetamine seizures and the high level of misuse. East and South-East Asia continues to be the region that seizes the largest total amounts of methamphetamine, which is available in two main forms (methamphetamine tablets and crystalline methamphetamine). While the misuse of methamphetamine tablets (usually of lower purity) is more concentrated in the countries of the Mekong river basin, the misuse of crystalline methamphetamine is more widespread geographically. Between 2008 and 2013, seizures of crystalline methamphetamine in the region almost doubled, and seizures of methamphetamine tablets increased eight-fold.

512. Among the countries of the Mekong river basin, Myanmar is considered to be the main country of origin for methamphetamine tablets. Information on seizures of methamphetamine tablets in China and Thailand suggests that more methamphetamine tablets are originating in and being trafficked from Myanmar. In Thailand, a sizeable amount of methamphetamine tablets was seized in 2014 (113 million tablets), while 248 tablets were seized in Singapore.

513. The latest national reports by China reveal that most of the crystalline methamphetamine available in the country is manufactured in the country, with most of the illicit manufacturing base located in the southern part of the country (Guangdong province). More than 80 per cent of the crystalline methamphetamine seized in 2013 had been manufactured in the cities of Shanwei and Jieyang, with the city of Lufeng being the main source of supply of the substances required for manufacture. Some illicit manufacture of crystalline methamphetamine was also found in the western part of the country, in Chengdu and its surrounding cities.

514. Across the region, the growing availability of crystalline methamphetamine remains a worrying trend. In Indonesia, arrests related to crystalline methamphetamine have increased significantly since 2012. In the Republic of Korea, seizures of crystalline methamphetamine increased to about 38 kg in 2013, compared with 21 kg the preceding year. In Cambodia, although the amount of crystalline methamphetamine seized fell in 2014 (29 kg), it remained higher than in 2012 (19 kg). In 2013, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reported its first crystalline methamphetamine seizure since 2005.

515. The most recent methamphetamine seizure data continue to point to a higher volume of trafficking in East Asian countries. In 2014, China reported the highest amount of methamphetamine seizures in the region: close to 28 tons, considerably higher than the amount seized in 2013. In Hong Kong, China, 104 kg of methamphetamine were found in five express cargo consignments in transit from mainland China to Malaysia via Hong Kong, China. Most of the methamphetamine seized in Japan (570 kg) originated in China, followed by Mexico and Thailand. In 2014, totals of 718.5 kg and 12.5 kg of methamphetamine were seized in the Philippines and Singapore respectively.

516. Although the majority of methamphetamine continues to be trafficked within the region, an increasing amount of methamphetamine is being trafficked into the region from other parts of the world. This seems to suggest that new trafficking routes have been established

linking previously unconnected methamphetamine markets of different regions. In recent years, methamphetamine originating in Africa has been seized in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. While some methamphetamine has also been trafficked from West Asia, quantities originating in Mexico were seized in Japan, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea in the period 2013-2014.

517. In Malaysia, 26 clandestine facilities manufacturing amphetamine-type stimulants were dismantled in 2013: 18 facilities manufacturing crystalline methamphetamine and 8 facilities manufacturing MDMA ("ecstasy") tablets. Also in 2013, two clandestine laboratories manufacturing amphetamine-type stimulants were dismantled in Indonesia, both manufacturing modest amounts of crystalline methamphetamine. In China, 376 clandestine laboratories manufacturing methamphetamine were dismantled in 2014, compared with 397 dismantled laboratories in 2013.

518. The growing abuse and seizure of MDMA ("ecstasy") has been reported by more East and South-East Asian countries. A significant amount of MDMA ("ecstasy") (489,311 tablets) was seized in Indonesia in 2014. In the Philippines, close to 3,600 MDMA ("ecstasy") tablets were seized in 2014—the largest amount seized by the country's authorities since 2002. Similarly, Singapore reported total seizures of more than 3,800 tablets of MDMA ("ecstasy"). Reported seizures of MDMA ("ecstasy") in Cambodia went from none in 2013 to 3.1 kg in 2014.

### (c) Precursors

519. A number of countries continued to report the trafficking of pharmaceutical preparations containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, which was spurred by the growing illicit demand for amphetamine-type stimulants in the region. Most of the seized quantities reported originated in the region, or, to a lesser extent, in the neighbouring region of South Asia. Myanmar is one of the main destinations for trafficked preparations containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, and precursor chemicals seized in Myanmar mainly originated in nearby countries, primarily China, India and, to a lesser degree, Thailand.

520. To circumvent national legislative controls on precursor chemicals, more non-scheduled precursor chemicals and/or pre-precursors are being used. For instance, following the reinforcement of control of *Ephedra* plant in China, 2-bromopropiophenone is being used to

synthesize ephedrine. In 2014, more than half of the crystalline methamphetamine in the country was synthesized using 2-bromopropiophenone. In response, 2-bromopropiophenone was placed under national control in China in May 2014.

521. Faced with these adaptive diversion attempts, closer cooperation with industry can provide competent national authorities with better intelligence on suspicious orders and transactions involving scheduled and non-scheduled chemicals. For instance, to heighten the awareness of the industry with respect to the potential diversion of chemicals, some authorities have provided chemical companies in the country with the international special surveillance list. Outreach activities for the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, through regular meetings, dialogue sessions, site visits and seminars, would be useful for the more timely detection of changing trends and patterns of diversion attempts.

522. A comprehensive review of the situation with respect to the control of precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the region can be found in the report of the Board for 2015 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

#### (d) Substances not under international control

523. From 2008 to 2014, the number of new psychoactive substances identified by countries within the region increased significantly, the majority of them belonging to the synthetic cannabinoid and synthetic cathinone groups. Among countries in the region, the largest number of new psychoactive substances were identified by Singapore (37 substances), Japan (31 substances) and Indonesia. In 2013 and 2014, at least 30 new psychoactive substances were identified by the Government of Indonesia. These include synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones, phenethylamines, piperazines and plant-based new psychoactive substances. While some of these substances may be imported from countries in the region, some are imported from other regions. Of the 1.8 kg of synthetic cannabinoids seized in the Republic of Korea in 2013, 1.4 kg were imported from the United States. The rapid emergence of substances not yet under control, the limited forensic capability to identify such substances in some countries and the different listing classification for those substances adopted by different countries in the region are factors that create considerable challenges in mitigating the risks posed by new psychoactive substances at the regional level. INCB therefore encourages

all governments to participate in its operational project on new psychoactive substances (Project Ion (international operations on new psychoactive substances)) and make full use of its secure communication platform (IONICS) to prevent non-scheduled new psychoactive substances from reaching consumer markets.

524. The abuse of ketamine remains a major problem for the region, although the amount of seizures has been decreasing in some countries. While not under international control, ketamine has been brought under national control in a number of countries in the region: China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand. Medical professionals in Brunei Darussalam and China (including Macao Special Administrative Region) indicated an increase in the abuse of the substance. In Hong Kong, China, the annual prevalence rate of ketamine use remained higher than that of amphetamine-type stimulants. The illicit manufacture of ketamine continues to be a problem in China, where the considerable increase in ketamine manufacture has led to a reported change in the main raw material used. Close to 12 tons of ketamine were seized in mainland China in 2014, and more than 80 clandestine laboratories manufacturing ketamine were dismantled. A further half ton of ketamine was seized in Hong Kong, China. Declining quantities of ketamine seizures were reported in Indonesia (declining from 117 kg in 2010 to 4.7 kg in 2013) and Malaysia.

525. The seizure of the plant-based psychoactive substances kratom and khat and the eradication of their cultivation continues to be reported. The largest total of kratom seizures in the region was reported by Thailand in 2014 (54 tons), up from 45.5 tons in 2013. In Malaysia, kratom-related seizures and arrests have increased recently, with the total amount of kratom seized reaching 9.1 tons in 2013, up more than 74 per cent from the previous year. Considerable seizures of kratom were also reported in Myanmar (219 kg in 2013). More than 6 tons of khat were seized in Hong Kong, China, in 2014. Almost 2 tons of khat leaves imported from Africa were found in the storage facilities of four logistics companies, destined for the United States, Canada and Taiwan Province of China. Recent eradication of illicit kratom cultivation has been reported by Myanmar.

## 5. Abuse and treatment

526. The trend of wider misuse of amphetamine-type stimulants, in particular methamphetamine, continues to be reported by most countries in the region. Increases in

the abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants have been identified in Brunei Darussalam, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea. In the Republic of Korea, crystalline methamphetamine remains the primary drug of concern and accounts for nearly all drug treatment admissions. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the abuse of methamphetamine tablets has expanded from urban and land border areas to other parts of the country. Even in countries where other drugs had been the primary drugs of abuse, considerable increases in the abuse of methamphetamine have been reported. In Malaysia, amphetamine-type stimulants constituted the most common drug of abuse among new drug users in 2013. Significant increases in the abuse of methamphetamine and "ecstasy" have been reported in China. In Macao, China, authorities reported that abuse of methamphetamine was linked to the gambling activities in the city. In Myanmar, a more widespread misuse of methamphetamine has been reported since 2005, as evidenced by a rising number of drug treatment admissions related to the substance. A higher prevalence of the misuse of MDMA ("ecstasy") has also been reported by Indonesia and countries in the Mekong region (Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam).

527. UNODC estimated that in the region there were more than 3.3 million opiate users in 2014, with a prevalence rate (0.2 per cent) that was lower than the global average (0.4 per cent). Heroin remains the main drug of concern in China, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Viet Nam. The largest number of opiate abusers in the region is found in China, where the number of registered opium abusers totalled approximately 1.46 million, almost half of the total number of drug addicts within the country in 2014. According to experts in China and Viet Nam, the substitution of heroin by synthetic drugs has become common among drug addicts. The same trend is reported in Indonesia, where the market for low-purity heroin was large and heroin users comprised a significant portion of persons admitted to drug treatment centres. A declining trend in the abuse of heroin, as reported by experts, has been observed over the last five years, although no regular nationwide surveys of drug-use levels are conducted by countries in the region.

528. With a prevalence rate of people who inject drugs of 0.2 per cent in East and South-East Asia (compared with the global prevalence rate of 0.26 per cent), the region continues to have the largest number of people who inject drugs. UNODC estimates that there are approximately 3.15 million people who inject drugs in the region, which is one quarter of the worldwide population of people who inject drugs. Around 10.5 per cent of them are living with HIV. Data at the national level, however,

reveal much higher HIV prevalence rates among people who inject drugs in certain countries, including the Philippines (46.1 per cent), Indonesia (36.4 per cent), Cambodia (24.8 per cent) and Thailand (21.9 per cent). As evidence regarding the effectiveness of different services and treatment programmes (needle and syringe programmes, opioid substitution therapy, antiretroviral therapy and the provision of naloxone) becomes more accepted in the countries, it is expected that more targeted service programmes will be implemented in the region.

529. The provision of psychological treatment services has been expanded in some countries in the region to respond to the demand for treatment for amphetamine-type stimulant use. For instance, the number of persons receiving drug abuse treatment services from state and private centres in Cambodia totalled more than 3,000 people in 2014, the majority of them crystalline methamphetamine users (82 per cent). Similarly, the Lao People's Democratic Republic plans to expand its community-based treatment for abusers of amphetamine-type stimulants and include counselling services in hospitals, health facilities and educational institutions. Despite a growing awareness, the standards of treatment for amphetamine-type stimulants require further enhancement.

530. Drug abuse among young people continues to be a worrying trend in the region. A survey conducted in schools in Japan revealed that among all types of illicit drug use, solvents and inhalants had the highest life-time prevalence rates among young people in 2014 (0.7 per cent, compared with 0.2 per cent for cannabis, methamphetamine and new psychoactive substances). Male teenagers have a higher prevalence rate than female teenagers for all types of illicit drug use. Given the various concerns of countries in the region, INCB urges all Governments concerned to closely monitor the situation and facilitate the implementation of specific and targeted interventions.

## South Asia

### 1. Major developments

531. In 2014, Governments in South Asia continued to cooperate in responding to the threats posed by illicit drugs at the national and regional levels. Those threats were trafficking in Afghan heroin; the emergence of new psychoactive substances; the rise in manufacturing and trafficking in methamphetamine, in both pill and

crystalline forms; the diversion of controlled substances from licit to illicit channels; and the abuse of pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

532. There is a relatively low level of availability of and access to opioids for pain relief in all countries in the region. The Government of India continued to take substantial measures to address the situation, including through legislative changes that enabled the introduction of a simple and uniform regulatory regime in respect of opioids for pain relief (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Third Amendment) Rules, 2015).

## 2. Regional cooperation

533. The countries of the region have continued their cooperation in drug abuse prevention and control matters under the umbrella of the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific. The drug supply and reduction programmes of the Colombo Plan were strengthened through collaboration with other organizations such as the Australian Federal Police and were to focus on precursor chemical control, border protection, abuse of pharmaceutical preparations and trafficking, and forensic drug analysis.

534. The Department of Narcotics of Bangladesh and the Narcotics Control Bureau of India held consultations at the level of directors general in Dhaka, on 22 and 23 March 2015. The two national authorities agreed to implement mechanisms to stop the trafficking in narcotic drugs and to control the illicit use of precursor chemicals; to exchange intelligence on the cross-border trafficking routes; to raise public awareness of illicit drug trafficking; to increase efforts to eradicate the illicit cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis along their common border; and to increase cooperation in capacity-building.

## 3. National legislation, policy and action

535. The Colombo Plan International Centre for Certification and Education of Addiction Professionals held several training events in the region for national trainers on the universal treatment curriculum for substance use disorders. In May 2015, the universal prevention curriculum was launched as part of the Colombo Plan drug demand reduction programme in Bhutan, and efforts were under way to introduce the universal treatment curriculum in Bhutan as well. The International

Centre was working on the translation and adaptation of the universal treatment curriculum for Bangladesh. Under the Colombo Plan drug advisory programme, the development of a new curriculum on child drug addiction was initiated, since the incidence and prevalence rates of drug addiction among children from infancy to the age of 12 in the region were increasing.

536. In 2014, the Indian Parliament adopted the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Amendment) Act, 2014. The amending act introduced major changes to national policy and legislation, including the establishment of a new category of drugs referred to as “essential narcotic drugs”, through which the central Government could list drugs of medical and scientific use and which would include morphine, fentanyl, methadone, among other drugs. Narcotic drugs identified as essential were made subject to a single set of rules that applied throughout the country, whereas before the amendment, each state used to have its own regulations. The power to amend the rules were vested in the central Government to ensure uniformity. Under the amending act, institutions wishing to use essential narcotic drugs would require a single licence instead of the several licences previously needed. The changes were likely to simplify access to drugs essential for pain relief and palliative care, making them more readily available to the patients who needed them.

537. The amending act included provisions to improve treatment and care for people dependent on drugs. It allowed for the management of drug dependence, and in that context legitimized opioid substitution, maintenance and other tertiary services. The amending act also repealed the mandatory imposition of the death penalty in case of a repeat conviction for trafficking large quantities of drugs. The courts were given the discretion to impose, as an alternative, a 30-year custodial sentence for repeat offences. INCB takes note of this development and again encourages those States which retain and continue to impose the death penalty for drug-related offences to consider abolishing the death penalty for such offences. The amending act further strengthened the forfeiture of the property of persons arraigned on charges of drug trafficking. It opened the way for private sector involvement in the processing of opium and concentrated opium poppy straw.

538. Through notification S.O.376(E) of 5 February 2015 issued by the Ministry of Finance, the Government of India brought mephedrone under the ambit of psychotropic substances by including it in the schedule to the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. The Government issued another notification listing

mephedrone under schedule I of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Rules, 1985, prohibiting its production, manufacture, possession, sale, purchase, transportation, warehousing, usage, consumption, import, export and transshipment, except for medical and scientific purposes.

539. India continued to develop a system for the online registration and submission of returns by manufacturers and wholesalers of psychotropic substances. The system opened for registration by users in 2015, and the Government planned to make it mandatory by the end of 2015. Notwithstanding those welcome developments, access to internationally controlled substances for medical purposes in the region remained below the world average, in particular for opiate pain medication. The Board refers to its 2015 report entitled *Availability of Internationally Controlled Drugs: Ensuring Adequate Access for Medical and Scientific Purposes*.

540. In 2014, Bhutan adopted the Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substance and Substance Abuse Act, 2015, which replaced the Act of 2005 of the same name. The previous law had a number of shortcomings, including inadequate regulatory and procedural requirements for the control and management of controlled drugs and substances (the description and categorization of drug-related offences were not clearly outlined); the absence of penal provisions for drug-related offences; the lack of a basis for determining the magnitude of such offences; and the absence of provisions on the need for and validity of drug test requirements. The new and comprehensive law restored the balance between demand reduction and supply reduction and addresses shortcomings of the Act of 2005.

541. To improve port security and prevent the illegal use of sea containers in transnational organized criminal activities including drug and precursor trafficking, Bangladesh and Nepal joined the Container Control Programme of UNODC and WCO in 2014. The Programme is operational in the following countries of the region: Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

#### 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

542. South Asia continued to be particularly vulnerable to the trafficking of opiates and heroin. In addition, widespread trafficking of cannabis, synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances persisted in 2014. The diversion of pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances from the

Indian pharmaceutical industry, as well as their trafficking, including through illegal Internet pharmacies, continued over the reporting period.

##### (a) Narcotic drugs

543. In 2014, in India, the number of arrests for drug-related offences increased to become the highest in five years. The number of prosecutions for drug-related offences increased by more than 50 per cent from 2013, and the number of convictions by 127 per cent.

544. The data reported by the Narcotics Control Bureau of India indicated that most of the seizures made in the country in 2014 pertained to three drugs: cannabis (5,510 cases), heroin (4,467 cases) and cannabis resin (2,247 cases).

545. The number of cannabis seizures in India increased by 20 per cent, from 4,592 cases reported in 2013 to 5,510 cases in 2014. Indian authorities seized 108,300 kg of cannabis in 2014, up from 91,792 kg in 2013. Seizures peaked in 2010 at 173.1 tons. Substantial quantities of cannabis were trafficked into India from Nepal. An associated trend was the trafficking of cannabis from north-eastern states of India to eastern and other states in the country.

546. The number of cannabis resin seizures in 2014 decreased by 7.5 per cent (2,247 cases, down from the 2,430 cases reported in 2013). However, in terms of weight there was a decrease of approximately 50 per cent (decreasing from 4,407 kg seized in 2013 to 2,280 kg seized in 2014, the lowest in the past five years). In addition to domestic production, cannabis resin is trafficked into India. A major source is Nepal, with which India shares a long, open border that is readily exploited by drug traffickers. From India, cannabis resin is also trafficked to destinations in Europe and the Americas by means of courier parcels.

547. The number of heroin seizures and the quantity of heroin seized in India decreased slightly in 2014 (from 4,609 seizures reported in 2013 to 4,467 in 2014, and from 1,450 kg in 2013 to 1,371 kg in 2014). The Indian state of Punjab, which shares a border with Pakistan, accounted for most of the Afghan heroin seized in India. The larger consignments of Afghan heroin are first smuggled into India through Pakistan, and then smuggled out in smaller quantities to major drug consumer markets in Australia, Canada and Europe. Reports from neighbouring countries also indicated the seizure of low-quality heroin manufactured in India, but there are no reports of such locally manufactured heroin being seized in India itself.

548. Cocaine trafficking has historically been very limited in South Asia, but the rise in annual seizures seen in India over the past few years suggests an increase in trafficking in cocaine. The quantity of cocaine seized in India in 2014 was 15 kg.

549. In India, the quantities of opium seized in 2014 decreased by 24.3 per cent to 1,766 kg, compared with 2,333 kg the previous year. The number of seizures of opium had been decreasing since 2012 and was at its lowest since 2010. It was suspected that the opium seized in India originated inside the country, both from licitly and illicitly cultivated opium poppy. In 2014, 25 kg of morphine were seized, compared with 7 kg in 2013, which was still significantly less than in 2012, when 263 kg were seized. The Narcotics Control Bureau continued to use satellite imagery, field surveys and intelligence-gathering to track and eradicate illicit poppy cultivation. Eradication operations were undertaken by law enforcement authorities. In 2014, approximately 2,470 ha of illicit poppy were identified and eradicated. Concerted efforts to eradicate illicit opium poppy cultivation yielded encouraging results, and the area needing to be cleared had been declining since 2011. Another illicit crop targeted by eradication efforts was cannabis. In 2014, over 3,198 ha of cannabis were eradicated, the highest amount since 2010.

550. The Department of Narcotics Control of Bangladesh reported that in 2014, the country had tried 2,689 persons for offences related to drugs. The police of Bangladesh reported handling 42,501 cases related to narcotics. The long borders that Bangladesh shares with India and Myanmar make it vulnerable to drug trafficking. Moreover, Bangladesh has a long history of cannabis production and consumption, and cannabis is the most common drug of abuse in the country. Although it is smuggled into the country from India and Nepal, there were also reports of illicit cannabis cultivation in remote areas of the country. Seizures increased slightly from 35 tons in 2013 to 36.48 tons in 2014.

551. In June 2015, the Bangladesh Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate reported a seizure of so-called “liquid cocaine” at the port of Chittagong. The cocaine was found diluted in drums of sunflower oil believed to have originated in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. The seizure seems to confirm the existence of new routes and markets for cocaine, which recently seem to be finding its way into countries in South Asia.

552. Seizures of heroin decreased by 32.1 per cent, from 123.73 kg in 2013 to 84 kg in 2014, the lowest amount since 2009. The heroin abused in Bangladesh was mostly crude and impure, with the estimated purity of heroin

sold on the street not exceeding 5 per cent. According to experts, most of the heroin seized in Bangladesh was either manufactured in India, or originated in Afghanistan and smuggled through India. At the same time, heroin of high purity from the Golden Triangle (Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand) sometimes entered the country from the south-east. There were some reports of seizures in China of heroin trafficked through sea ports in Bangladesh. Dhaka airport continued to be a transit point for heroin being trafficked to China, Europe and the Middle East.

553. In 2013, 11.62 kg of opium were seized in Bangladesh, but no seizures were reported in 2014.

554. Trafficking of codeine-based cough syrups, such as phensedyl, from India to Bangladesh continued to be reported. Although Bangladesh banned codeine-based cough syrups, its medical use is allowed in India. In 2014, 748,730 bottles of codeine-based preparations were seized in Bangladesh, a decrease from the 987,661 bottles seized in 2013. Seizures of phensedyl had been declining consistently since 2012, and the seizures recorded in 2014 were the smallest since 2009. Synthetic opiates such as buprenorphine and pethidine (chemical name meperidine) in injectable form continued to be trafficked into Bangladesh. Seizures of buprenorphine decreased to 99,509 ampoules in 2013.

555. In 2014, Bhutan witnessed the highest number of drug cases ever registered by the authorities (644 cases). The great majority (90 per cent) were related to the possession of controlled substances. Cannabis, which in addition to being cultivated also grew in the wild, was the most common drug of abuse. Cannabis, along with small quantities of low-quality heroin, was also being smuggled into the country from India.

556. In 2014, in Nepal, both the illicit cultivation and the wild growth of cannabis were reported in the districts bordering India and in the interior. Although the Government carries out cannabis eradication campaigns every year, illicit cultivation continued in the reporting period. The porous border with India facilitates the trafficking of cannabis. While the seizures of cannabis rose sharply over the period from 2011 to 2013, with a 15-year record of 47,086 kg of cannabis being seized in 2012, they decreased to 6,910 kg in 2014.

557. A similar trend was reported for cannabis resin trafficked along land routes from Nepal to India and China, and by air to destinations such as Canada, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United States and Europe. In 2014, 2,053 kg of cannabis resin were seized in Nepal,

compared with 1,931 kg in 2013 and a record of 5,169 kg in 2012.

558. In 2014, in Nepal, the downward trend in heroin seizures continued: 3.8 kg of heroin were seized, against 12.42 kg in 2013 and 15.7 kg in 2012. Heroin from South-West and South-East Asia was smuggled into Nepal across the border with India and through Kathmandu international airport. Traffickers were also reported to use Nepal as a transit country through which they smuggled heroin to destinations such as Australia, China and the Netherlands. There were also seizures of low-quality heroin smuggled in small quantities from India, mainly intended for domestic consumption.

559. There is also evidence of illicit opium cultivation in Nepal. There have been no extensive surveys to determine its extent, but cultivation in small patches was reported in remote hilly areas that are difficult for enforcement agencies to access. No illicit heroin manufacturing facility has as yet been detected in Nepal. According to the Narcotics Control Bureau of Nepal, illicit opium is also being smuggled into India.

560. The first case of cocaine trafficking in Nepal was recorded in 2012. Since then there has been an increase. Instances of cocaine trafficking into the country by carriers from Namibia, Pakistan and Thailand via Brazil were identified in 2014. Reports indicated that Nepal was also being used as a transit point for cocaine smuggling. In 2014, 5.5 kg of cocaine were reported seized in the country. In April 2015, 11 kg of cocaine were seized at Kathmandu international airport, the largest cocaine seizure so far in Nepal.

561. In 2014, authorities in Nepal arrested 2,918 individuals for drug trafficking offences, against 2,673 in 2013. The Narcotics Control Bureau reported that an increasing number of Nepalese nationals were involved in drug trafficking. Previously, drug trafficking used to be dominated by foreign nationals.

562. Trafficking of heroin into Sri Lanka has been steadily increasing. The main trafficking routes were by sea, from southern India (for Indian heroin) and from Pakistan (for Afghan heroin). Heroin is smuggled into the island in sea containers and fishing boats. In 2014, 313 kg of heroin were seized, a decrease of about 11 per cent compared with the previous year.

563. Other than along the established sea routes, trafficking of drugs into Sri Lanka by air, largely through Colombo international airport, has been a regular occurrence. In recent years, the majority of the heroin seized

at the airport has been found on couriers arriving from Pakistan. They use various methods, including ingestion and concealment in body cavities and various kinds of equipment and luggage.

564. Cannabis and heroin are the major illicit drugs of abuse in Sri Lanka. Cannabis is illicitly cultivated in the country. The estimated land area under cannabis cultivation was nearly 500 ha in 2014. Cannabis abuse has become a significant problem. No cannabis resin production had been reported. In 2014, 19,644 kg of cannabis from India were seized. In 2014, cannabis seizures decreased by 76 per cent compared with 2013.

## (b) Psychotropic substances

565. South Asia is increasingly being used for the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS). ATS are also increasingly being abused. ATS in powder form is increasingly being smuggled from and illicitly manufactured in India, which is emerging as the main source in the region. Tablets containing ATS trafficked in India are also being smuggled into the country from Myanmar. In 2014, 196 kg of ATS were seized, more than twice the amount of 2013 (85 kg) and almost five times that of 2012 (41 kg). The number of ATS seizures and the quantities seized have been rising steadily. In 2014, 42 ATS seizures were reported, the highest number in five years. In 2014, the Narcotics Control Bureau of India reported the dismantling of five illicit manufacturing facilities, from which about 155 kg of amphetamines and 162 kg of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine were seized.

566. Seizures of methaqualone in India registered a sharp decrease, from 3,205 kg in 2013 to 54 kg in 2014, the lowest in five years. Methaqualone is often trafficked by means of courier parcels to Australia, Canada, Ethiopia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and countries in South-East Asia.

567. India and China are perceived as major sources of various new psychoactive substances. One of those is mephedrone,<sup>38</sup> whose increasing abuse has been reported globally in recent years. India was one of the source countries for mephedrone trafficked to various overseas destinations. After establishing its control over mephedrone and regulating it as a controlled psychotropic substance, India effected various seizures (1,106 kg from January to June 2015).

<sup>38</sup> The substance was brought under the control of the 1971 Convention by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2015.

568. In 2014, 109 grams of LSD were seized in India, which was the highest quantity in the past five years.

569. In Bangladesh, “yaba” (methamphetamine) continues to be smuggled from Myanmar across the south-eastern border. The quantities seized by Bangladesh law enforcement agencies have been rapidly increasing during the past five years. In 2014, 6.76 million “yaba” tablets were seized, compared with 2.8 million in 2013, a growth of 141 per cent. The quantity seized in 2014 was the highest since 2009. Sharp increases in seizures have been recorded since 2011. The proximity of Bangladesh to Myanmar and the surge in domestic demand made the country a big market for “yaba”. “Yaba” is mainly smuggled from Myanmar by fishing boat. It is bartered for other drugs of abuse, such as buprenorphine and tranquilizers, that are then smuggled in the opposite direction, from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

570. Diazepam and buprenorphine ampoules were reported to be smuggled into Nepal from India. In 2014, 44,495 ampoules of diazepam and 37,000 ampoules of buprenorphine were seized in Nepal, slightly more than the 43,227 ampoules of diazepam and 30,887 ampoules of buprenorphine seized in 2013.

### (c) Precursors

571. The diversion of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine from legal manufacture in India to illicit channels remains a major challenge for law enforcement agencies. Indian drug law enforcement agencies continued to report seizures of pharmaceutical preparations containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine trafficked from India to Myanmar for the extraction of the precursors. Instances of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine trafficking to South-East Asia were also reported in 2014. The quantity of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine seized in India declined sharply, from 6,655 kg in 2013 to 1,662 kg in 2014.

572. Bangladesh has a growing chemical and pharmaceutical industry, and has recently emerged as a source and transit location for methamphetamine precursors such as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. The drug-related challenges facing the authorities in Bangladesh in 2015 continued to be the diversion of precursor-based pharmaceutical preparations from the legitimate market, and the smuggling of shipments out of the country.

573. A comprehensive review of the situation with respect to the control of precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the region can be found

in the 2015 report of the Board on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

### (d) Substances not under international control

574. India continues to be a source country for ketamine trafficked to South-East Asia. Since February 2011, ketamine has been a controlled substance under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. In 2014, Indian law enforcement agencies seized 32 kg of ketamine, a significant decrease from the 1,353 kg seized in 2013. Seizures indicate that ketamine trafficking may now be declining as a result of the authorities’ stringency that followed the recent amendments to the Act.

## 5. Abuse and treatment

575. Most countries in South Asia do not regularly carry out national drug surveys; information on abuse and prevalence therefore needs to come from other sources. Cannabis is the most common drug of abuse in the region. According to the *World Drug Report 2015*, the annual prevalence rate for cannabis abuse in South Asia is estimated to be about 3.5 per cent of the population, or 33 million persons. According to UNODC, the annual prevalence of abuse of opioids remained stable at 0.3 per cent of the population and continued to be lower than the estimated world annual prevalence rate of 0.7 per cent.

576. The estimated prevalence of drug abuse by injection in South Asia in 2013 among the population aged 15 to 64 (the most recent information available from countries in the region) remained stable at 0.03 per cent, which was very low compared with the global average of 0.26 per cent. As mentioned above, the lack of reliable data on drug abuse in the region may be the reason why the reported prevalence is so low.

577. The abuse of “yaba” (methamphetamine) and codeine-based preparations continues to be widespread in Bangladesh, and is still increasing. Among street children, the abuse of glue and solvents by sniffing is common. Buprenorphine, mainly smuggled into the country from India, is one of the most popular drugs of abuse among those who inject drugs. Pethidine used to be the main drug of abuse among those who inject drugs in Bangladesh, but because of the emergence of buprenorphine over the past three decades and the high price of pethidine, the abuse of pethidine has decreased.

578. In 2014, Bangladesh stepped up its campaign against drug abuse and drug trafficking. The campaign included the distribution of posters, leaflets, stickers and booklets. Furthermore, speeches and discussion meetings were held in schools, and short films were produced with WHO. In 2014, a total of 10,364 patients were treated in private treatment centres, up from 8,108 patients in 2013. Women continued to make up a very small proportion of those receiving drug abuse treatment in Bangladesh, with only 25 female patients receiving treatment in 2014.

579. The Government of India accorded a high priority to the issue of drug abuse. The Prime Minister used many platforms to spread the message to parents that they should spend more time with their children. There was an emphasis on skill development, which was also encouraged among drug users.

580. In January 2015, the Government of India approved and launched a revised scheme of assistance for the prevention of alcoholism and substance (drug) abuse and for social defence services, which included the provision of financial assistance and grants for buildings and a toll-free national helpline for those with alcohol and drug abuse problems. The scheme was to provide a complete range of services such as awareness-raising and the identification, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts by voluntary and other organizations. Through preventive education programmes and whole-person recovery treatment of drug-dependent persons, its main pillars, the scheme was to reduce the demand for and consumption of alcohol and other dependence-producing substances.

581. Bangladesh, India and Nepal have implemented comprehensive packages for HIV prevention among drug users, including needle and syringe programmes and opioid substitution therapy.

582. Under its national AIDS control programme for 2013-2014, India established 45 new opioid substitution therapy centres for injecting drug users, thereby doubling the availability of such services in one year. The department of AIDS control of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is supporting the provision of opioid substitution therapy services through more than 150 dedicated centres across 30 states and union territories in India. After the successful completion of a pilot project in 2013, India decided to scale up the methadone maintenance treatment programme and its adoption by health clinics through the Ministry of Health.

583. In 2015, UNODC published the findings of the first study held among women in north-eastern India who

use drugs. The study identified their drug use patterns, the adverse impact of their drug use, and the impediments that limited their access to services. The study included the recommendation to expand the nature and scope of services provided to women in the future.

584. Cannabis and heroin continued to be the two drugs most commonly abused in Sri Lanka. Opium, opiates and opioids such as morphine, methadone and tramadol, were also reported to be misused in Sri Lanka. However, they were not being manufactured in the country. In 2014, a total of 1,646 people received drug abuse treatment, of whom 1,414 were treated for opioid addiction and 915 for cannabis addiction.

585. Sri Lanka does not manufacture any synthetic drugs or precursor chemicals, but the use of ATS, including methamphetamine and MDMA ("ecstasy"), and of other synthetic drugs, such as LSD and ketamine, is reportedly on the rise.

586. In Nepal, the common pharmaceutical preparations containing controlled substances that were being trafficked and abused were codeine-based cough syrups, buprenorphine, diazepam, nitrazepam and morphine.

587. In the Maldives, the problem of drug abuse was growing, especially among young people, who constituted about one third of the total population. The authorities reported that almost half of those who abused drugs (46 per cent) were aged between 16 and 24 years. While the variety of drugs available in Maldives is increasing, heroin and liquid cannabis (hash oil) are the most commonly used drugs. Maldives has implemented opioid substitution therapy.

## West Asia

### 1. Major developments

588. The continuing instability and climate of insecurity that prevail in some parts of the Middle East, in particular Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, continue to undermine law enforcement efforts and pose a challenge to drug control efforts among countries in the region. Poor border controls and the intensified movement of the population across countries is certainly favourable to illicit drug trafficking destined for markets in the region and can lead to a greater number of individuals abusing drugs.

589. The significant and rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in some countries of the region continues to pose a grave risk to peace and security, with various implications, following the displacement of millions of inhabitants. The difficult and traumatic situation of refugees escaping conflict zones, in particular in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, makes them particularly vulnerable to and at high risk of exposure to drug trafficking and addiction. Lack of governmental control and a general atmosphere of lawlessness in many areas make it virtually impossible to monitor drug control activities.

590. The armed conflict and refugee crisis situations have given rise to increased demands for emergency supplies, including internationally controlled substances for medical purposes. However, as supply is wholly dependent on emergency aid, delivery in certain areas has been inadequate or severely limited. In that context, INCB wishes to draw attention to the special topic published in its annual report for 2014 on availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in emergency situations<sup>39</sup> and remind all States that, under international humanitarian law, parties to armed conflicts have an obligation not to impede the provision of medical care to civilian populations located in territories under their effective control. This includes access to necessary narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

591. Against the backdrop of a long-standing lack of official sources of reliable information on illicit drug production, trafficking and abuse among countries in the region, there have been several media and anecdotal reports regarding the widespread abuse of counterfeit Captagon tablets (containing amphetamine) among all parties engaged in armed violence in the Syrian Arab Republic.

592. The drug control situation in the region remains complex. The most recent estimates reported in the executive summary of the *Afghanistan opium survey 2015* suggest that the situation concerning illicit opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, a significant factor for drug control efforts in the region, may be improving. Nevertheless, drug trafficking and illicit manufacture of heroin continue to be matters of concern for Governments in transit and destination countries. The completion in December 2014 of the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan may further affect the security situation in the country, which, in turn, could have implications for the drug control situation.

593. Significantly, for the first time in six years, the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015*, for which the executive summary is available, notes that there has been a decrease in the estimated total area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, which in 2015 totalled 183,000 hectares (ha). That represents a decrease compared with 2014, when cultivation reached record levels, at 224,000 ha. However, the area of cultivation in 2015 remains the fourth highest amount reported since the beginning of estimations in 1994. The extent of the decrease (19 per cent) may have been augmented by a recent change in the estimation methodology: the reliability of data is said to have improved significantly from 2014 to 2015. However, the results of different years must be compared with caution. The estimated potential opium production in the country decreased from 6,400 tons in 2014 to 3,300 tons in 2015. Similarly, average opium yield decreased to 18.3 kilograms per hectare, compared with 28.7 kilograms per hectare in 2014. At the same time, the total verified Governor-led eradication of opium poppy increased to 3,760 ha eradicated in 2015 in comparison with 2,693 ha in 2014.

594. Central Asian countries reported a decrease in seizures in 2014 of opiates originating in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, for criminal groups engaged in drug trafficking, the subregion remains attractive as a channel for smuggling opiates from Afghanistan to markets in the Russian Federation and Europe. Further, the abolition of customs controls at the borders between the countries in the Eurasian Economic Union, comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation, may pose an additional challenge for the drug law enforcement authorities.

595. Similar to previous years, almost all illicit drugs are available in the Middle East subregion, which drug trafficking networks mainly use as a transit area for the smuggling of cocaine, heroin and amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS). Various seizure reports suggest that a trend of increasing traffic in cocaine emerged in the Middle East in 2014. According to various reports, cocaine seizures increased, in particular in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

## 2. Regional cooperation

596. The London Conference on Afghanistan, held on 4 December 2014, brought together representatives of more than 50 States, multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations and representatives of Afghan civil society to discuss development, governance and

<sup>39</sup> E/INCB/2014/1, paras. 228-238.

stability in Afghanistan, including issues related to drug control. The Conference provided a platform for the Government of Afghanistan to set out its vision for reform and for the international community to demonstrate its support and solidarity for Afghanistan.

597. The summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), held in Moscow on 23 December 2014 and attended by the Presidents of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan, adopted the CSTO anti-drug strategy for the period 2015-2020.

598. At a meeting in Dushanbe in May 2015, the heads of the drug law enforcement agencies of CSTO member countries discussed the situation in Afghanistan and decided to continue their cooperation in tackling the manufacture and distribution of new psychoactive substances and to prepare a plan of action for the period 2016-2017.

599. At its summit held in Ufa, Russian Federation, in July 2015, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Council of Heads of State decided to accept the accession of India and Pakistan to the Organization. The Organization's main goals are the provision and maintenance of peace, security and stability among its members, including drug control. At the summit, the Organization adopted a development strategy outlining priority areas until 2025, including issues related to regional stability and drug control, and plans to address drug challenges were incorporated into the declaration of the Council of Heads of State issued at the summit. The Organization's member States expressed concern at the scale of narcotic drug manufacture in Afghanistan, which posed a threat to development and security in the region.

600. The Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre, a standing intergovernmental body for combating trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, continues to serve as a regional platform for exchanging information and experiences on countering drug trafficking and promoting law enforcement cooperation.

601. Several regional and subregional organizations such as the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and its Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs and the League of Arab States, including its Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior and the Council of Arab Ministers for Health, continue to actively promote cooperation and harmonization of efforts among Arab countries, including in the area of drug control.

602. In June 2015, the Board participated in the 11th international conference on drug control, organized by the Dubai Police. The event, attended by representatives of Ministries of the Interior and counter-narcotics agencies from countries of the Middle East and North Africa and of the Gulf Cooperation Council, focused on access to controlled substances for licit purposes while preventing diversion and abuse, and conducted a workshop to guide national delegations in identifying recommendations for incorporation into national strategies.

603. The international anti-drug forum organized by the Qatari Ministry of Interior in Doha in May 2015 recommended measures to tackle emerging drug trafficking trends in the region through the establishment of an early warning observatory and the inclusion of legal provisions to criminalize the promotion of illicit drug use through the Internet.

### 3. National legislation, policy and action

604. In order to counter the rapidly developing illicit market for synthetic drugs and the emergence of new psychoactive substances, the abuse of which is becoming a matter of concern in West Asia, some countries in the region have amended their national legislation and have begun to place some new psychoactive substances under national control. The Government of Armenia amended its national legislation in May 2015, placing 114 new psychoactive substances on the list of nationally controlled substances.

605. In March 2014, the Government of Georgia adopted a package of legislative amendments, pursuant to which illicit trafficking in pharmaceutical preparations containing codeine, ephedrine, norephedrine or pseudoephedrine is now subject to criminal prosecution.

606. In Kazakhstan, the new penal code and the code of criminal procedure, which entered into force in January 2015, stipulate criminal liability for offences related to trafficking in analogues of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. In addition, the law on narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their analogues and precursors, the main drug control legislation of Kazakhstan, was also strengthened and supplemented with provisions on analogue scheduling in July 2014.

607. In 2014, the Government of Kyrgyzstan approved a counter-narcotics strategy and implementation plan which defined measures and activities in the field of drug control for the period 2014-2019. The strategy seeks to

promote healthy lifestyles among the country's young people through different types of activities, including awareness-raising campaigns. The strategy also aims to strengthen the law enforcement agencies of Kyrgyzstan and enhance drug demand reduction and prevention efforts, including the implementation of tertiary prevention measures such as needle exchange, counselling, the provision of health care, and educational activities, as well as treatment and rehabilitation programmes.

608. In order to prevent the abuse of substances not under international control, Turkey placed 246 new psychoactive substances under national control in 2014. In addition, article 19 of the national law on the control of drugs was supplemented with provisions on generic scheduling in January 2015.

609. The Government of Israel has taken legislative measures to curb the growing market for new psychoactive substances and their popularity among the youth in particular. In 2014, new synthetic cannabinoids and their derivatives were listed as narcotic drugs in the national legislation.

610. In June 2015, the United Arab Emirates health authorities recommended the inclusion of three plant materials, namely kava (*Piper methysticum*), kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*) and *Salvia divinorum* in Table 4 of that country's Federal Law No. 14 of 1995 (article 2) on the countermeasures against narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

611. In the United Arab Emirates, efforts are also being made to standardize procedures for prescriptions involving controlled substances, restricted pharmaceuticals and psychoactive drugs, including innovative measures such as the establishment of an electronic system for the issuance of prescriptions and the dispensing of medicines containing controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

612. In February 2015, Turkmenistan strengthened its main drug control law on narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors through an amendment establishing that amnesty may not be granted to individuals who have been convicted of crimes related to trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or precursors.

613. In Jordan, the Security Directorate and the Ministry of Labour entered into agreements to secure employment for inmates, including those incarcerated for drug-related sentences, upon completion of their sentence period or treatment period. Furthermore, some reforms within the

Jordanian social security institution will broaden the social security system to include rehabilitation centres.

## 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

### (a) Narcotic drugs

614. Cannabis production, trafficking and abuse continue to be widespread in West Asia. Cannabis plants, seeds and oil are frequently seized in the region and remain the most widely abused substances. Afghanistan continues to be considered one of the largest illicit producers of cannabis resin worldwide. While the trend of illicit cannabis cultivation and production is believed to be stable in that country, on the basis of the results of annual surveys conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime between 2009 and 2011, systematic data collection efforts have not been undertaken since. Further, there are continued reports of illicit cultivation of cannabis in the Bekaa valley of Lebanon, where eradication efforts have been sustained.

615. According to the data available to the Board, cannabis seizures increased in West Asia in 2014, with the exception of Israel, where quantities of both cannabis herb and cannabis resin seizures decreased from 2013 to 2014 (from 38 kilograms (kg) to 7 kg of cannabis herb and from 320 kg to 6 kg of cannabis resin). The countries reporting the largest seizures of cannabis in 2014 were, in descending order of seizure amount, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Lebanon. According to the data provided to the Board by the authorities of Saudi Arabia, seizures of cannabis herb in the country have nearly doubled: from 23 tons in 2011 to nearly 38 tons in 2014.

616. Large shipments of cannabis destined for Libya are regularly stopped in Lebanon, where almost 3 tons of cannabis herb were seized in 2014, a considerable increase compared with the 164 kg seized in 2013. Furthermore, in early 2015, Lebanese police had already seized a total of 2 tons of cannabis on the way to Libya. Similarly, nearly 7 tons of cannabis, of which about 20 per cent was cannabis resin, were smuggled across land borders into Jordan, where they were seized in 2014.

617. The executive summary of the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015* estimated the total area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in that country to be 183,000 ha in 2015. Even taking into account the impact of methodological changes introduced between 2014 and 2015, this figure represents a marked decrease from the previous

year, when cultivation had reached record levels at 224,000 ha. While 2015 marked the first decrease since 2009, cultivation levels remained high in absolute terms. The estimated area of illicit opium poppy cultivation in 2015 was nevertheless the fourth highest since estimations began in 1994, surpassed only by the estimated amounts for 2007, 2013 and 2014. A corresponding decrease in Afghanistan's estimated potential production of opium was recorded: 3,300 tons (48 per cent less than in 2014). The low production estimates are believed to be a result of the reduction in total area under cultivation, combined with a significantly reduced average opium yield per hectare. The reduced average yield was reportedly owing to a lack of water in certain regions, which may have affected plant density. In 2015, the average opium yield was 18.3 kilograms per hectare, compared with 28.7 kilograms per hectare in 2014 (a 36 per cent decrease).

618. In 2015, 97 per cent of the total illicit opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan took place in the eastern, southern and western regions of the country, which include the country's most insecure provinces. The same three regions experienced the greatest relative decrease in opium poppy cultivation levels in 2015 (decreases of 40 per cent, 20 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, compared with 2014), while steep increases were observed in the central and northern regions (increases of 38 per cent and 154 per cent, respectively). Poppy cultivation levels in the north-eastern region of the country remained stable. The extent to which these comparative figures might be attributable to the recent change in estimation methodology must, however, be borne in mind. At the province level, Helmand continued to account for more than 47 per cent of all illicit opium cultivation in Afghanistan.

619. The Government of Afghanistan continued its efforts to eradicate illicit opium poppy cultivation in the country, increasing total eradication of opium poppy to 3,760 ha in 2015. However, the total eradicated area remains very limited in absolute terms compared with the total estimated area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan (1-2 per cent).

620. The route from Afghanistan through the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the shortest trafficking routes from West Asia into Europe, with significant amounts of Afghan opiates seized there every year, primarily opium and heroin. Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran has remained the country in the world with the largest quantity of opium seized: 393 tons in 2014. In total, the country's authorities seized 511 tons of illicit drugs in 2014, compared with 555 tons in 2013.

621. Heroin smuggling routes through the southern Caucasus are marked by constant changes. According to data provided to the Board, seizures of heroin in Georgia increased from 117 kg in 2013 to more than 591 kg in 2014, and seizures of heroin in Azerbaijan totalled nearly 296 kg in 2014, compared with 101 kg in 2013. Significant increases in heroin seizures were also reported in Armenia, where over 850 kg were seized in 2014, in contrast to the low levels of seizures made in the country in the previous years (less than 5 grams were seized in 2012 and in 2013).

622. Drug seizures in Central Asia have followed a decreasing trend. In particular, the amount of heroin seized in the subregion decreased by 24.6 per cent, from 1.6 tons in 2013 to 1.2 tons in 2014. The amount of heroin seized in Kazakhstan decreased by 48 per cent (from 754 kg to 392 kg) and by 12.4 per cent in Uzbekistan (from 121.6 kg to 106.5 kg). Only Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan reported a moderate increase in seizures of heroin, from 247 kg to 285 kg and from 483 kg to 507 kg, respectively. In Turkmenistan, seizures of heroin decreased from 12.6 kg in 2013 to 1.8 kg in 2014.

623. Countries in the region continued their cooperation in countering illicit drug trafficking within the framework of CSTO. In particular, the counter-narcotics operation "Channel Patrol", conducted on 18-22 May 2015, resulted in the seizure of more than 12 tons of narcotics, including over 7 tons of opium, approximately 3 tons of hashish, more than 1 ton of heroin and 126 kg of cannabis herb. The operation involved cooperation among the law enforcement agencies of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan, with the involvement of the agencies of Afghanistan, China and Iran (Islamic Republic of) and INTERPOL as observers.

624. Similarly, the information available to the Board shows that heroin seizures decreased among countries in the Middle East in 2014. Heroin seizures, which increased significantly in several countries of the region in 2013, decreased in 2014, particularly in, in decreasing order of seizure amounts, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Israel. In July 2015, a joint security operation of Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates resulted in the dismantling of a major heroin ring, the arrest of 40 drug traffickers and the seizure of 150 kg of heroin.

625. Data available to the Board indicate that annual opium seizures in the Middle East subregion in 2014 were also small, ranging from 34 grams in Jordan to about 4 kg in Saudi Arabia.

626. The extent of cocaine trafficking in West Asia continued to increase in 2014, with some countries in

the region reporting a marked increase in drug seizures. For example, Saudi Arabia reported an increase in seizures of cocaine, rising from 4.6 kg in 2013 to 533.5 kg in 2014, and Jordan reported an increase from 12 kg in 2013 to 319 kg in 2014.

627. As in previous years, the territory of the United Arab Emirates served as a transit area for traffickers smuggling drugs from South America to Africa and Asia. In June 2015, cocaine traffickers who had transited Dubai, United Arab Emirates, were arrested in Nigeria, South Africa and Turkey.

628. Further, increasing quantities of South American cocaine, in particular cocaine originating in Mexico and destined for Israel and Lebanon, are being seized while the drug is in transit through Jordan and Saudi Arabia; most of the cocaine is trafficked by sea, using containers, and seizures take place at seaports; 320 kg were seized by the Lebanese authorities during the first eight months of 2014, and 319 kg were intercepted by the Jordanian authorities in 2014, compared with 12 kg in 2013.

## (b) Psychotropic substances

629. According to seizure data, pharmaceutical preparations containing psychotropic substances are trafficked in most countries in West Asia. In particular, abuse of sedatives and anxiolytics (for example, diazepam and nitrazepam) in the form of tablets is widespread, which may indicate weaknesses in national systems for the control of the networks for licit distribution of prescription medicines containing controlled substances. **INCB calls upon the countries concerned to increase their vigilance with respect to diversion, trafficking and abuse of such preparations and to reinforce controls on domestic distribution channels for pharmaceutical preparations containing controlled substances.**

630. Seizures of psychotropic substances in Central Asian countries remain relatively low. In 2014, authorities of Kazakhstan reported the seizure of 13,983 vials and 3,496 tablets of psychotropic substances. The law enforcement authorities of Tajikistan in the same year reported the seizure of 2,590 MDMA tablets, 2,025 phenobarbital tablets and 10 tablets of diazepam. The total amount of pharmaceutical preparations seized in Kyrgyzstan amounted to 3,604 grams in 2014.

631. Trafficking and abuse of ATS have been reported by a growing number of countries in West Asia, particularly abuse of amphetamine, methamphetamine and

MDMA, with a marked increase in abuse of “ecstasy”-type substances noted in Lebanon in 2014. For 2014, there were reports of significant seizures of MDMA (“ecstasy”) in Israel and amphetamine in Saudi Arabia.

632. The quantity of reported seizures of ATS in the Islamic Republic of Iran decreased considerably. The amount of seized ATS was 2,644 kg in 2014, a decrease of 28 per cent compared with the previous year. The number of clandestine drug laboratories dismantled in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2014 (340 laboratories) was a decrease of 24 per cent from 2013 (445 laboratories).

633. Seizures of counterfeit Captagon tablets (believed to contain amphetamine) continue to be reported by most countries in the Middle East. In particular, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic reported that seizures of amphetamine illicitly manufactured under the brand name “Captagon” in 2014 were higher than in previous years. Most of the Captagon tablets are smuggled across the non-official border crossings between Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, transiting Jordan, with Saudi Arabia as the main final destination. In October 2015, 2 tons of Captagon destined for Saudi Arabia were reportedly seized at the international airport in Beirut.

634. Trafficking and abuse of amphetamine among countries in the Middle East continued to be reported. Saudi Arabia is among the countries that registered a significant increase in the amount of amphetamine tablets seized, as the country seized more than 100 million tablets in 2014, compared with 57 million in 2013. Furthermore, almost 32 million amphetamine tablets were seized in Jordan in 2014.

635. In March 2014, a special joint operation between the drug enforcement administrations of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain resulted in the dismantling of a trafficking ring and the seizure of 22 million amphetamine tablets.

636. In 2014, Jordanian authorities seized more than 43 million tablets made using procyclidine, an antiparkinsonian agent, obtained from Kemadrin tablets; the seized tablets had originated in India and been smuggled by air. Kemadrin is apparently mixed with other substances to produce hallucinogenic effects. It appears that Jordan is used as a transit country as more than 98 per cent of the drug was destined for Iraq.

## (c) Precursors

637. Seizures of acetic anhydride, the key precursor chemical used in the illicit manufacture of heroin,

declined in Afghanistan in 2014. The change of trafficking routes and modi operandi used by traffickers were among the possible reasons for the decrease in seizures. Further, the black market price of acetic anhydride in Afghanistan, which is an indicator of the chemical's availability on the market, increased slightly in 2014, likely due to an increase in demand caused by the high levels of opium production in the country. INCB urges all relevant stakeholders of Member States in the region to increase the exchange of drug-related intelligence among their national competent law enforcement authorities, including through the relevant regional intelligence centres such as the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre, the Joint Planning Cell of Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan and the Gulf Cooperation Council's Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs.

638. The territories of Central Asian countries continued to be exploited by trafficking organizations involved in the diversion of and trafficking in precursor chemicals. The total amount of precursors seized in Kazakhstan reached 729 tons in 2014. The law enforcement authorities of Kyrgyzstan reported seizures of precursor chemicals totalling 6,197 tons.

639. A comprehensive review of the situation with respect to the control of precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the region can be found in the report of the Board for 2015 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

#### (d) Substances not under international control

640. Abuse of substances not under international control, such as ketamine and khat, have continued to be reported by some countries in the region. The abuse of tramadol, a synthetic opioid not under international control, continued to be reported by some countries in the region. New drug abuse patterns for *Salvia divinorum* and synthetic cannabinoids were also reported in Lebanon.

641. Seizures of substances not under international control continued to be reported in Turkey in 2014. A total of 773 kg of synthetic cannabinoids were seized in the country. Georgia reported a 90 per cent decrease in consumption of new psychoactive substances, known locally as "bios" and "spices", in the period June-December 2014 following the adoption of the new law on new psychoactive substances in May 2014.

## 5. Abuse and treatment

642. According to latest available data, for 2012, the number of drug users in Afghanistan was estimated to be between approximately 1.3 million and 1.6 million, and 2.65 per cent of the total population were abusing opiates. In contrast to many other countries, drug abuse in Afghanistan appears to be highest among older segments of society (9 per cent among those aged 45 years and older). The overall annual prevalence of drug use in Afghanistan is estimated to be 6.6 per cent, while in urban areas drug use prevalence is estimated to be about 5.3 per cent. Although the number of treatment centres in Afghanistan increased from 43 in 2009 to 102 in 2012 and to 108 in 2013, drug treatment capacity in Afghanistan still covers less than 8 per cent of opium and heroin users.

643. The number of drug users in the Islamic Republic of Iran was estimated to be about 1,325,000 in 2014, which is 2.26 per cent of the adult population of the country. The Government also estimated that some 750,000 persons had received treatment for drug-related problems. There are currently more than 4,500 private and around 600 public treatment and rehabilitation centres in the country.

644. According to official statistics, in 2014 there were a total of 65,216 persons registered as drug users in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, compared with a total of 73,345 persons in 2013. The number of officially registered drug-dependent persons in Kazakhstan in 2014 stood at 34,221 persons, which is a significant decrease compared with 40,224 persons in 2013. In Kyrgyzstan, 9,024 persons were officially registered as drug-dependent in 2014, which is 8.8 per cent less than in 2013. The number of people suffering from drug addiction remained stable in Tajikistan in 2014. According to official statistics, there were 7,279 registered drug-dependant individuals in the country, of which 80.8 per cent were abusing heroin. A total of 14,692 drug-dependent persons were officially registered in Uzbekistan in 2014, a decrease of 9.2 per cent from the previous year.

645. Despite the lack of reliable estimates concerning the age range and the number of drug abusers, drug abuse in the Middle East is a growing problem. In Lebanon, for example, it is estimated that about 2,500 people need treatment for drug abuse. Among the 3,016 patients admitted in treatment centres in Lebanon in 2014, 89 per cent abused cannabis, 51 per cent abused heroin and 42 per cent reported abusing cocaine. Other substances of abuse of those patients included ATS, benzodiazepines, hallucinogens, GHB, ketamine, *Salvia divinorum* and tramadol.

646. In view of the lack of comprehensive and reliable data on the extent of drug abuse in the region, INCB urges the Governments concerned to assess the situation in their country by setting up drug monitoring systems and conducting population-based surveys on the extent of drug abuse, in order to develop and implement the appropriate prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes.

647. Access to drug dependence treatment is hampered by the limited number of specialized medical facilities in the region, in addition to the stigma associated with drug dependence. Nevertheless, the Board notes that a number of countries in the region established or are in the process of establishing treatment facilities and services to address the negative health and social consequences of drug abuse. INCB is hopeful that this will improve the availability of drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation services.

648. In May 2014, under the auspices of the Palestinian Ministry of Health, an opioid substitution therapy clinic was opened in Ramallah, in which methadone is provided under medical supervision. Prior to the opening of the centre, health professionals conducted a study visit to opioid substitution therapy in Jerusalem and training in collaboration with the Nazareth methadone centre. By mid-June 2015, there were 52 patients benefiting from the centre.

649. The Board also notes that the opioid substitution therapy programme launched in Lebanon in 2011 is now fully operational and serves 1,375 patients, double the number registered by mid-2013. Nearly 95 per cent of the patients are male and more than half are between the ages of 26 and 35. Comprehensive care is provided, including medical treatment, psychiatric evaluation, psychological and social assistance.

## D. Europe

### 1. Major developments

650. Europe continues to be an important market for drugs produced locally and drugs smuggled from other regions, in particular Latin America, West Asia and North Africa. The synthetic drugs manufactured in Western and Central Europe supply illicit markets both in that sub-region and in other parts of the world. In recent years, Eastern Europe has emerged as a transit and destination area for cocaine, although the amounts of cocaine seized in the subregion remain relatively small.

651. In Western and Central Europe, cannabis is the most commonly seized drug, accounting for about 80 per cent of all seizures. Cocaine ranks second overall, accounting for more than double the number of reported seizures of amphetamines or heroin. The number of seizures of MDMA (“ecstasy”), was relatively low in Western and Central Europe.

652. By March 2015, more than 450 new psychoactive substances were being monitored by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). During 2014 alone, 101 new psychoactive substances were reported for the first time via the European Union early warning system. The increase in the trafficking and abuse of those substances continued to pose a public health challenge in many European countries.

653. Both the purity and the potency of all the drugs of abuse commonly found in Western and Central Europe have increased. The reasons for that increase are complex, and may include advances in technology and market competition. In some countries that produce high-potency cannabis, the share of that substance on the domestic market has increased in recent years. New data indicate that the potency of cannabis resin smuggled in the region has also increased. Recently, EMCDDA and Europol alerted the European Union community to health risks associated with the consumption of high-purity “ecstasy” and tablets containing *para*-methoxymethamphetamine (PMMA) but sold to users as “ecstasy”. In some countries, high-quality synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones offered in the illicit market compete with low-quality and relatively more expensive most commonly abused drugs.

654. The Internet and social media have become important tools in marketing drugs. According to EMCDDA more than 600 websites selling new psychoactive substances, sometimes in amounts in the kilograms, were identified in the European Union in 2013 and 2014. Assessment of the size of the online drug market is not easy and there is a need for further awareness-raising regarding the growing potential role of the Internet and use of cryptocurrencies, such as bitcoin, in drug supply and marketing with respect to both established drugs and new psychoactive substances. There is also a need for a review of existing regulatory models to perform in a global and virtual context.

### 2. Regional cooperation

655. The countries of South-Eastern Europe continued to intensify their regional law enforcement cooperation