

B. Africa

A growing number of countries in Africa are now permitting the cultivation and export of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes, and some countries have authorized the use of cannabis for medical purposes.

The lack of data from many countries in Africa on the trafficking in and use of drugs remains a major impediment to fully assessing the drug situation in the region and hinders the ability of countries and the international community to respond to these challenges.

1. Major developments

363. Four countries in Africa have estimates approved by INCB on the cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes. Some other countries in Africa have enacted legislative and policy changes with regard to cannabis. Most of those changes would allow for the cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes, although in some cases only for export, not domestic use. In addition, some countries have modified their schedules of control to reduce or remove restrictions on the use of certain cannabis-based preparations for medical purposes.

364. **The Board wishes to recall that Governments that permit the cultivation of cannabis have an obligation to establish control measures in accordance with the 1961 Convention as amended. Such measures include the establishment of an agency responsible for designating areas and issuing licences for cultivating, purchasing and taking physical possession of such crops as soon as possible and having the exclusive right of importing, exporting and wholesale trading and maintaining stocks other than those held by manufacturers.**

365. ECOWAS released the report of the West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use in late 2019, the first-ever report on drug trafficking and drug use in West Africa, with the support of UNODC and the European Union. The report provides an analysis of drug trafficking and drug use data provided by the Network's focal points for the period 2014–2017.

366. The Ministry of Health of Morocco released a national protocol to address drug overdoses by persons who inject drugs in the country. The protocol is aimed at providing information for health officials, officials outside the health sector and other relevant actors across the country who might have to deal with a drug overdose situation.

367. Following the adoption of the Narcotic Control Commission Bill 2019, Ghana has decriminalized some minor drug use offences and refocused its drug control efforts using a health-based approach for persons who use drugs.

368. In August 2020, the Government of South Africa submitted to the Parliament the Cannabis for Private Purposes Bill of 2020, amending its Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act (1992) to allow the cultivation and use of cannabis by adults for personal use following a 2018 decision of the country's Constitutional Court. Combined with the amendments made to the Medicines and Related Substances Act of 1965 in May 2020, the non-medical use and cultivation of cannabis by adults in private spaces is decriminalized in South Africa. Public use of and trafficking in cannabis remain punishable offences.

369. Despite the lack of data from many countries, the information that is available suggests that Africa continues to face major challenges regarding trafficking in drugs. Countries in West and North Africa continue to seize shipments of cocaine trafficked from South America destined for Europe. Cannabis continues to be widely trafficked within Africa, while cannabis resin is heavily trafficked in North Africa, both for sale in the subregion and for trafficking onward to Europe. Trafficking in heroin remains a major concern for African countries in the Indian Ocean region, whereas countries in other parts of Africa seize only small quantities of the drug. While no major seizures of illicitly manufactured or falsified tramadol have been reported in the region, available drug use prevalence data suggest that the substance continues to be trafficked.

370. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of countries and international organizations took measures to ensure that persons affected by drug use disorders were able to continue receiving treatment and to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission during such treatment.

371. In Nigeria, UNODC partnered with health workers across the country, establishing a network to provide assistance by telephone to drug users. In addition, the European Union, through the UNODC project entitled "Response to drugs and related organized crime", provided personal protective equipment to 25 drug treatment centres across Nigeria to ensure that health workers and patients were protected while services are provided.

372. The Ministry of Health of Algeria, in cooperation with UNODC and UNAIDS, provided material support, including personal protective equipment, to several non-governmental organizations, allowing them to reach drug

users individually while minimizing their risk of contracting COVID-19 at hospitals and treatment centres. Similarly, UNODC supplied personal protective equipment to a major drug treatment centre in Dakar so that patients were protected while receiving treatment.

373. The Government of Kenya opened an additional methadone dispensary in Shimo Le Tewa Prison to relieve congestion and reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission among prisoners being treated for drug use. The Moroccan Association of Addictology issued guidelines for drug treatment professionals to ensure that drug treatment services continued during the COVID pandemic.

2. Regional cooperation

374. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union, at its 905th meeting, in January 2020, issued a statement regarding the political and security situation in Guinea-Bissau. While noting the political progress made in the country, the Council appealed to the international community to support Guinea-Bissau in confronting drug trafficking, which could threaten efforts to ensure stability, democratic governance and the rule of law in the country.

375. As part of a review of the political and security situation in Guinea-Bissau, the Security Council, on 28 February 2020, adopted resolution 2512 (2020), in which, *inter alia*, it called upon authorities in the country and the international community at large to step up efforts to combat drug trafficking and other transnational crimes. In that resolution, the Council also requested the Secretary-General, through collaboration with international donors, to ensure that the UNODC country office in Guinea-Bissau be sufficiently resourced in order to assist the country in its efforts to counter drug trafficking following the withdrawal of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau.

376. As of February 2020, three additional countries had signed the treaty for the establishment of the African Medicines Agency, bringing the number of signatories of the treaty to 14 countries, 1 less than the 15 required for the treaty to enter into force. Once established, the Agency is expected to coordinate the regulatory system for medicines and drugs among States members of the African Union, provide regulatory guidance to countries and facilitate further cooperation among countries to ensure access to safe and effective medical products in the region.

377. The third annual meeting of the African Medicines Quality Forum took place in Abuja from

25 to 28 February 2020. The meeting was hosted by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control of Nigeria in collaboration with the African Union and other international organizations. The meeting brought together drug control organizations from many African countries and scientists and stakeholders from various health- and drug-related agencies to deliberate on a quality-assurance model for drugs and medicines for countries in Africa.

378. During the second half of 2020, INCB coordinated access to IONICS and GRIDS intelligence and conducted 10 training sessions for law and regulatory enforcement officers from 11 countries in the region. A total of 113 officers from Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, the Sudan and Tunisia participated in training on monitoring new psychoactive substances and emerging synthetic opioids, as well as training in the safe handling of fentanyl-related substances and interdiction approaches. The officials also received practical training on the Board's secure communications platforms that allow for the exchange of information on dangerous substances that are not internationally controlled.

3. National legislation, policy and action

379. Several countries in Africa have revised their national legislation to permit the cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes for export or to permit the import and use of certain cannabis preparations for medical use. In some cases, control measures for cannabis plant have changed, and some countries have changed the placement of THC and CBD in their schedules of control.

380. In addition to cannabis-related legislative and policy reforms, several countries have launched new national drug control plans to better address their respective drug control problems. Further, Ghana has updated its legislation, revising its penal code to decriminalize minor drug use offences.

381. At the end of 2019, Togo launched a new five-year plan for the period 2020–2024 to counter drug use and trafficking in the country, allocating financing to implement the plan. The plan is aimed at strengthening coordination among drug control bodies in the country and enabling authorities to freeze and seize the assets of criminal organizations.

382. The President of Seychelles launched the country's new National Drug Control Master Plan 2019–2023 in

December 2019. The plan is focused on improving the well-being and safety of the population at large. The President noted that demand reduction and treatment for persons who use drugs were of critical importance in combating the country's drug problem.

383. In February 2020, the Government of Seychelles adopted the Misuse of Drugs (Cannabidiol-based Products for Medical Purposes) Regulations 2020, amending the country's drug control legislation to permit the use of CBD for medical purposes. Under the amendment, duly authorized medical practitioners are permitted to prescribe CBD-based medicines for qualifying medical conditions. The amendment does not specify which qualifying medical conditions may be treated with CBD but empowers the country's Public Health Commissioner to determine them by decree.

384. The Parliament of Malawi approved the Cannabis Regulation Bill of 2020, in February 2020, permitting the cultivation of cannabis for medical, industrial and scientific purposes. The bill also establishes a national cannabis agency to issue licences to cultivate cannabis and regulate the industry within Malawi. According to official reports, the cultivation of cannabis under the framework of the Cannabis Regulation Bill could be permitted as early as 2021.

385. In March 2020, the Parliament of Ghana approved the Narcotics Control Commission Bill 2019, which introduces a major overhaul of the country's drug control legislation and policy. Under the bill, a health-based approach is emphasized in addressing drug use, and some minor drug use offences are decriminalized. In addition, the bill alters the country's institutional framework for drug control by giving the country's Narcotics Control Board the status of a Commission, with enhanced powers. Also under the bill, the cultivation of cannabis for the production of CBD for medical purposes is permitted, and CBD is removed from national control.

386. In an official communication to the Board in April 2020, Uganda reported that it had begun permitting the cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes. The Government had drafted guidelines to assist the Minister of Health in determining which cultivators should be granted licences to cultivate cannabis. However, final approval of the guidelines and the establishment of the national cannabis agency were delayed due to lockdown measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

387. In May 2020, the Minister of Health of South Africa issued Notice R586, further amending the schedules

of the country's Medicines and Related Substances Act of 1965 and codifying changes in the control of cannabis-related substances made by the Minister in May 2019. Under the Notice, cannabis plant, THC and dronabinol were removed from schedule 7 (the country's highest level of control) of the Act. Certain low-dose CBD preparations from raw plant material were descheduled entirely. Also under Notice R586, cannabis plant raw material was descheduled if it is cultivated, possessed or consumed by an adult, in private for personal consumption. According to the Ministry of Health, those amendments bring the Act into line with a 2018 decision of the Constitutional Court of South Africa.

388. In a related development, on 5 August 2020, the South African Cabinet submitted to Parliament the Cannabis for Private Purposes Bill of 2020. The bill, together with the above-mentioned changes made to the Medicines and Related Substances Act of 1965, amends the country's Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act of 1992 (Act No. 140 of 1992) in relation to the personal cultivation of cannabis. The Cannabis for Private Purposes Bill of 2020 is aimed at bringing the country's drug control legislation into line with a decision by the Constitutional Court of South Africa in 2018 that struck down portions of that legislation. The Court suspended its ruling for 24 months to give the Government time to amend the country's drug control laws to permit the private cultivation and consumption of cannabis by adults. At present, private personal cultivation and consumption of cannabis is decriminalized in South Africa. The sale of cannabis and consumption of the drug in public remain illegal and subject to punishable offences.

389. In June 2020, South Africa launched the country's new National Drug Master Plan for the period 2019–2024, the fourth such plan put into effect in the country. The Plan was developed following an evaluation of the country's plan for the period 2013–2017, which had led to recommendations for key authorities at several levels of government in the country to be strengthened and for a focus on evidence-based interventions to prevent and treat substance use. The National Drug Master Plan includes seven goals to address the country's drug problem, including ensuring the availability of controlled substances for licit medical use and countering the expanding use of new psychoactive substances. In addition, the Master Plan contains a reference to the 2018 ruling by the Constitutional Court of South Africa permitting the private use of cannabis, and it is noted therein that, while the Government would modify national legislation to comply with the ruling, the Master Plan remained a framework to curb cannabis use in the country.

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

390. Available information suggests that Africa remains a major transit region for drug trafficking, as well as a growing market for drugs. Seizure data suggest that, as has been the trend in recent years, West and North Africa continue to be a key hub for the trafficking of cocaine from South America to Europe. Seizures of cannabis and cannabis resin are reported by all countries for which data are available, and there is significant trafficking in those drugs in North Africa, both for sale within the subregion and for trafficking onward to Europe. The seizures of falsified and non-pharmaceutical tramadol, an opioid analgesic not under international control, reported by some countries in West Africa suggest that the trafficking in that drug continues to be a challenge for the subregion.

391. Law enforcement authorities in Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco and Tunisia each reported multiple seizures of cocaine in 2020, seizures being effected in ports or on ships in their territorial waters. In one significant seizure in February 2020, the naval forces of Côte d'Ivoire seized more than 400 kg of cocaine from a ship in the country's coastal waters. Several other countries in other parts of Africa also reported seizures in the first part of 2020, although of small quantities. In comparison with 2019, when Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia provided official reports regarding their seizures of cocaine, the lack of seizure data for 2020 from some parts of Africa has made it difficult to determine the trend for trafficking in cocaine. Notably, although several significant seizures were made in West and North Africa in 2020, they were not as large as the multi-ton seizures of cocaine effected by the authorities of Cabo Verde in January and August 2019.

392. Cannabis continues to be the most-trafficked drug in Africa and is also trafficked to Europe, mostly from North Africa, with reports that in some cases the trafficking route goes through countries of the western Sahel. As in previous years, most trafficking in cannabis resin occurred in North Africa, with Morocco reporting seizing a total of more than 75 tons of that substance, the result of numerous interdictions in the first half of 2020. Similarly, authorities in Algeria conducted several interdictions, seizing a total of more than 18 tons of cannabis resin since late 2019. Senegal reported a significant seizure of 5.1 tons of cannabis resin. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency of Nigeria reported seizing a total of 7.4 tons of cannabis in 2020. Regarding trafficking in cannabis herb, Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Ghana, Mauritius, Namibia, Senegal, Seychelles, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia

reported seizures ranging from several hundred kilograms to hundreds of tons, quantities that are comparable to those seized in previous years.

393. Seizure data suggest that trafficking in heroin continues to be a major issue in African countries of the Indian Ocean region, including Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and the United Republic of Tanzania, but trafficking in that drug is reported in other parts of Africa as well. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Morocco all reported total seizures of heroin ranging from a few kilograms to several hundred kilograms in 2019. The lack of data makes it difficult to determine year-to-year trends in the trafficking in heroin in Africa, as the amounts seized have risen somewhat in a few countries but fallen in others.

394. For countries in the region, there are only very limited official data on trafficking in other drugs for the present reporting period. Several countries in Africa reported seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants, related precursor chemicals and other substances, although in smaller quantities than the other drugs discussed above. Seizures of "ecstasy" and other hallucinogens were reported by Morocco and Tunisia.

395. Trafficking in tramadol, a synthetic opioid not under international control, including illicitly manufactured non-pharmaceutical preparations containing that substance, continues to pose a challenge for the region. Few official data are available regarding trafficking in tramadol during the reporting period. However, data on the prevalence of use of tramadol, both pharmaceutical and falsified tramadol, suggest that trafficking in the substance remains an issue for the region.

5. Prevention and treatment

396. The lack of prevalence data and information on drug use in Africa continues to be an impediment to determining the extent of drug use. It also hinders Governments and the international community as they seek to respond effectively by means of evidence-based drug use prevention and treatment programmes. Nonetheless, on the basis of the limited information available, drug use in the region appears to be increasing, and some countries report drug use rates for some drugs that are higher than the global prevalence rate. Cannabis continues to be the main drug used in Africa, along with tramadol, which is used in some parts of Africa.

397. **The Board reiterates its call upon all States in the region to develop mechanisms to improve the collection of information on drug use prevalence with the aim of**

developing drug control and treatment strategies that are evidence-based and tailored to each country's specific needs.

398. In 2019, the Ministry of Health of Morocco released a national protocol to prevent and manage drug overdoses by persons who use drugs. The goal of the protocol is to provide guidance to health practitioners, emergency responders and non-health professionals who may be faced with an overdose situation. Implementation will be dependent on the provision of training for relevant people, information-sharing, the distribution of naloxone and the granting of authority for non-health-care professionals to administer naloxone in response to an overdose situation outside a hospital setting. The protocol is distributed to relevant stakeholders in Morocco, together with a supporting information kit. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health modified the protocol in line with the guidelines of the Moroccan Association of Addictology to ensure ease of access to treatment services during the pandemic.

399. In late 2019, ECOWAS released the first-ever report of the West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use, for the period 2014–2017, which was produced with the assistance and support of UNODC and the European Union. The report provides an analysis of the data provided by the Network's focal points on drug trafficking and drug use in States members of ECOWAS. As stated in the report, in the reporting period, 7 of every 10 persons accessing drug treatment services (not counting cases related to alcohol use) indicated that cannabis was their primary drug of use. Further, cocaine was the most common stimulant used. The rapid rise of opioid use in the subregion was also noted in the report, with tramadol use driving the phenomenon, along with significant use of heroin in some ECOWAS countries.

400. According to the *UNODC World Drug Report 2020*, cannabis is the most-used drug in Africa; approximately 45 million people have used the drug in the past year. Pharmaceutical opioids, in particular tramadol, constitute the next most-used category of substances; prevalence data are available only for North Africa but they show that approximately 7.4 million people in that subregion used tramadol in the past year. Despite major gaps in prevalence data, the *World Drug Report 2020* noted that cocaine, amphetamine, "ecstasy" and other drugs were used in the region, but in limited amounts compared with cannabis and tramadol.

401. In March 2020, the Ministry of Health of Ethiopia, in collaboration with UNODC, organized a workshop on the national implementation of drug policy commitments.

More than 40 participants, including high-level representatives of the federal Government and regional governments of Ethiopia and representatives of the Office of the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, the African Union, civil society and non-governmental organizations with mandates related to drugs and substance use. One important topic discussed during the meeting was the fact that Ethiopia was being targeted by drug traffickers as a destination and transit country for illicitly manufactured drugs. The workshop concluded with the establishment of a new national multisectoral technical working group on drugs, to be led by the Ethiopian Food and Drug Administration.

402. Burkina Faso strengthened its capacity to treat people who use drugs by deploying 20 specialists from its Ministry of Health and from civil society groups to each district in the country, in line with the ECOWAS Universal Treatment Curriculum of the Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Programme. The health authorities of Burkina Faso opened a new specialized unit for drug treatment in Yalgado Ouédraogo University Hospital in Ouagadougou.

403. Mauritius has been experiencing a rise in the use of synthetic drugs for several years. The number of offences related to synthetic drugs has doubled since 2015, reaching 1,059 cases in 2018. The most-used synthetic drugs in Mauritius include synthetic cannabinoids, seizures of which increased from approximately 1 kg in 2015 to 224 kg in 2018.

404. The United Republic of Tanzania reported that, by the end of 2019, the country had established eight opiate substitution therapy centres using methadone to treat people who inject drugs and 65 recovery homes to support people who use drugs. The Government is also in the process of establishing an opiate substitution therapy programme in the country's prisons, with the support of UNODC.