

and provision of treatment and services to reduce the negative health and social consequences of drug use in most European countries. Specialized outpatient facilities that could not implement the required social-distancing measures were closed in some countries. On the other hand, mobile or online platforms and other innovations, such as greater flexibility associated with medication-assisted treatment service models and the use of telemedicine, were increasingly adopted to provide drug treatment services across the region.

750. Another survey focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on patterns of drug use suggested that there had been some reduction in illicit drug use during the early period of the COVID-19 pandemic (from March to May 2020). Respondents to the EMCDDA online survey provided different explanations, from the lack of social opportunities to reduced drug availability and access to sources of drug supply. Income loss and financial uncertainty were also cited as major reasons for the reduction in illicit drug use.

751. The closure of the night-time economy was commonly considered as the primary reason for decreases in the illicit use of “ecstasy” and cocaine, although increases in the illicit use of amphetamines were reported in some Northern European countries during the lockdown period. On the other hand, cannabis use seemed to be less affected by the lockdown, with occasional users reducing their use and some frequent users consuming more. A reduction in heroin use among high-risk opioid users was observed in Czechia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia. Increased “digitalization” of the drug market and more flexible distribution systems were also cited as some of the adaptations employed for continued access to drugs.

F. Oceania

Drugs continue to be trafficked in large quantities through Pacific island countries and territories en route to Australia and New Zealand, and there is increased trafficking in methamphetamine from Asia. At the same time, domestic demand for methamphetamine and cocaine is growing in Pacific island countries, and there has been an increase in the number of drug-related offences recorded. However, data on the extent of drug use and treatment demand in Pacific Island countries remain virtually non-existent.

In New Zealand, a proposed cannabis legalization and control bill, which would have allowed people to possess and consume cannabis in certain circumstances, was rejected by voters in a referendum held on 17 October 2020.

In Australia, legislation came into force in the Australian Capital Territory in January 2020 permitting the cultivation of cannabis plants for personal non-medical use; however, the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes remains a criminal offence under Australian federal law.

The 2019 Australian National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that the proportion of people who had used codeine for non-medical purposes in the previous 12 months had halved, from 3.0 per cent in 2016 to 1.5 per cent in 2019. Since 2018, medications containing codeine can no longer be purchased from a pharmacy without a prescription.

1. Major developments

752. The secretariat of the Oceania Customs Organization noted that measures such as border closures and import and export restrictions taken by Governments of Pacific island States in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had hindered the movement of medical supplies and medical teams needed to assist countries. In a guidance document on COVID-19, members of the Oceania Customs Organization were asked to consider expedited clearance of essential goods and workers to support national responses. They were also asked to consider granting all medical supplies and equipment needed to provide relief in relation to the pandemic first priority to cross borders, where practicably possible.

753. Pacific island countries and territories continue to be used as transit points for drug trafficking; however, they are increasingly becoming destinations for synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine, with domestic demand growing, and becoming locations for illicit manufacture. **Recognizing that national capacities in the region are inadequate to respond to this threat, the Board recommends that the international community provide support to enhance the capacities of Pacific island States to address these new challenges and to safeguard their citizens’ health.**

754. Not all Pacific island States have signed and ratified the three international drug control conventions.⁷³ The absence of this international legal framework, coupled with growing domestic demand for drugs and the limited national and regional capacities of Pacific island countries

⁷³Of the 10 States yet to accede to the 1961 Convention as amended, 7 are in Oceania: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Of the 13 States not party to the 1971 Convention, 8 are in Oceania: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Of the seven non-parties to the 1988 Convention, four are in Oceania: Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

and territories, renders these countries and territories more vulnerable to drug trafficking, illicit drug manufacture and related crimes, including money-laundering and corruption. The Board recalls that the treaties are recognized as the cornerstone of the international drug control system and that they provide countries with a framework to address the challenge of drug trafficking, for example through the provisions on extradition and mutual legal assistance, as well as export pre-notification. However, some non-parties in the region are reporting to the Board and participating in the international system for monitoring licit trade in controlled substances on a voluntary basis. The Board is engaged with the countries of the region, for example in the framework of the memorandum of understanding signed between the Board and the Oceania Customs Organization in 2019, and activities have been held in the region over the past year under the Board's GRIDS Programme (see below for further details). The Board welcomes the recommendation made at the forty-eighth Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Conference, held in Pago Pago, American Samoa, from 21 to 23 August 2019, that, among other important measures, non-parties should accede to the international drug control conventions. **The Board urges all Pacific island States that are not parties to all three international drug control conventions to accede to them as rapidly as possible and offers its support to this end. The Board encourages the international community to support non-parties in the region towards treaty accession and implementation.**

2. Regional cooperation

755. Participants at the fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum, held in Funafuti, Tuvalu, from 13 to 16 August 2019, endorsed the Boe Declaration Action Plan as a framework to implement the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, including through the establishment of a subcommittee of the Forum Officials' Committee on Regional Security. The Plan includes an affirmation of an expanded concept of security, with an increasing emphasis on, inter alia, transnational crime. The Plan also includes recognition of the substantial geographical area of the region, its extensive and porous jurisdictional boundaries, and its differences in governance and law enforcement capacity that further exacerbate its susceptibility to illicit threats, markets and activities. The Plan sets out a series of actions, including many aimed at disrupting the flow of illicit drugs, such as methamphetamine and cocaine, and strengthening national capacities to address demand and minimize the harm associated with the illicit use of drugs through a comprehensive government approach including health, education and social services.

756. In November 2019, UNODC provided training to law enforcement and customs officers of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in the use of drug and precursor test kits. The training followed two years of national training workshops for technical officers from the law enforcement and health authorities on the challenge of synthetic drugs. UNODC also held meetings with officials from the two countries to review progress made in implementing the practical recommendations developed in the national training workshops.

757. In December 2019, the Oceania Customs Organization delivered training on dangerous substances trafficked in the region and the use of INCB systems during a two-day event at its headquarters in Suva. The training covered awareness-raising, safe handling and interdiction, precursors and synthetic drug trafficking, and intelligence exchange and was attended by officers from the Oceania Customs Organization, the Fiji Police and the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service. It was held in the framework of the memorandum of understanding between INCB and the Oceania Customs Organization signed in 2019. A similar training event was held by the Board in Wellington on 9 December 2019 for the New Zealand Customs Service and the National Drug Intelligence Bureau. In February 2020, INCB delivered training in Nadi, Fiji, during a regional workshop on customs intellectual property rights enforcement organized by the Oceania Customs Organization. At the workshop, participants were provided access to and training on the Board's secure global communications platforms that allow for the exchange of information and alerts to support domestic and international cooperation and investigations into trafficking in dangerous substances not under international control. The workshop was also delivered within the framework of the memorandum of understanding between the Board and the Oceania Customs Organization and was attended by customs officers from Australia, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu. Under the Board's GRIDS Programme, an informal meeting of 11 experts on the topic of trafficking in dangerous substances throughout Oceania was held on 3 March 2020 on the margins of the sixty-third session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

758. INCB was represented at the New Zealand Annual Drug and Organized Crime Conference, held at the Police College in Porirua, Wellington, on 9 December 2019. Consultations were held between a representative of INCB and representatives of the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police in Wellington on 10 December 2019 and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat in Suva on 13 December 2019.

to determine practical ways in which the GRIDS Programme tools and partnerships could be further leveraged to counter transnational crime through enhanced cooperation and information-sharing to disrupt the flow of illicit drugs in response to the region's recently adopted Boe Declaration Action Plan.

759. In August 2020, the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police five-year strategic plan for the period 2020–2024 was launched. In the plan, it is recognized that transnational crime remains at the forefront of concern, with growing local markets for methamphetamine posing a threat to local communities. The plan includes provision for the rapid sharing of information and resources, the development of prevention approaches, the building of intelligence capability and the enhancement of investigations capability.

3. National legislation, policy and action

760. In January 2020, legislation came into force in the Australian Capital Territory permitting the cultivation for non-medical purposes of up to two cannabis plants per person, or four plants per household. Under the legislation, it is an offence to use cannabis in a public place, expose a child or young person to cannabis smoke, store cannabis where children can reach it, cultivate cannabis hydroponically or with the application of artificial light or heat sources, and grow plants where they can be accessed by the public. The sale, sharing and gifting of cannabis remain unlawful, as do the possession, cultivation and use of cannabis by people aged under 18 and the driving of a vehicle with any amount of cannabis in the body. Guidance by the Australian Federal Police states that cannabis is not legal in the Australian Capital Territory, only that amendments have been made that exempt individuals from criminal liability in certain limited circumstances. The use of cannabis for non-medical purposes remains illegal under Australian federal law. Further information on this development is contained in chapter II of the present report.

761. **The Board recalls that developments permitting the non-medical use of cannabis are in contravention of the provisions of the 1961 Convention as amended and the 1988 Convention, to both of which Australia is a party. Consistent with article 9, paragraph 5, of the 1961 Convention as amended, the Board remains engaged in dialogue with the Government of Australia with a view to facilitating effective national action to attain the aims of that Convention.**

762. During the general election in New Zealand in October 2020, a referendum was held on the proposed cannabis legalization and control bill. The bill was rejected by voters.

763. In November 2019, “Law Week”, on the theme “Fighting illicit drugs through awareness”, was held in Tonga by the Office of the Attorney General in cooperation with the Tonga Police and other ministries and agencies. Activities included an outreach programme led by the Tonga Police Safety Team. Also in November 2019, cannabis identification training was provided to police officers in Tonga by the New Zealand Institute of Environmental Science and Research. The Tonga National Illicit Drugs Policy was approved by Cabinet in October 2019; it promotes a whole-of-society approach through harm reduction, supply reduction and demand reduction.

764. In November 2019, WCO, in collaboration with the Australian Border Force and the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, conducted training for customs officers in Suva and Nadi under the UNODC/WCO Container Control Programme. In December 2019, the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service and the Republic of Fiji Military Forces signed a memorandum of understanding formalizing a commitment to cooperate through the provision of training, the sharing of information and the undertaking of joint operations to combat transnational illicit activities.

765. In March 2020, the Community Affairs References Committee of the Senate of Australia issued a report entitled *Current Barriers to Patient Access to Medicinal Cannabis in Australia*, in which it made a series of recommendations to address such barriers. The Export Control Legislation Amendment (Certification of Narcotic Exports) Bill 2020 was passed by the Parliament of Australia in June 2020. It amends the Export Control Act 1982 and Export Control Act 2020 to allow for the licit export of certain narcotic drugs, such as medicinal cannabis and low-THC hemp products.

766. In August 2020, the Criminal Code and Customs Legislation Amendment (Precursors and Drugs) Regulations 2020 came into effect in Australia, listing additional substances as controlled precursors and specifying commercial and marketable quantities for those substances. The commercial and marketable quantities for phenyl-2-propanone were reduced, reflecting changes in the methods for illicitly manufacturing methamphetamine from the substance. Further information pertaining to the control of precursor chemicals can be found in the report of the Board for 2020 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention. The legislation also placed under

national control the substances recently added to the schedules of the 1961 and 1971 Conventions pursuant to the 2019 and 2020 scheduling decisions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. In 2019, the synthetic cannabinoids 5F-MDMB-PINACA (5F-ADB) and AMB-FUBINACA (FUB-AMB) were placed under national control in New Zealand.

767. The Medical Cannabis Scheme of New Zealand came into effect on 1 April 2020, pursuant to the Misuse of Drugs (Medicinal Cannabis) Regulations 2019. Medicinal cannabis products are available to patients only on prescription from a doctor. Manufacturers and importers are required to provide evidence to the Medicinal Cannabis Agency that they meet minimum standards of quality, and any person wishing to work in the industry must hold a medicinal cannabis licence or work for a company holding such a licence.

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

768. In addition to the continuing use of Pacific island countries and territories as trans-shipment points for drug trafficking to Australia and New Zealand, evidence points to those countries and territories increasingly becoming locations of illicit manufacture and domestic use. In Fiji, for example, the number of drug-related offences increased by more than 560 per cent from 2013 to 2018. The authorities of Fiji noted a substantial increase during the same period in seizures of parcels containing drugs, including methamphetamine, originating in China, the United States and countries of South America. Seizures of methamphetamine and cocaine, in addition to cannabis, continue to be made in Tonga. From April 2018, when the Drug Enforcement Taskforce commenced operation, to November 2019, a total of 42.56 kg of methamphetamine, 2.49 kg of cocaine and 3.48 kg of cannabis were seized in Tonga. In the UNODC publication *Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia: Latest Developments and Challenges*, it was noted that the amount of methamphetamine seized in Tonga was substantial, considering that the population is estimated at just over 100,000 people. In July 2020, a seizure of over 500 kg of cocaine, destined for Australia, was made in Papua New Guinea.

769. The amount of cocaine seized in Oceania almost tripled from 2014 to 2018, to 2.1 tons; 97 per cent of the cocaine seized over the period was accounted for by Australia. Over the same period, the quantity of cocaine seized in New Zealand increased from 10 kg to 213 kg. However, the amount of cocaine reported seized by New

Zealand decreased in 2019, with an increasing proportion seized in connection with air transportation and a decreasing proportion in connection with sea transportation.

770. Seizures of large amounts of amphetamine-type stimulants continue to be made in Australia. For example, in April 2020, a yacht carrying approximately 1 ton of methamphetamine was intercepted in Australia, following an investigation in cooperation with authorities of New Caledonia and the United Kingdom. In March 2020, authorities in Australia reported the seizure of over 1 ton of “ecstasy” suspected to have originated in Europe, trafficked via the Republic of Korea. The number of dismantled clandestine laboratories in Australia, most of which were connected to the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine, continued to decline, to 308 laboratories in the 12-month reporting period 2018/19, reflecting a reduction of almost 30 per cent compared with the previous period.

771. The amounts of methamphetamine and “ecstasy” seized in 2019 increased significantly in New Zealand, by 515 per cent and 556 per cent respectively, compared with the previous year, and a record seizure of more than 400 kg of methamphetamine was made in 2019, transported by sea from Thailand. Some decrease in the number of clandestine laboratories illicitly manufacturing methamphetamine was observed in New Zealand, with 54 such laboratories dismantled in 2019, compared with 71 the previous year. However, an upward trend was observed in the first quarter of 2020.

772. The amounts of heroin and morphine seized in Oceania declined for three years in a row to the lowest level since 2009, with Australia accounting for more than 99 per cent of the amount reported seized in the region.

5. Prevention and treatment

773. There continues to be a lack of data about the extent and scope of drug use and treatment demand and delivery in Pacific island States. **The Board urges the Pacific island States to undertake studies to collect data on the extent of the drug problem in order to facilitate the design and adoption of evidence-based drug policies and the provision of appropriate prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services. The Board encourages regional and international organizations and bilateral partners that provide assistance to the Pacific island States to offer their support to the countries of the region in this regard.**

774. Preliminary findings of a survey conducted during the period April–June 2020 of Australians who had regularly used drugs in 2019 showed that, following the introduction of measures to combat the spread of COVID-19, cannabis use had increased, while the use of “ecstasy”, cocaine and ketamine had decreased. Use of pharmaceutical opioids, GHB, benzodiazepines and LSD had mostly remained stable. Most respondents continued to receive their drugs in person, although there were small increases in the proportion of respondents who had drugs delivered to them and those who did not obtain drugs following the introduction of restrictions. A small proportion of respondents reported that they had tried but been unable to access drug treatment and/or mental health services following the introduction of restrictions related to the pandemic. Other studies suggested some disruption to heroin and methamphetamine markets, evidenced in changes in price and availability. Preliminary findings of another study, on the impact of the pandemic and associated restrictions on people who use illicit stimulants in Australia, were similar, indicating that use of “ecstasy” decreased in general following the introduction of restrictions related to COVID-19, while use of cannabis increased and use of benzodiazepines and LSD remained unchanged. Few respondents (6 per cent) reported difficulties in accessing alcohol and drug treatment services since March 2020. Of the respondents to a poll conducted in May 2020 of people who use drugs, 26 per cent reported a decrease in their consumption of drugs during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 17.6 per cent reported an increase. In April 2020, the Government of Australia announced the allocation of additional resources to support online and phone services for people experiencing drug and alcohol problems during the pandemic.

775. The eleventh report of the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program, which covered about 56 per cent of the population, provided insights into the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on drug consumption in Australia. Record high levels of consumption of methamphetamine and heroin were recorded outside of capital cities, while record high levels of consumption of cocaine and cannabis were recorded in the capital cities. In contrast, there was a record low level of consumption of fentanyl outside of capital cities and oxycodone in the capital cities. Both in and outside of capital cities, population-weighted average consumption of “ecstasy”, oxycodone and fentanyl decreased, while population-weighted average consumption of heroin increased. Average consumption of cannabis also increased outside of capital cities during the pandemic. Wastewater data collected in October 2019, December 2019 and February 2020 (i.e., prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia) indicated that methamphetamine remained the most prevalent

illicit drug for which testing was conducted, with record levels recorded in capital cities. In addition, the presence of cocaine and “ecstasy” had also increased since August 2016, with a significant increase in “ecstasy” since April 2018, to a record level. From August 2016, the presence of heroin declined considerably outside of capital cities but increased in some capital cities. A decline in the presence of oxycodone and fentanyl had been observed since December 2018.

776. The Australian 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 16.4 per cent of people aged 14 and over had used an illicit drug in the previous 12 months, similar to the level of 2016 (15.6 per cent) but representing an increase since 2007 (13.4 per cent). However, the survey found a lower lifetime prevalence of use of illicit drugs among young people: in 2001, 38 per cent of those aged 14–19 had used an illicit drug at some time in their lives, compared with 22 per cent in 2019. However, among people aged 20–29, use of both “ecstasy” and cocaine had increased. Over the period 2016–2019, past-year use of the following substances had increased among people aged 14 and over: cannabis (from 10.4 per cent to 11.6 per cent), cocaine (2.5 per cent to 4.2 per cent), “ecstasy” (2.2 per cent to 3.0 per cent), hallucinogens (1.0 per cent to 1.6 per cent), inhalants (1.0 per cent to 1.4 per cent) and ketamine (0.4 per cent to 0.9 per cent). Past-year methamphetamine use had stabilized in 2019, at 1.3 per cent of people aged over 14. Between 2016 and 2019, the estimated number of people aged 14 and over who had used a pharmaceutical drug for non-medical purposes within the previous 12 months had declined (from 4.8 per cent to 4.2 per cent), and the proportion of people using substances from the category “painkillers and opioids” for non-medical purposes had declined from 3.6 per cent to 2.7 per cent. It was considered that that decrease was likely to have been the result of the 2018 reclassification of medications containing codeine, following which products containing codeine could no longer be purchased from a pharmacy without a prescription. Indeed, the proportion of people using codeine in the past year for non-medical purposes halved, from 3 per cent in 2016 to 1.5 per cent in 2019. Past-year use of heroin was estimated at 0.1 per cent in 2019 and 0.2 per cent in 2016.

777. Interviews with people who inject drugs also suggested that use of methamphetamine increased in 2019, with three quarters of respondents reporting use of methamphetamine in the preceding six months. On the other hand, one survey found that the use of “ecstasy” in Australia had continued to decline in 2019, with 67 per cent of respondents indicating use of the substance in the previous six months.

778. In Australia, between the 12-month reporting periods 2009/10 and 2018/19, the number of closed⁷⁴ treatment episodes increased for amphetamines (almost sixfold, from 10,000 to 58,200) and for cannabis (from 31,500 to 41,200); amphetamines were the most common principal illicit drug of concern. Closed treatment episodes for which heroin was the principal drug of concern declined from 9.9 per cent in 2009/10 to 5.2 per cent in 2018/19. The number of deaths in Australia involving amphetamines was four times higher in 2018 than in 1999. Over the same period, the rate of drug-induced deaths involving cocaine doubled (0.2 deaths per 100,000 population). Opioids were present in nearly two thirds of drug-induced deaths in 2018 (4.6 per 100,000 population), and the rate of opioid-induced deaths involving synthetic opioids has increased over the past decade. Over the period from 2014 to 2018, the proportion of drug-induced deaths attributed to prescription drugs decreased, from 75 per cent to 60 per cent.

779. The New Zealand Health Survey for the 12-month reporting period 2018/19 indicated that 15 per cent of people aged 16–64 had used cannabis in the previous year. Among young people, aged 15–24, the annual prevalence was 28.6 per cent. This reflected an increase compared with the previous year (11.9 per cent and 24.2 per cent respectively). A 2019 survey of secondary-school students in New Zealand found that 4.1 per cent of students reported use of cannabis at least weekly, representing a decrease since 2001 (6.5 per cent) but not a substantial change since 2012.

780. The use of methamphetamine in New Zealand appears to have increased in recent years, with the New Zealand Health Survey for the 12-month reporting period 2018/19 showing that 1 per cent of people aged 15 or over had used the substance in the previous year, reflecting a significant increase compared with the period 2017/18. According to wastewater monitoring data covering 80 per cent of the population of New Zealand, in 2019, an estimated 14–16 kg of methamphetamine were consumed each week in the sites tested, although a decrease in consumption of the substance was noted in the fourth quarter of 2019. Some increase in the number of people receiving treatment for the use of amphetamine-type stimulants was reported by the Government of New Zealand.

781. A large increase in the use of “ecstasy”-type substances in New Zealand was reported prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the final quarter of 2019, wastewater analysis indicated that “ecstasy” was the second most-commonly detected drug (tested substances were methamphetamine, “ecstasy”, cocaine, heroin and fentanyl), with average annual consumption estimated at 426.4 kg, more than double that of the level detected in the first quarter of the year. It is thought that “ecstasy” is commonly used as a replacement for alcohol, potentially for everyday casual use, particularly among young people.

782. In June 2020, an early-warning system was launched with the aim of reducing drug-related harm in New Zealand. The system, called “High Alert”, is operated by the Drug Information and Alert New Zealand of the National Drug Intelligence Bureau and is designed to help identify where drug-related harm was occurring, provide evidence about outbreaks of harm and, in some cases, anticipate potential harm related to drug use.

⁷⁴A treatment episode is considered closed when treatment is completed or has ceased; there has been no contact between the client and treatment provider for three months; or there is a change in the main treatment type, principal drug of concern or delivery setting.