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EMBARGO:

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REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

AFRICA

The social and political changes in North Africa that began in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia in 2011 and were still ongoing in 2012 have reportedly caused deficiencies in the drug law enforcement capabilities in some of these countries.

Major political changes also took place in Guinea-Bissau and Mali in early 2012, which may affect the fight against drug trafficking in West Africa and elsewhere. While transitional Governments have now been installed in the two countries, the situation remains unstable, in particular in the case of Mali. That is of concern as both Guinea-Bissau, a hub for cocaine trafficking in the sub-region, and Mali, a transit country for cocaine and cannabis resin, have been targeted by international drug traffickers.

While cannabis remains the most widely cultivated, trafficked and abused drug in Africa, new threats have emerged, in particular the illicit manufacture, trafficking and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants. Until few years ago, illicit manufacture and abuse of methamphetamine appeared to be largely confined to Southern Africa. Methamphetamine manufacture has now emerged in West Africa, notably Nigeria, and there is increasing trafficking in amphetamines through West and East Africa to East and South-East Asia.

There has been an increase in levels of cocaine abuse in West Africa as in recent years the region has emerged as a transit area for narcotics, especially cocaine, from South America to the lucrative European market. Trafficking of heroin to and through East Africa is increasing and has resulted in an increase in levels of heroin abuse, notably in Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles and the United Republic of Tanzania. Of particular concern is the increasing abuse of heroin by injection in a subregion that is seriously affected by HIV and AIDS.

The abuse of and trafficking in tramadol, a synthetic analgesic not under international control, has become a major concern in Africa.

Lack of reliable data on the extent and nature of drug abuse in Africa poses a challenge in developing prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes.



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AMERICAS

Central America and the Caribbean

The Central America and Caribbean region continues to be used as a major transit area for cocaine from South America to the North American market. In general, a decline in seizures of cocaine was seen in 2010, possibly as a result of declining demand in North America. The increasing power of and competition among drug gangs has contributed to raising corruption and homicide rates in the region, especially in Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the so-called “Northern Quad-angle”, which have been particularly affected by significant levels of drug-related violence.

INCB is concerned about the increasing influence of powerful drug cartels on the “maras” (local gangs in Central America), which have become diversified and internationalized and are now conducting their illicit drug-related activities and trafficking with the support of small- and medium-size cartels. This poses a new challenge to the Governments of the region in tackling illicit drug trafficking and drug-related violence. The destabilizing effects of drug trafficking and their impact on regional security have increased and the region has been affected by links between drug trafficking and increased levels of violence, particularly drug-related violence in the region.

After a decline in recent years, there are indications that trafficking in cocaine through the Caribbean subregion is increasing. Colombian authorities reported that most of their recent seizures pointed to the increasing importance of the Caribbean route as opposed to previous years, when seizures occurred mostly in the Pacific region. It is estimated that about 280 tons of South American cocaine is destined for North America. Much of it travels by way of Central America and the Caribbean, where cocaine abuse is also increasing. Central America also remains a region of concern regarding the abuse of pharmaceutical preparations that contain stimulants.

North America

Despite declining prevalence rates for some drugs, North America remains the biggest illicit drug market in the world, as well as the region reporting the highest drug-related mortality rate. Approximately 1 in every 20 deaths among persons aged 15 to 64 in North America is related to drug abuse.

Prescription drug abuse in North America continues to represent a major threat to public health and remains one of the biggest challenges to the drug control efforts in the region. Given the fact that most users of prescription drugs for non-medical purposes obtained the drugs from a friend or family member, Governments in the region have recognized the need to establish drug disposal programmes including so-called “prescription drug take-back days”. Through initiatives such as these, tons of unneeded pharmaceuticals have been removed from circulation in North America over the past few years.

Drug abuse among Canada’s First Nations communities has remained a major threat to public health in these communities.



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In Mexico, drug-related violence continued to constitute a major threat to public security nationwide. According to figures released by the Government of Mexico, over 60,000 people have been killed as a result of drug-related violence since 2006.

In the United States, voters in Massachusetts approved a ballot initiative which would allow the use of cannabis for “medical purposes” in that State, making it the 18th jurisdiction in the United States to do so. In its Annual Report, the Board reminds Governments that State-sponsored “medical cannabis” schemes must be administered according to the provision set forth in the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended by the 1972 Protocol.

Also in the United States, voters in the States of Colorado and Washington approved a ballot initiative which would allow the use of cannabis in these jurisdictions for recreational (i.e. non-medical and non-scientific) use. The INCB Report reiterates that the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, limits the licit use of narcotic drugs including cannabis to medical and scientific purposes. With regard to the ballot initiative in the United States, the Board takes note of a Statement made by the Office of the Attorney General of the United States in December 2012, subsequent to the finalization of its report.

South America

The total area of illicit coca bush cultivation in 2011 significantly decreased in Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (27,200 ha) and slightly increased in Colombia (64,000 ha) and Peru (62,500 ha). The total area under illicit coca bush cultivation in South America in 2011 was estimated at 153,700 ha, indicating a minor decrease from the 154,200 ha reported in 2010.

In March 2012, the Government of Peru approved the National Drug Control Strategy 2012-2016. The Strategy promotes the development of projects and activities supporting integrated and sustainable development in areas where coca bush is grown, control of the drug supply and the prevention and rehabilitation of drug abuse. Its main goals include reduction of the potential production of coca leaf by 30 per cent by 2016.

The large seizures of cannabis in South America are a source of concern, as they might be a sign of a significant increase in the magnitude of cannabis production in the region. In its report, INCB calls upon the Governments of the countries in South America to determine, to the extent possible, the magnitude of and current trends in the illicit cultivation and use of cannabis plants in their territories and to further strengthen their efforts to combat such cultivation.

ASIA

East and South-East Asia

East and South-East Asia continues to have the second largest total area of illicit opium poppy cultivation in the world, representing one-fifth of the global total. Increased illicit cultivation of opium poppy has been reported since 2007 in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar.



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To address the issues in the region, INCB calls upon the Governments of the countries in question, as well as the international community, to take action, in particular in the areas of alternative development and eradication.

An illicit manufacturing hub, East and South-East Asia represents a growing illicit market for amphetamine-type stimulants, especially methamphetamine. Almost half of the global seizures of methamphetamine in 2010 were made in the region, and further increases were reported throughout the region in 2011. Large-scale trafficking of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants, continued.

In the region, trafficking in and abuse of prescription drugs and over-the-counter pharmaceutical preparations containing internationally controlled substances is a serious problem. Seizures and abuse of products containing morphine, codeine and benzodiazepines have been reported in the region, with the products having been either smuggled from South Asia, or stolen or obtained from pharmacies with forged prescriptions. In its report, INCB urges Governments to strengthen control measures for trade and distribution of these products. The abuse of new psychoactive substances is also a growing problem, with seizures of such substances reported by a number of countries in the region.

South Asia

Pharmaceutical preparations continue to be diverted from India's pharmaceutical industry and smuggled into countries in South Asia and beyond. The Government of India has recognized the problem and has taken strong measures to combat it.

Drug trafficking and abuse is rising in a number of countries in South Asia. In the Maldives, drug trafficking has shown significant increases in recent years; drug abuse is also rising in Bhutan. In Bangladesh, seizure data suggest that trafficking in and abuse of codeine-based cough syrups, buprenorphine and methamphetamine/caffeine combination tablets ("Yaba") is rising, while trafficking of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine in India appears to be increasing.

Governments across South Asia have taken steps to counter the threat posed by drug trafficking and abuse since the Board's last report. These have included a new national policy and enhanced border security and law enforcement measures in India; new drug control legislation in the Maldives; a new medicines regulation in Bhutan; efforts to eradicate illicit cultivation of opium poppy across the region; a new national drug policy underway in Bangladesh; and efforts to strengthen and professionalize the addiction treatment workforce in Sri Lanka.

West Asia

West Asia continues to have the greatest share of global illicit opium poppy cultivation and illicit opiate production, primarily in Afghanistan. Afghanistan saw a significant rebound in illicit opium poppy cultivation, reaching 154,000 hectares (ha) in 2012, 18 per cent more than the previous year, as half of the 34 provinces continue to cultivate opium poppy. The uncertain security situation



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and political instability prevailing across West Asia provides fertile ground for illicit activities that generate profits for both regional and international criminal networks, resulting in increasing levels of illicit trafficking in drugs and money-laundering.

Demand for various illicit stimulants, such as cocaine and methamphetamine, appears to be increasing in parts of West Asia. Cocaine seizures are occurring with increasing frequency and are of a larger volume, with cocaine seizures increasing by more than 20 times between 2001 and 2010. In 2011, Turkey seized a record 589 kg of cocaine—nearly double the amount seized in 2010—and reported that the number of cocaine seizures had increased dramatically. Seizures of these drugs have steadily increased, and abuse, for example, of methamphetamine in the Islamic Republic of Iran, has also been reported to be on the rise.

Weaknesses in timely information exchange among Governments continue to hinder backtracking investigations to identify the source of chemical diversion in West Asia, in particular in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. Therefore, to enhance intelligence-sharing, INCB encourages all Member States to communicate all illicit chemical-related incidents through the Board's secure online global communication platform, the Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS).

The prevailing situation across the Arab subregion contributed to the spread of illicit drug trafficking in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Jordan continue to be affected by counterfeit "captagon" tablets containing amphetamine. In 2011, the volume of amphetamines (including "captagon") seized in the region amounted to 22 tons, with Saudi Arabia remaining the main country of destination. Abuse of prescription drugs containing psychotropic substances, in particular benzodiazepines and stimulants, has been reported by most of the countries in the region.

EUROPE

The abuse of illicit drugs in Europe has stabilized in recent years, although at a high level. However, the increasing abuse of, as well as illicit manufacture of and trafficking in, new psychoactive substances is a major challenge in West and Central Europe, with a record of 49 new psychoactive substances reported to the European Union early warning system in 2011. The number of Internet sites selling psychoactive products destined for countries of the European Union more than quadrupled from January 2010, to 690 such sites in January 2012. Many Governments are addressing this challenge by placing individual or groups of substances under national control.

A further challenge is polydrug abuse—the consumption of illicit drugs in combination with other drugs, alcohol and non-controlled substances. According to authorities of the Russian Federation, the number of desomorphine users in the country is growing. In 2011, significant increases in new cases of HIV infection based on a high prevalence of HIV among injecting drug users were reported in Bulgaria, Greece and Romania.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is now an important regional hub for trafficking of narcotic drugs. The main trafficking routes pass through Bulgaria, Romania and the former Yugoslav Republic of



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Macedonia to Kosovo¹, then through Montenegro and Serbia to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and from there to Croatia and Slovenia and Western Europe. Cocaine trafficking through ports in Croatia and Greece for shipments to Eastern Europe is increasing.

In the region, an increased number of laboratories used for the illicit manufacture of amphetamines have been detected; some of these sites have had a significant manufacturing capacity. Methamphetamine appears to still be replacing amphetamine in Northern and Western Europe, and the quantity of methamphetamine seized in Northern Europe has increased significantly.

UNODC launched in 2012 a new regional programme for South-Eastern Europe for the period 2012-2015 on “Countering illicit trafficking and organized crime for improved governance, justice and security”. Also in 2012, the Government of Ukraine adopted its National Drug Strategy.

OCEANIA

The levels of abuse and illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants in Oceania remain among the highest in the world. However, strengthened control in Australia and New Zealand of precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants has resulted in more seizures of methamphetamine. Among other countries in the region, especially the Pacific island States, there is a lack of information on the drug trafficking situation, yet in these States there are indications that methamphetamine is available and that levels of abuse among young people are considerable, even in remote areas.

Levels of abuse of cocaine are also increasing in the region, and large seizures have been reported, in particular in Australia. Cocaine traffickers continue to target the illicit drug markets of Australia and New Zealand. The growing abuse of new psychoactive substances is a serious challenge in Australia, with a large number of substances available.

INCB welcomed the decisions by the Governments of Nauru and Niue to accede to the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. However, nine States in the region have yet to become parties to all three of the international drug control conventions. The Board urges the Governments of the States concerned—the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu—to become parties to all three of the international drug control treaties. The fact that these States are yet to ratify the conventions is a matter of concern, especially in view of apparent increases in trafficking in and illicit manufacture of drugs in the region.

¹All references to Kosovo in the present document and reports of INCB should be understood to be in compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).