

component arranged through UNDCP, serving as the focal point. Finally, to ensure consolidated investigations and the sharing of information and intelligence and of the findings of investigations, the meeting established a task force to oversee the project.

63. The task force is composed of members representing the major geographical regions, namely China, the Netherlands, South Africa and the United States, as well as the European Commission, Interpol and the World Customs Organization as competent international bodies. The Board, through its secretariat, guides the task force fully within the scope of its treaty mandates. The first meeting of the task force was held in Vienna in August 2002.

64. At that time, the Task Force established two working groups, one addressing the precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants and the second addressing equipment, materials and the sale of chemicals over the Internet, and identified their priorities and objectives. The first meetings of the working groups are to be hosted by the Government of the Netherlands and Europol, respectively, during December 2002. The Board trusts that the activities initiated by the working groups will result in successes similar to those achieved under Operations Purple and Topaz.

III. Analysis of data on seizures of, and illicit traffic in, precursors and trends in illicit manufacture of drugs

A. Overview

65. The analysis presented below provides an overview of major trends in diversion and trafficking of the substances frequently used in the illicit manufacture of drugs. In the analysis of available data, consideration has been given to information provided by the law enforcement and regulatory authorities not only on seizures, but also on known cases of diversion and attempted diversion, on stopped or suspended shipments in international trade, and on the illicit manufacture of drugs. The findings of investigations undertaken are also considered.

66. The present report contains seizure data for the five-year period from 1997 to 2001, furnished by Governments under article 12 of the 1988 Convention (see annex I, tables 3a and 3b).

67. Seizures of most of the substances in Tables I and II have been reported for 2001. No seizures were reported for *ergometrine* and *isosafrole*. Furthermore, more comprehensive information on the methods and routes of diversion has become available to the Board through the international operations currently under way. All Governments are therefore urged to review their procedures for the collection and provision of the information relating to seizures, diversions and stopped shipments of all controlled and non-controlled substances, so that a comprehensive analysis of the current trafficking trends for all chemicals can be carried out.

68. The working mechanisms developed over the years to prevent diversions of precursor chemicals from international trade are functioning well. For 2001, Governments have reported stopping over 20 shipments in international trade, which were believed to be diversion attempts. Nine controlled substances, from both Tables I and II, as well as two non-controlled chemicals, were the subject of those diversion attempts. It is noteworthy that certain Governments are able to identify suspicious orders of even the most widely traded substances such as hydrochloric acid and methyl ethyl ketone.

69. On the basis of the available information, the following observations can be made:

(a) The majority of the seizures effected during 2001 of, in particular, Table I substances, have been made when authorities have intercepted precursor chemicals being smuggled over national borders. When such consignments are intercepted, it is essential for authorities to launch backtracking investigations as soon as possible after the seizure, sharing all relevant information with other concerned Governments, if the source of the seized chemicals is to be identified and future diversions are to be prevented;

(b) Given the large volume of licit trade in certain substances, in particular at the domestic level, the intensive monitoring of transactions may not always be feasible. In such cases, intelligence should be developed, through seizures, interceptions, confidential and other sources etc., so that

investigations can be carried out in a focused, structured and effective manner;

(c) In attempted diversions from international trade, traffickers are continuing to utilize the names of known companies that have licit requirements for the substance sought. In the most recent attempts uncovered, however, traffickers are placing orders for much larger amounts of the substances than were previously noted and, in addition, are supporting those orders with falsified sales contracts and company stamps and also false import certificates;

(d) Corruption continues to be a major factor to be addressed when attempting to prevent diversions or to intercept smuggled consignments of precursor chemicals. Traffickers are now infiltrating the staff or corrupting employees of transport and shipping companies to ensure that consignments are moved through international ports as quickly as possible and with a minimum of problems. Such a position also enables traffickers to obtain prior warning of law enforcement activities concentrating on a specific consignment;

(e) The use of controlled deliveries has proven an effective tool in the identification and arrest of traffickers responsible for diversions of precursors. The controlled deliveries reported have, however, been primarily carried out within a national territory, or at a bilateral level, as difficulties continue to be experienced in organizing multijurisdictional operations. There is an urgent need to examine the possibility of developing working mechanisms and standard operating procedures for controlled deliveries at the international level.

B. Trends in the illicit traffic in precursors and other chemicals and the illicit manufacture of drugs

1. Substances used in the illicit manufacture of cocaine

Potassium permanganate

Seizures

70. The Board has noted that seizures of *potassium permanganate* have been steadily declining since the introduction of Operation Purple in 1999, with 150 tons of the substance reported seized in 1999, 77 tons during 2000 and 51 tons for 2001.

Furthermore, the Government of Colombia, which consistently reports the largest seizures of the substance, has also reported decreasing seizures during that period, with the amounts seized falling from 71 tons in 1999 to 50 tons in 2001. When viewed in conjunction with other factors, such as the number of stopped shipments, the low level of oxidation of cocaine samples seized during law enforcement actions and the continuing illicit manufacture of potassium permanganate itself, the Board sees the declining seizures as an indication of the effectiveness of Operation Purple, in particular its intensive tracking programme (see chapter II, section B, above), in preventing diversions of the substance from international trade, thereby restricting the availability of the substance for use by traffickers in the illicit manufacture of cocaine.

71. While the international tracking of the substance is functioning well in preventing diversions from international trade, traffickers are still able to obtain the substance, as indicated by the interception of smuggled consignments in international trade, detected by the Colombian authorities during 2000 and 2001. During that period, a total of five such cases, amounting to nearly 70 tons of potassium permanganate, were intercepted. In particular, in its report for 2001,¹⁹ the Board noted that, since phase II of Operation Purple commenced in January 2000, all of the potassium permanganate intercepted in Colombia had been smuggled out of Mexico. The Governments of Colombia and Mexico worked together to identify the sources of the potassium permanganate seized and to take measures to prevent further diversions, and no interceptions along that route have been reported for 2002. The Board is continuing its efforts to identify countries possibly being targeted by traffickers in further diversion attempts.

72. Elsewhere in the Latin American region, seizures of potassium permanganate have been reported by Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. Of the countries bordering Colombia, only Brazil, a country with a large chemical industry, and Panama, an important trans-shipment point, have not reported whether seizures of the substance have taken place in their respective territories during 2001. In view of the significant intraregional trafficking of potassium permanganate and the attempted diversion of the substance, detected during 2002, involving Brazil, regulatory authorities of all countries in the region