

Summary

At the completion of 10 years after the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, Governments and the International Narcotics Control Board have taken stock of the achievements and problems identified in the area of precursor control. The United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 is nearing universal adherence. However, as trafficking attempts continue to be identified in all regions of the world, the Board calls on the 12 States that are not yet parties to the Convention (most of them in Oceania) to become parties without delay. While the number of Governments reporting to the Board under the provisions of article 12 of the 1988 Convention is satisfactory, many reports lack the necessary detail on circumstances of seizures, methods of diversion and use made of non-controlled substances. A positive development is that a growing number of Governments are providing to the Board voluntary information on the licit import, export and uses of scheduled chemicals. That information is a key element in efforts to prevent the diversion of precursors from international trade. The Board particularly appreciates the cooperation of the 109 Governments that in 2007 provided data on their legitimate requirements for precursors frequently used in the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants. The publishing of such estimates has been of significant and practical assistance in identifying suspicious transactions and preventing diversions.

The rapid exchange of information on individual shipments of precursor chemicals, through pre-export notifications between Governments, continues to be the most effective tool in detecting and preventing attempted diversions. The Board again invites all Governments that wish to be alerted of any shipment of precursor chemicals destined to their territory to request the provision of such pre-export notifications officially, through the Secretary-General, in accordance with article 12, paragraph 10, of the 1988 Convention. In this connection, it is encouraging to note that almost 100 Governments now participate in the online system for the exchange of pre-export notifications (PEN Online). That system considerably expedites communications between the Governments of exporting and importing countries. Furthermore, in Security Council resolution 1817 (2008) the Governments that had not yet done so were urged to register with and utilize the PEN Online system.

The Board particularly welcomes the strengthening during the reporting period of control measures over the international and domestic movement of precursors. New legislative and regulatory measures were introduced in Australia, Belize, China, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua and South Africa. As the monitoring of international trade in scheduled chemicals continues to yield results, it will be particularly important to strengthen controls over domestic manufacture and distribution as the new channels being explored by traffickers. Indeed, cross-border trafficking has become the most common method of obtaining chemicals for use in clandestine laboratories.

The Board has continued, within its treaty mandate, to support international initiatives such as Project Cohesion and Project Prism. The Board acknowledges the work of the task forces of those projects in monitoring chemical shipments and coordinating investigations that have led to seizures and stopped shipments. The Board notes the results achieved by multilateral exchanges of information, and

encourages Governments and relevant international organizations to continue and intensify their participation in such activities.

The strengthened monitoring and control of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine have helped to prevent the diversion of those two raw materials. In response, trafficking networks have been exploring new ways to supply illicit laboratories, including the utilization of alternative precursors. In addition, as orders for raw materials are brought under increasing scrutiny by authorities worldwide, traffickers have turned to placing orders with legitimate pharmaceutical companies for preparations containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine that are purportedly to be sent to developing countries. In many regions, controls over pharmaceutical preparations continue to be less stringent or even non-existent. Numerous cases of diversion and attempted diversion of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, often in the form of preparations, were identified and reported to the Board, involving Africa and West Asia in particular.

The Board is pleased to note the results achieved in the period 2007-2008 in preventing the delivery of acetic anhydride for the manufacture of heroin in Afghanistan. The increase in seizures and prevented deliveries of large amounts of acetic anhydride in the period 2007-2008 is likely to have disrupted the supply of that substance to Afghanistan. In its report, the Board makes a number of recommendations to all Governments to continue their efforts in support of Afghanistan and to make such assistance sustainable.

The Board continues to be concerned by the lack of available knowledge on the origins and methods of diversion of chemicals, particularly potassium permanganate, used in the illicit manufacture of cocaine in South America. Although the number of attempted diversions of potassium permanganate from licit international trade continued to decrease, there is no shortage of the chemical. The indications are that traffickers have found ways to circumvent international trade controls, possibly through diversion from domestic trade and smuggling within the region. One of the sources of potassium permanganate in Colombia is illicit manufacture within the country. The Board urges Governments in the Americas to make use of the experience accumulated in the targeting of acetic anhydride under Project Cohesion, and to devise similar strategies to address the smuggling of precursor chemicals into cocaine-manufacturing areas.