

# Summary



## New precursor chemicals under international control

On 3 December 2024, two fentanyl precursors (4-piperidone and 1-boc-4-piperidone) and two series of closely related designer precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants (16 substances in total) were added to Table I of the 1988 Convention. The 16 precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants are all designer precursors with no known legitimate uses and no regular trade.



## Normative developments

On 18 January 2024, the 1988 Convention entered into force for South Sudan, bringing the number of States that have ratified, acceded to or approved the 1988 Convention to 191. Changes in legislation and control measures in 10 countries and the European Union are also covered in the section on legislation and control measures.



## Reporting to the Board

The quality and quantity of data reported by Governments remain a cause for concern, with only 81 of the 191 States parties to the 1988 Convention having submitted data through form D by the deadline of 30 June 2024. The number had risen to 115 Governments by 1 November 2024, the cut-off date for the present report. The Board notes that only 84 of the forms for 2023 received contained information on estimates of annual legitimate requirements for ephedrine, pseudoephedrine and their preparations. Furthermore, some estimates provided to INCB date back more than 10 years and have not been updated.



## Major trends in licit trade and trafficking

- The global quantity of ephedrines (i.e. ephedrine and pseudoephedrine in all forms) seized, at over 15 tons, surpasses the quantities seized in the previous two years combined.
- Quantities of pharmaceutical preparations containing pseudoephedrine seized continue to increase.
- The largest quantities of ephedrine in the form of raw material seized were reported by Pakistan (over 5 tons in 21 cases), indicating the possible emergence of a new trafficking route from West Asia to countries in Europe.
- The suspected diversion of 500 kg of ephedrine and 500 kg of pseudoephedrine in the form of raw material pre-notified through the PEN Online system for export from Europe to Africa highlights the need for heightened vigilance by Governments.
- No seizures of amphetamine precursors were reported in or adjacent to West Asia, where large quantities of amphetamine-based “captagon” are seized.
- Seizures of increasing amounts of P-2-P methyl glycidic acid and its esters (almost 56 tons) and of 3,4-MDP-2-P methyl glycidic acid and its esters (almost 45 tons) have been reported. About 15 tons of amphetamine or methamphetamine and 17 tons of MDMA, respectively, could have been manufactured illicitly from the amounts seized.
- The seizure of precursors of a P-2-P methyl glycidic acid derivative in an illicit industrial-scale laboratory in South Africa is the first instance reported to INCB of these chemicals being used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine.
- The highly efficient, industrial-scale illicit manufacture of methamphetamine continues in North America and South-East Asia.
- Methods used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine in Mexico are now being observed in South Asia and Southern Africa, with the alleged involvement of Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

- Seized potassium permanganate has predominantly been sourced from within the country in which the seizure has been made.
- The illicit manufacture of cocaine chemicals, including potassium permanganate, continues, albeit on a limited scale.
- Trafficking in acetic anhydride destined for Afghanistan continues, although on a smaller scale.
- No notable developments related to precursors of phencyclidine, LSD and other narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances have been reported to INCB.
- Canada, Mexico and the United States of America are the only countries that have reported notable seizures of fentanyl precursors. In October 2024, the Kingdom of the Netherlands reported the first seizure of a fentanyl precursor in Europe.
- Worldwide, actionable information about the illicit manufacture of ketamine and the sources of the precursors required remains limited.
- More reports are being received of seizures of precursors and the illicit manufacture of synthetic cathinones.
- Seizures of precursors of synthetic cannabinoids have been reported for the first time.
- CBD is being examined as a precursor of THC and HHC.



### Equipment used in illicit drug manufacture

INCB is promoting the development and implementation of a coordinated strategic approach to addressing the use of the equipment and excipients used in illicit drug manufacture. A survey was conducted among Governments worldwide to better understand national action and international cooperation. This led to the convening by INCB of the fourth expert group meeting on illicit drug manufacturing equipment and article 13 of the 1988 Convention. Work also continued with WCO to establish unique Harmonized System codes for selected equipment on the international monitoring list of equipment used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.



### Cooperation with industry

The Board has continued to reiterate the crucial role of voluntary cooperation with industry as an effective strategy to prevent the diversion of and trafficking in chemicals used for illicit drug manufacture. Furthermore, it has continued to encourage Governments to map their national industry landscapes with the aim of raising awareness among those industries that are likely to be susceptible to diversion. In the reporting period, the Board conducted several national mapping exercises in cooperation with a number of pilot countries. Findings from the mapping exercises and experiences with various existing national cooperation models were discussed at an INCB international conference at the end of 2024.



### Virtual markets

Chemical precursors, including designer precursors, are increasingly sourced through virtual markets, mainly on the surface web. Initiated in 2024, the INCB Automated Monitoring of Virtual Chemical and Equipment Markets software solution is aimed at monitoring developments and trends in these markets by leveraging advanced technologies to assist in identifying suspicious postings related to precursor chemicals and illicit drug manufacturing equipment and systematically analyse the data collected in order to develop actionable information and intelligence packages.

# Recommendations

Recommendations to Governments appear in bold throughout the present report.

## Key recommendations relate to:

- The reporting by Governments to INCB pursuant to article 12, paragraph 12, of the 1988 Convention (paras. 9, 29 (c), 31, 66 and 153)
- The monitoring of legitimate international trade and the utilization of related platforms (i.e. the PEN Online and PEN Online Light systems) and tools and resources (paras. 29 (d), 41, 42, 44, 45, 49, 113 and 157 and boxes 1 and 2)
- The sharing of information on precursor-related incidents through PICS (paras. 29 (c), 63, 66, 153 and 159)
- Cross-cutting issues related to illicit drug manufacturing equipment (para. 170) and cooperation with industry (para. 172)

## Additional recommendations related to diversion prevention and investigation include:

- The control of pharmaceutical preparations containing substances in Tables I and II of the 1988 Convention in the same way as the substances themselves (para. 72), and the monitoring of domestic manufacturers of pharmaceutical preparations of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine to prevent the manufacture of fake medicines (para. 78)
- The conduct of investigations into suspicious transactions and precursor seizures and forensic profiling analysis of seized substances to determine the nature of starting materials (paras. 45, 74, 102 and 159)
- The exercise of vigilance about quantities indicated as being required by companies when determining annual legitimate requirements (paras. 37 and 81)

# Tools

## Monitoring of licit trade

The Board's PEN Online system continued to provide an effective mechanism for monitoring trade in internationally controlled precursors, with the tool now regularly being used by 145 countries. In addition, the analogous PEN Online Light system, another of the Board's initiatives to prevent chemicals not listed in Tables I and II of the 1988 Convention from reaching illicit laboratories, is currently being used by 42 exporting and importing Governments. During the reporting period, INCB, together with UNODC, conducted training for 20 officials from eight countries in East and South-East Asia and Oceania on the use of these systems.



## Law enforcement operations

PICS continued to provide a platform for the global communication of actionable information about precursor- and equipment-related incidents in real time. As at 1 November 2024, PICS had more than 700 active users from 130 countries and territories, representing 325 agencies in all regions. Over 4,800 incidents relating to precursors and equipment had been communicated through the system since its inception. Between 1 November 2023 and 1 November 2024, over 500 new incidents were communicated. These incidents involved 147 distinct substances, of which only 18 are internationally controlled (12 are listed in Table I and 6 in Table II of the 1988 Convention). Among these incidents were 130 incidents involving equipment. During the reporting period, INCB trained over 120 officials from 40 countries and three international or regional organizations on the use of PICS.



## Other tools and resources

To assist Governments in addressing the diversion of non-scheduled chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and the proliferation of designer precursors, the Board developed and disseminated to all competent national authorities a list of substances that fall within the extended definitions described in the limited international special surveillance list of non-scheduled substances. The Board also amended the list to include two new sections on the following: (a) frequently seen precursors of substances recently scheduled under the 1961 Convention and the 1971 Convention and of new psychoactive substances; and (b) frequently seen cutting agents, adulterants and excipients. Moreover, INCB disseminated the most recent information on control measures applied by Governments to chemicals that are not in Tables I or II of the 1988 Convention but that may be used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, controlled precursors or new psychoactive substances.

