

reported for the first time the dismantling of a laboratory for the illicit manufacture of Captagon. Significant quantities of Captagon were also seized in the Syrian Arab Republic (1.4 million tablets) and Jordan (512,000 tablets).

439. The abuse of stimulants (mainly methcathinone sold under the name of ephedrone, but also other amphetamine-type stimulants) is also occurring in central Asia. Methcathinone can easily be manufactured in home laboratories from ephedrine, which is extracted from the *Ephedra* plant. There is an abundance of wild-growing *Ephedra* plants in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Ephedrine is converted into methcathinone (ephedrone) for injection or is used as a precursor in the manufacture of methamphetamine. For a number of years, ephedrine from China has been smuggled into countries in central Asia.

440. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the abuse of benzodiazepines in the form of pharmaceutical tablets is widespread. Benzodiazepines are often abused in conjunction with opium and heroin, indicating that controls over the licit distribution of such products are weak in those countries and in the countries adjacent to them. The abuse of benzodiazepines (Rohypnol) is also increasing in Turkey. In Pakistan, benzodiazepines (for example, diazepam) are also reportedly being added to heroin as adulterants.

Missions

441. In November 1999, a mission of the Board visited Lebanon. The Board notes with appreciation that the Government of Lebanon has prevented the re-emergence of opium poppy cultivation, has continued its campaign against illicit cannabis cultivation and has made efforts to curtail illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors. The Board trusts that the Government will promulgate a decree categorizing the substances to be controlled under the new law for precursors, thereby making it possible for the law to be fully implemented.

442. The Board notes with regret that the Government of Lebanon has shown no intention of lifting bank secrecy in cases involving drug traffickers. Under current legal stipulations in Lebanon, it is extremely difficult to investigate money-laundering and it is virtually impossible to confiscate assets of drug traffickers; that leaves the country vulnerable to attempts to use its banking system to "launder"

proceeds illegally obtained from drug-related activities. The Board therefore reiterates its call to the Government to withdraw its reservation regarding the provisions against money-laundering in the 1988 Convention.

D. Europe

Major developments

443. The availability of drugs in Europe has increased. While cannabis abuse appears to have remained stable in most countries, the availability and abuse of synthetic drugs and cocaine have continued to rise in most parts of the region. In many countries, the prevalence of the abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants is second only to that of cannabis abuse. Despite public concern about synthetic drugs and the fact that scientific evidence has shown them to be harmful even to occasional users, few measures have been taken to prevent their abuse. It appears that some authorities in western Europe are firmly convinced that the abuse of such drugs cannot be prevented. Measures to reduce the illicit demand for such drugs therefore tend to consist of advising drug abusers on the "safe use" of such substances and providing drug-testing facilities at events where synthetic drugs are abused. Such action, although well-intended, leads to ambiguous messages and confusion. Thus, many drug abusers are not aware that there is no safe use of such drugs.

444. Drug policy discussions in western Europe have focused on the implementation of harm reduction activities such as the establishment of drug injection rooms or the effectiveness of heroin maintenance programmes. Following the attention given to harm reduction in western Europe, it appears that some countries in central and eastern Europe have also started to put more emphasis on harm reduction.

445. The Board acknowledged many years ago, in its report for 1993,⁴⁵ that harm reduction had a role to play in a tertiary prevention strategy for demand reduction purposes. However, the Board also drew attention to the fact that harm reduction programmes could not be considered substitutes for demand reduction programmes. The Board would like to reiterate that harm reduction programmes can play a part in a comprehensive drug demand reduction strategy but such programmes should not be carried out

at the expense of other important activities to reduce the demand for illicit drugs, for example drug abuse prevention activities.

446. Since some harm reduction measures are controversial, discussions of their advantages and disadvantages have dominated the public debate on drug policy. The fact that harm reduction programmes should constitute only one element of a larger, more comprehensive strategy to reduce the demand for illicit drugs has been neglected. The Board regrets that the discussion on drug injection rooms and some other harm reduction measures has diverted the attention (and, in some cases, funds) of Governments from important demand reduction activities such as primary prevention or abstinence-oriented treatment.

Treaty adherence

447. Since the last report of the Board was published, San Marino has acceded to the three international drug control conventions, Liechtenstein has become a party to the 1972 Protocol amending the 1961 Convention and to the 1971 Convention and Andorra and Estonia have acceded to the 1988 Convention. Of the 44 States in Europe, 42 are parties to the 1961 Convention, 42 are parties to the 1971 Convention and 40 States and the European Community are parties to the 1988 Convention.

448. Albania remains the only country in Europe that is not a party to any of the international drug control treaties. The Board discussed this issue with the authorities of Albania during a mission in April 2000 (see paragraphs 482-484 below). The Board urges the Government of Albania to accede to the three international drug control treaties as soon as possible.

449. Albania, the Holy See, Liechtenstein and Switzerland remain the only States in Europe that have not ratified the 1988 Convention.

Regional cooperation

450. The Board notes with appreciation that the European Union Action Plan to Combat Drugs (2000-2004) was endorsed by the European Council at Santa Maria da Feira, Portugal, in June 2000. The Action Plan provides common political guidelines for all activities to be undertaken by the institutions and member States of the European Union to implement the European Union Drugs Strategy (2000-2004). The

Action Plan addresses, inter alia, questions regarding the improvement of drug coordination at all levels and the development of national drug coordination units in each member State of the European Union.

451. The Board notes the efforts of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction to collect and analyse drug-related data and provide comparable data on the drug phenomenon in European States. The Board welcomes the work that the Centre has carried out in the assessment of those synthetic drugs which pose a serious threat to public health and have limited therapeutic value.

452. The Board notes with satisfaction that a number of Governments in Europe have stepped up their bilateral cooperation. For example, the Government of the Russian Federation has concluded over 80 inter-governmental and inter-agency agreements related to drug control with other Governments throughout the world.

453. A large number of bilateral and regional agreements on drug law enforcement have led to excellent cooperation among eastern European countries and between eastern European countries and western European countries, contributing to the increase in the number of seizures of drugs, in particular heroin, in Europe.

454. The Board welcomes the fact that the law enforcement authorities of Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Ukraine have continued their joint efforts to fight drug trafficking, which have resulted in major drug seizures.

455. Because of the general lack of data on the prevalence of drug abuse in eastern Europe, the Board, in its report for 1999,⁴⁶ encouraged Governments in that subregion to establish drug abuse information systems. The Board welcomes the fact that, since then, a number of epidemiological studies on drug abuse have been initiated. In particular, the Board notes with appreciation the results of both the multi-city study on drug abuse and the Phare project on drug information systems.

National legislation, policy and action

456. The Board welcomes the adoption of new comprehensive drug control legislation in Slovenia, including updated provisions on control of the licit movement of scheduled substances, provisions related

to the prevention of drug abuse and the treatment of drug abusers and a new law on precursor control.

457. The parliament of Portugal decided in July 2000 that penal sanctions would no longer apply to the illicit use, possession and acquisition for personal use of all drugs. Instead, those offences would be subject to administrative sanctions, such as fines, or other limitations of rights, such as the suspension of driving privileges. A similar law is under consideration in Luxembourg.

458. In September 2000, the parliament of Poland approved a bill that increases penalties for abusers and sellers of any type of drugs. The bill sets prison terms of up to three years for drug possession and up to 10 years for the retail selling of drugs. In the past, retail sellers of drugs had often escaped punishment because persons could not be punished in Poland for carrying small quantities of drugs for personal use.

459. Drug legalization is not considered a policy option in Europe, but there is a move in several member States of the European Union to decriminalize drug abuse, particularly when it is perceived to be related to drug addiction. Drug legalization is also not supported by the general public, or even young people.

460. In February 2000, Germany adopted an amendment to its narcotics act, allowing for the establishment and operation of drug injection rooms. The amendment sets forth 10 minimum standards for the security and control of the use of narcotics in drug injection rooms. The Board notes that the Government of Germany has responded to some of the concerns of the Board such as the emergence of rampant drug trafficking on and around the premises of drug injection rooms; however, the Board maintains its principal objection to the establishment and operation of such facilities, which was expressed in its report for 1999.⁴⁷ The Board notes that the non-medical use of drugs obtained on the illicit market without prescription runs counter to the main principle of all the international drug control treaties, namely that drugs should be used for medical and scientific purposes only.

461. Albania, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Liechtenstein have adopted new or strengthened existing legislation to prevent money-laundering. The Board urges the Governments of Poland, the Republic of Moldova and the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia to accelerate the adoption of such legislation. The Board notes that, in Switzerland, the number of suspicious transactions reported has considerably increased since the adoption of the law against money-laundering in that country.

462. In the Russian Federation, amendments to the federal law on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances of 1997 are currently being prepared. As the planned changes are extremely important for national drug control coordination, as well as better international cooperation, the Board urges the Government to accelerate the enactment of that legislation.

463. The Board urges the Governments of Croatia, Slovakia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to follow the example of other countries in Europe by accelerating the adoption of legislation for precursor control.

464. As Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a significant transit point for drug trafficking, the Board has been encouraging the authorities to promote cooperative agreements in the field of drug control between the two entities in that country. The Board therefore welcomes the joint ministerial meeting held in February 2000 that resulted in the two entities agreeing to set up a high-level working group to coordinate the drafting of new drug control legislation.

465. In the summer of 2000, the Government of Switzerland started a national campaign to prevent drug abuse. The campaign, which is a joint effort by the Federal Office for Public Health, the Federal Office of Sports and the Swiss Olympic union, is focusing on using community sports as a means of preventing drug abuse and improving the general health of children and young adults. The campaign is offering a wide range of projects, counselling and information material.

466. Several Governments in Europe have created web sites aimed at preventing drug abuse. The web sites provide information on the effects of drugs. In addition, they often provide answers to questions on drug abuse or related problems. For example, an evaluation of a web site operated by a state government in Germany has shown that advanced technology was successfully used to reach out to abusers of synthetic drugs, cocaine or cannabis who were reluctant to approach in person facilities offering assistance. The web site was also used by others, including young

people, to find information about drugs. The Board therefore encourages Governments to continue to make use of the Internet in their efforts to prevent drug abuse and reach out to drug abusers.

467. In December 1999, the Government of Spain adopted a national drug strategy for the period 2000-2008. The strategy contains, among other things, measures that need to be taken in order to achieve the aims and objectives that, in 1998, Governments at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to countering the world drug problem together, committed themselves to reaching. The Government of the Russian Federation approved the governing principles and guidelines for action to counter illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and drug abuse for the period up to 2008, which describe ways to achieve the goals set by the Assembly at its twentieth special session. The Governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine launched national drug control strategies or programmes related to the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Assembly at its twentieth special session. The Board welcomes those strategies and encourages other Governments in Europe to adopt similar national strategies to ensure achievement of the goals and targets set in the Political Declaration adopted by the Assembly at its twentieth special session.

468. The Board notes that the leaders of eight major industrialized countries (G-8) and the President of the European Commission, at the summit held in Okinawa in July 2000, urged universal implementation of the recommendations adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session.

Cultivation, production, trafficking and abuse

Narcotic drugs

469. Cannabis continues to be the most widely trafficked drug in Europe. Nearly 512 tons of cannabis resin and over 81 tons of cannabis herb were seized in 1999. Morocco continues to be the main source of cannabis resin. Albania remains a major source country for cannabis herb. Albanian cannabis is smuggled primarily into Greece and Italy, where large seizures of it have been made in the past three years. Cannabis is also increasingly being cultivated in Lithuania; in 1999, 1,842 hectares of cannabis were eradicated in that country, three times more than in 1998. Large

areas under cannabis cultivation were also eradicated in Ukraine in 1999. Some western European countries, such as the Netherlands and Switzerland, are becoming important sources of cannabis; the Board again calls on the Governments concerned to consider taking urgently needed countermeasures.

470. Indoor cultivation of cannabis remains a significant problem in western Europe, not least because cannabis seeds and paraphernalia for growing cannabis continue to be sold via the Internet. The Board is not aware of any government action taken against the sale of seeds of highly potent varieties of cannabis over the Internet. As a result, indoor cannabis cultivation has continued to increase. In the United Kingdom, it appears that indoor cannabis cultivation is increasingly being controlled by criminal organizations.

471. The amount of heroin seized in Europe has increased. That increase is partly attributable to significantly increased interception rates in central and eastern European countries. Law enforcement agencies consider that the bulk of the heroin seized in Europe has passed along the Balkan route. In 2000, law enforcement activities led to record seizures in Bulgaria. The eastern parts of Germany are increasingly being used by heroin traffickers as transit points. Countries in central and eastern Europe continue to be used for the storage of heroin and cocaine destined for countries in western Europe. Most of the heroin in Europe continues to be from south-west Asia, Afghanistan being the main country of origin. Some of the heroin seized was identified as being from south-east Asia or Colombia.

472. The Governments of Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Romania, the Russian Federation and Slovenia have reported that heroin abuse has become a major concern. In Albania, heroin abuse is spreading noticeably. In Hungary, intravenous heroin abuse is increasing at an alarming rate.

473. "Liquid heroin" or "kompot", which is produced from poppy straw, continues to be abused in the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). In the Russian Federation, poppy straw extract, commonly used by drug addicts in the past, is being replaced by highly concentrated substances, in particular opium and its derivatives, including heroin. In Ukraine, opium poppy straw extract continues to be the most abused drug.

474. The availability and demand for cocaine have increased in Europe. Large amounts of cocaine are smuggled annually out of South America to meet the illicit demand for that substance in Europe; such smuggling is being facilitated by closer links between criminal groups in the two continents. The average annual increase in cocaine seizures in Europe is about 15 per cent, reflecting not only intensified law enforcement efforts but also an increase in cocaine trafficking and abuse. Spain continues to be the main gateway to Europe for South American cocaine. Most of the larger shipments of cocaine are transported in cargo containers to a primary entry point in Europe, where the consignments are then transferred to smaller boats and yachts and transported to other parts of the region. Cocaine is brought to the Russian Federation both directly from South America and through other States. Although seizures of cocaine in central and eastern Europe decreased in 1999, trafficking organizations have used countries in those subregions as transit points for transporting consignments of cocaine by sea and by air to western Europe, as evidenced by the seizure of 241 kg of cocaine in Croatia in May 2000.

475. Cocaine abuse in Europe has increased in recent years. Available data on lifetime abuse of cocaine show that cocaine abuse has increased in Belgium, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Illicit demand for cocaine has also risen in countries in eastern Europe.

Psychotropic substances

476. Europe continues to be a major source of the illicitly manufactured amphetamines and amphetamine-type stimulants on illicit markets not only in the region but throughout the entire world. Such substances continue to be manufactured mainly in countries in western Europe; however, they are also illicitly manufactured in countries in eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, other CIS member States and the Baltic States.

477. Amphetamine seizures in Europe have increased slightly, with the United Kingdom accounting for the bulk of the seizures made. Amphetamine is illicitly manufactured mainly in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom; some amphetamine laboratories are located in countries in eastern Europe.

478. The availability of methamphetamine, which was previously not a concern, has shown a marked increase in western Europe. In the first half of 2000, over 120,000 tablets of methamphetamine were seized in Switzerland, more than in any other country in Europe. Significant methamphetamine seizures have also been made in Germany. Most of the methamphetamine originated in south-east Asia.

479. Significant seizures of MDMA (Ecstasy) were made in many western European countries, including France, Germany, Spain and Switzerland. Seizures of MDMA (Ecstasy) originating in countries in western Europe, particularly the Netherlands, a major manufacturer of the substance, have increased throughout the world.

480. The Czech Republic reported that during the last two years there has been an increase in the abuse of methamphetamine ("pervitine") by inhalation, compared with previous years, when the drug was almost exclusively injected.

481. Although an increasing number of studies show that MDMA (Ecstasy), because of its neurotoxic properties, causes long-term brain damage, MDMA (Ecstasy) and other synthetic drugs continue to be perceived as relatively "harmless". This is illustrated by the fact that the term "party drugs" is often used to describe MDMA (Ecstasy) and other amphetamine-type stimulants. Synthetic drugs are abused in many different recreational dance and party settings; in addition, in some European countries, drug traffickers sell large amounts of various synthetic drugs at large street parades without being hindered.

Missions

482. In April 2000, the Board sent a mission to Albania. Albania is used as a transit point for heroin consignments from western Asia destined for illicit markets in western Europe. Weak institutional structures make the country attractive to traffickers of not only drugs, but also all sorts of illicit contraband. There is a key trafficking route along its coast on the Adriatic where a large number of small rubber boats are used to smuggle illicit contraband into Italy.

483. Albania is finally starting to enjoy relative peace and stability and will hopefully be able to address the critical issue of strengthening its government institutions, such as the judiciary, which is necessary in order

to deal effectively with criminality in general and drug trafficking in particular.

484. A major concern of the Board is the fact that Albania is the only State in Europe that is not a party to any of the international drug control conventions. The Board urges the Government of Albania and the donor community, including regional organizations, to work closely together to ensure that Albania becomes a party to those conventions without further delay. Albania's accession to the conventions will help to ensure that it will be considered a full partner in its efforts to deal with the problems of criminality and illicit drugs.

485. The Board sent a mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 2000. Institutional structures established by the the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the annexes thereto (collectively the "Peace Agreement"),⁴⁸ initialled in Dayton, Ohio, in the United States on 21 November 1995 and signed in Paris on 14 December 1995, as well as political developments, have prevented unified and effective controls over narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances from being established in the country. The licit trade in internationally controlled substances and drug law enforcement are addressed separately by the two entities that make up the country, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. The absence of a national authority to control the trade in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals may adversely affect the ability of the country to obtain important medicaments containing internationally controlled substances. The lack of a national coordinating body for law enforcement enables traffickers to illicitly move drugs and precursor chemicals through the country with ease.

486. The Board notes that the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina has prepared draft legislation to deal with the above-mentioned shortcomings. The draft legislation would establish a commission for the coordination of drug policy to monitor the licit trade in internationally controlled substances. It would also set up a central office for drugs to coordinate all inter-entity and international operations for the detection, prevention and suppression of drug trafficking. The Board urges that the legislation be enacted and implemented without delay.

487. The Board sent a mission to Greece in May 2000. The national drug policy in that country is in line with the provisions of the international drug control treaties. Control over the licit production of, manufacture of, trade in and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in Greece is carried out conscientiously as reflected in the reliable statistical reports submitted regularly to the Board by the authorities. The provisions of all three international drug control treaties have been incorporated in national law. The Board welcomes the efforts made by the authorities to look into a more effective way of monitoring the wholesale and retail distribution of psychotropic substances in order to detect and prevent possible overprescription of such substances and their diversion to illicit markets in other countries in Europe.

488. The Board commends the Government of Greece for offering a wide range of treatment and rehabilitation programmes that provide drug abusers with not only the usual care, but also extensive counselling, psychosocial assistance and job-related skills. Such treatment is provided to drug abusers without compromising the principles of the international drug control treaties.

489. The Board sent a mission to Ireland in May 2000. The Board highly appreciates the vigorous measures taken by the Government to prevent illicit drug trafficking, such as making it possible to identify, freeze and confiscate the proceeds of crime. Those measures appear to have deterred major drug traffickers from operating and keeping their assets in Ireland. The Board invites the authorities of Ireland, including the Criminal Assets Bureau, to continue to share their experience with their counterparts in other countries. The Board notes, however, that the effectiveness of drug interdiction in Ireland depends to a large extent on measures adopted and implemented in other countries, in particular the member States of the European Union.

490. While the primary concern of the Government of Ireland is understandably the significant heroin problem in the Greater Dublin area, the Government should also update the national drug strategy to give adequate attention to the high level of abuse of cannabis and MDMA (Ecstasy), especially among youth. The Board trusts that the authorities, while continuing their significant efforts in the treatment of opioid addiction, will further develop rehabilitation

and social reintegration projects for addicts. The Board appreciates the efforts of the Government to strengthen community support for its drug-related activities through the local drug task forces.

491. As regards the licit manufacture of, trade in and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, the Board notes the commitment of the authorities of Ireland to ensure full compliance with the international drug control treaties for all substances under international control. The Board welcomes the determination by the Department of Health and Children to extend to all psychotropic substances the mechanism of control of international trade by import and export authorizations and to ensure full accountability for manufacturing losses in the pharmaceutical industry. The Board appreciates the commitment by the authorities to further strengthen their cooperation with the Board in the control of precursor chemicals.

492. At the invitation of the Government of Portugal, the Board sent a mission to that country in September 2000. The Government, in its invitation, had expressed interest in the Board's opinion of the new national drug strategy, which involved changes in the type of sanctions applied to the use, possession and acquisition of drugs for personal use, as well as the reorganization of the institutional framework.

493. In Portugal, the thorough review of the national institutional framework for drug control has brought about the establishment of a national inter-institutional coordination agency. The Board is confident that the creation of a centralized structure will lead to a more effective mechanism for the coordination of programmes and measures, as well as for the exchange and centralization of information on drug abuse, illicit trafficking and related crime.

494. By adopting the new national drug strategy, the Government of Portugal has embarked on a wide-ranging review of drug-related legislation. The Board will continue to monitor the developments in that area. The Board expects that new legislation will be fully in line with the international drug control treaties.

495. In April 2000, the Board sent a mission to the Russian Federation to discuss, among other things, problems involving control of licit activities related to narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors,

as well as the Government's cooperation with the Board.

496. While appreciating the achievements made in recent years by the law enforcement agencies in combating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, the Board notes the difficulties encountered by the Russian authorities in monitoring and reporting to the Board, as required under the three international drug control treaties, licit activities in the country related to narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors. The Board encourages the Government to streamline, bearing in mind the existing problems, the current arrangement for the distribution of control functions between different ministries and relevant government bodies at the national level, with a view to enhancing the drug control system within the country. The Board wishes to emphasize the importance of identifying appropriate government bodies as the competent authorities responsible for both the actual control over narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors and reporting to the Board, and the need to improve coordination and cooperation, particularly among the ministries concerned.

497. The Board sent a mission to Spain in September 2000. The Board notes with satisfaction the commitment of the Government of Spain to international drug control. That commitment is reflected in the national drug control strategy, which provides for a comprehensive and well-balanced system of prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes to deal with the abuse of drugs, as well as alcohol and tobacco, and puts major emphasis on the prevention of drug abuse, in particular, among youth. The Board welcomes the fact that more than 50 per cent of the confiscated funds derived from drug trafficking are used to finance those programmes and that considerable efforts have been made to link the criminal justice system and the treatment programmes. The Board notes with satisfaction that procedures to collect data on the extent and nature of drug abuse are being well established.

498. Drug law enforcement authorities in Spain continue to be successful in seizing significant quantities of drugs destined for Europe. In view of the importance of Spain as a transit country for drugs being smuggled into Europe, the Board encourages the Government to continue to take further steps to

increase the effectiveness of its law enforcement activities and to dismantle drug trafficking organizations. The street purity of cocaine in Spain is the same or higher than that reported in source countries in Latin America, which implies that changes have occurred in the smuggling of that substance into Spain and most likely into the rest of Europe as well. In order to be able to determine those changes, a cocaine-profiling system could be established.

499. The mission to Spain visited a pilot project established by the community of Madrid aimed at reaching out to severely addicted heroin abusers. The pilot project provides, in particular, the use of heroin injection facilities intended to be a first step to attract those abusers who have previously not been incorporated into any type of health-care network or into other drug abuse treatment programmes. The Board reiterates its concern over such facilities, which it expressed in its report for 1999.⁴⁷

500. In September 2000, for the third time in the last decade, a mission of the Board visited Switzerland at the invitation of the Government. The Board notes with appreciation the willingness of the Government to maintain a business-like dialogue with it on numerous matters related to the implementation of the international drug control treaties. The Swiss authorities have actively supported the worldwide strengthening of control of the international trade in psychotropic substances. Comprehensive precursor control mechanisms have been introduced and the provisions of article 12 of the 1988 Convention are being effectively implemented. Under the new law against money-laundering, banks have increasingly reported suspicious transactions to the federal authorities and have frozen the assets involved in such transactions. The Board encourages Switzerland to complement the above-mentioned positive steps by accelerating its accession to the 1988 Convention.

501. The Board appreciates the fact that Switzerland has developed in the last decade a comprehensive drug control strategy, supported by considerable financial means. In particular, the Board welcomes the high quality of the primary and secondary prevention activities. All four elements of that strategy, namely prevention, treatment, "harm reduction" and law enforcement, should receive equal attention, and emphasis should not be shifted towards harm reduction.

502. The Board notes the results of the comprehensive drug control strategy of Switzerland. It has been reported, for example, that the incidence of HIV infection and hepatitis infection, overdose mortality and the rate of drug-related crime have been reduced. However, the Board wishes to highlight its understanding that those positive developments are the result of complex measures, supported by a sophisticated social and health-care system and impressive financial resources, and not the result of any isolated element of the drug control policy. The effect of extensive prescribing of various scheduled drugs on the level of drug abuse and trafficking in Switzerland should be carefully evaluated. The Board therefore encourages other countries examining the Swiss experience to consider its complexity, including the extensive social and medical support for drug addicts, based on considerable financial means.

503. The Board notes with concern that the cultivation and sale of cannabis in Switzerland have actually developed into a significant grey area of business. Further liberalization foreseen, such as the decriminalization of cannabis cultivation and trade currently under discussion, would not only be contrary to the provisions of the 1961 Convention, but might also aggravate the problem instead of solving it. The Board is concerned about the possible long-term results of the cannabis policy of Switzerland and the dangers of large-scale smuggling of cannabis products out of Switzerland and "drug tourism". The Board calls on the Swiss authorities to take the above-mentioned concerns into consideration when deciding on revisions of the Swiss narcotics law of 1951 with regard to cannabis cultivation, purchase, trade and possession.

504. The Board continues to be concerned over the practice not in line with international conventions of establishing drug injection rooms where non-medical use of drugs is taking place. Switzerland is a country with a highly developed social and health-care system and should be able to provide all types of facilities for treatment, instead of establishing drug injection rooms that maintain and facilitate drug abuse under supposedly hygienic conditions.

505. The Board has reviewed action taken by the Government of Romania pursuant to recommendations made by the Board after its mission in July 1997 to that country. The Board notes with appreciation that, in response to its recommendation to establish a high-

level coordinating body for drug control matters, an inter-ministerial committee for the fight against drugs was established in Romania in July 1999.

506. The Board welcomes the adoption in Romania of law No. 21/1999, on the prevention and penalization of money-laundering. The Board notes with concern, however, that the authorities of Romania have not followed their time plan for the adoption of other draft bills on drug-related crime, including draft bills on drug trafficking, corruption and organized crime. The Board urges the Government of Romania to consider those pending bills as a matter of priority and adopt them at the earliest possible date.

E. Oceania

Major developments

507. Illicit trafficking in and abuse of heroin continue to be serious problems in Australia. Seizure data indicate that the drug remains widely available, that its price has fallen and that its purity remains high. Arrests for criminal offences involving heroin have increased sharply since 1997. The heroin death rate in Australia continues to rise. The Board trusts that the Government will continue its efforts to address those developments appropriately, in line with its obligations under the international drug control treaties, in order to reverse the trend.

508. The Board has become aware of large orders of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine placed by companies located in Papua New Guinea; both ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are precursor chemicals controlled under the 1988 Convention and used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine. As the illicit manufacture of stimulants is a serious problem in the region of Asia and the Pacific in general, the Board trusts that the competent authorities of Papua New Guinea will fully investigate any attempts to divert large quantities to clandestine manufacture.

509. While problems of heroin and cocaine trafficking and abuse have been, for the most part, limited in the Pacific islands, seizure data indicate that the area is increasingly being used for the trans-shipment of those substances. The Board hopes that the recent political situation in some of the Pacific islands will not adversely affect the ability of the Governments concerned to address drug control.

Treaty adherence

510. The Board remains concerned that the rate of accession to the international drug control treaties continues to be low in Oceania. Of the 14 States in the region, 9 are parties to the 1961 Convention and 8 are parties to the 1971 Convention. A number of States, namely, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, have not become parties to any of the international drug control conventions. Very few of the States in the region are parties to the 1988 Convention. The Board urges Governments and regional organizations to give priority to the issue of accession.

Regional cooperation

511. Regional organizations such as the Oceania Customs Organisation and the South Pacific Forum continue to play an important role in improving the coordination of action to implement the provisions of the international drug control treaties among the Pacific island States, which are often geographically isolated. The Board urges that drug control issues, including money-laundering, remain an important element of their work.

512. The Board welcomes the efforts of the Government of Australia to include the authorities of New Zealand and Papua New Guinea in consultations with a view to contributing to more harmonized approaches in Oceania.

National legislation, policy and action

513. Harm reduction continues to be a major element of the strategy on drug abuse in both Australia and New Zealand. While such an approach may help to reduce the incidence of communicable diseases, the Board stresses that harm reduction should not become a goal in itself and that such a strategy should not be adopted at the expense of a strong commitment to reduce both the supply of and demand for illicit drugs. Moreover, all such measures must be in conformity with the provisions of the international drug control treaties.

514. The Board notes that a number of Pacific island States, such as Samoa, have begun considering ways to strengthen their financial controls in order to ensure that their institutions are not used for money-laundering. The Board encourages all States in the