

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

region to expeditiously put in place all measures necessary to prevent money-laundering.

### **Cultivation, production, manufacture, trafficking and abuse**

#### *Narcotic drugs*

515. In Australia, a decrease in the illicit outdoor cultivation of cannabis has been offset by an increase in the hydroponic cultivation of cannabis; according to the 1998 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, about one out of five survey participants had used cannabis in the previous 12 months. The illicit cultivation of cannabis also continues in New Caledonia and in Papua New Guinea and to a limited extent on some Pacific islands, such as Fiji. The price of the drug in Australia, the key consumer market for cannabis cultivated in Papua New Guinea, decreased in 1999. In Papua New Guinea, cannabis is increasingly being bartered for commercial goods and weapons.

516. Most of the heroin seized in the period 1998-1999 by Australian customs authorities originated in East and South-East Asia. Sydney and, to a lesser extent, Melbourne remain key entry points since those cities are primary international and domestic transportation hubs; they are also places with high levels of abuse. While the injection of drugs is most common, there has been an increase in the practice of inhaling the smoke of burning heroin in Australia. Other countries in Oceania, such as New Zealand, do not appear to have a significant market for heroin. As shown by the recent seizure of 350 kg of heroin in Fiji, the Pacific islands are quite vulnerable to trafficking.

517. The availability of and demand for cocaine are, with the exception of Australia, low in countries in Oceania. Only sporadic seizures by law enforcement authorities occur in the region. In the past few years, however, seizure data indicate a trend towards the increasing use by traffickers of Pacific islands, such as Fiji and Tonga, as transit points for South American cocaine en route to consumer markets in Australia and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand.

#### *Psychotropic substances*

518. Methamphetamine continues to be manufactured illicitly in Australia using chemicals such as pseudoephedrine diverted from domestic sources. Australian police reported that large amounts of

Sudafed, a common over-the-counter decongestant containing pseudoephedrine, had been stolen from warehouses across the country. Pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors are, however, working together with medical professionals such as doctors and pharmacists and with regulators and law enforcement to ensure that such over-the-counter medication is used only for the purpose for which it is intended; those efforts include increasing security measures of pharmaceutical wholesalers and distributors. Trafficking in and abuse of methamphetamine in crystal form appear to be on the rise in some of the Pacific islands.

519. The demand for MDMA (Ecstasy) appears to be increasing in New Zealand, as reflected in the increased seizures of that substance by local law enforcement authorities. There is as yet no evidence of local manufacture of MDMA (Ecstasy) in that country.

520. LSD continues to be a major problem in New Zealand, where it is illicitly imported mainly through the mail system from western Europe and the west coast of North America.

521. The sale and abuse of sodium oxybate, a psychoactive substance with hallucinogenic properties that is not under international control, have increased significantly in New Zealand.

### **Missions**

522. In April 2000, the Board sent a mission to Australia.

523. The drug issue has continued to be widely debated at the federal and state levels and by the Australian public at large. Under the Tough on Drugs Strategy adopted in November 1997, the Government has been focusing more of its attention on the reduction of the supply of and demand for illicit drugs in order to reverse the negative trends of the 1990s. Harm reduction has been the key principle underpinning Australia's drug strategy since the mid-1980s.

524. The Board notes with concern that, during the 1990s, parallel to the increasing abuse of illicit drugs, the social acceptance of illicit drugs in Australia remained high, with many people being vocally in favour of the legalization of drugs, in particular cannabis. Indicators show that globally Australia is among the countries with the most widespread

cannabis abuse. The Board notes, however, that the majority of Australians are not in favour of the legalization of cannabis.

525. The spreading heroin abuse in Australia has been followed by a rising death toll among heroin abusers. Therefore, the focus in that country should be on measures to reduce the number of heroin abusers. Some States unfortunately challenge the policy of the federal Government and choose to support policies that run counter to the treaty obligation limiting the use of drugs to medical and scientific purposes only, by establishing heroin injection rooms where illicitly obtained drugs can be injected under supervision.

526. Australia has a very comprehensive and multifaceted programme of treatment and rehabilitation. The Board encourages the Government to develop further the system, which so far has focused on pharmaco-therapeutic assistance in the form of maintenance. The Board appreciates the programmes that enable persons to gradually terminate methadone maintenance and become drug-free and socially reintegrated. The Board notes the establishment of structures for close cooperation between health and judicial authorities, together with the non-governmental sector, aimed at diverting drug-dependent persons from the criminal justice system into appropriate treatment systems.

527. The Board welcomes the efforts of the Government of Australia to prevent young people from abusing drugs, through preventive education in all primary and secondary educational establishments. A campaign for 2001 targeting parents through various media will be followed by specific messages to young people. Those measures will be supported by back-up programmes in schools. The Board trusts that the efforts will result in more people rejecting drugs and not getting involved in drug abuse.

(Signed) Hamid Ghodse      (Signed) Jacques Franquet

President

Rapporteur

(Signed) Herbert Schaepe

Secretary

Vienna, 17 November 2000