

Foreword

The international drug control conventions enjoy almost universal adherence and the International Narcotics Control Board monitors their implementation by Governments to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances used for scientific and medical purposes. As a result of the implementation of the conventions, the diversion of controlled substances at the international level has been virtually eliminated. Furthermore, Governments have intensified their efforts to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs. Unfortunately, corruption is undermining international efforts to eliminate problems related to controlled drugs. Thus, chapter I of the present report is devoted to the issue of drugs and corruption.

By systematically using violence and corruption, intimidating and blackmailing public officials, wealthy and powerful organized criminal groups have been able to weaken law enforcement and judicial systems. Violence is often used to threaten or punish “whistle-blowers”. Witnesses who provide evidence of drug-related corruption often risk their lives and the lives of their family members. Unless the vicious cycle of corruption and drug trafficking is broken, international drug control efforts cannot be fully successful.

Developing countries and societies in post-conflict situations are particularly vulnerable to drug-related corruption. Corruption facilitates the illicit drug trade, which, if left unchecked, can destabilize economies, political systems and civil society and eventually threaten peace and security. In severe cases, organized criminal groups exert their considerable political influence to gain control over large population groups or geographical areas.

Law enforcement and customs authorities throughout the world are highly vulnerable to drug-related corruption. Drug control units are at risk of being infiltrated by criminal groups, which often have at their disposal enormous resources and sophisticated technology. Regulatory agencies are also exposed to drug-related corruption, as drug traffickers must engage in money-laundering to hide their huge profits. If military units are used in illicit crop eradication and border control, they may also be exposed to drug-related corruption. The judicial system may also be affected by drug-related corruption and intimidation.

In spite of the power of organized criminal groups, the overwhelming majority of law enforcement and judicial officials worldwide manage to resist corruption and intimidation. Regrettably, some law enforcement and judicial officials lose their lives fighting drug-related corruption.

Another challenge is to ensure the availability of medication containing substances under international control. In many countries, access to such controlled substances for use in the treatment of severe pain is limited or non-existent. In view of the seriousness of the problem, the Board has decided to issue a supplement to the present report: a report on the availability of internationally controlled drugs.

Global consumption of opioid analgesics used for pain management has increased significantly. For example, global consumption of morphine increased by a factor of almost 7 in the period 1989-2009. However, the increase in morphine consumption has been considerably higher in some regions and there are disparities

among countries in each region. The highest levels of consumption of opioid analgesics are reported in countries in North America and Europe. Governments must identify problems encountered in ensuring the availability of controlled substances used for medical purposes and, if necessary, take appropriate measures to remedy the situation. In addition, Governments must have monitoring and control systems in place to ensure that narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are used only for legitimate medical purposes.

The use of substances, including pharmaceutical preparations, to facilitate the commission of crime continues to be a cause for concern. Much media attention has been given to the use of so-called “date-rape drugs”, such as flunitrazepam, to facilitate sexual assault. “Designer drugs”, substances that have been developed especially to avoid existing drug control measures, are a major concern. “Designer drugs” are manufactured by making a minor modification to the molecular structure of controlled substances, resulting in new substances with pharmacological effects similar to those of the controlled substances. Instructions for manufacturing “designer drugs” can often be easily found on the Internet. One widely publicized “designer drug”, mephedrone, has been reported in an increasing number of countries and regions, and many countries have placed it under national control. As synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists, marketed under brand names such as Spice, are becoming more and more available, there has been increasing concern about the health risks of such products. In some countries, certain synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists have been added to the list of substances controlled under national legislation. Governments and relevant international organizations must develop comprehensive measures to counter the problem of “designer drugs”. There is a need for similar action to be taken with regard to precursor chemicals, as Governments are increasingly being confronted with substances not under international control and substitutes for controlled precursors, including substances that are specifically designed to circumvent existing controls and that can be reconverted into controlled precursors using readily available means.

In Africa, the lack of regulatory controls and the availability of controlled substances on the unregulated market pose a significant health risk. In South America, while the total area under illicit coca bush cultivation decreased in 2009, there was an increase in the abuse of cocaine in the Southern Cone. In Afghanistan, there continues to be a high level of illicit opium poppy cultivation; efforts to reduce such cultivation have been hindered by corruption, lack of security and limited law enforcement capacity. In South-East Asia, there was an increase in illicit opium poppy cultivation in the so-called Golden Triangle, which accounted for 5 per cent of global opium poppy cultivation. Increased trafficking in amphetamine-type stimulants remains a major problem in East and South-East Asia. South Asia is now one of the main regions used as a source of precursor chemicals required for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine.

The present report highlights the many challenges faced in drug control. It presents a realistic snapshot of the current drug control situation throughout the world. The news is not all bad. Governments have gained experience in preventing and treating drug abuse. There is broad recognition of the fact that the drug-related problems must be tackled by using a delicate balance of both supply and demand reduction measures. There are regional and international mechanisms for promoting cooperation in drug control. Non-governmental organizations are playing an

increasingly important role in highlighting the need for equitable access to medicines used for the treatment of pain. The need to ensure respect for human rights in supply and demand reduction measures is emphasized repeatedly by international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Organized criminal groups are dynamic — always seeking the path of least resistance. It is only together — through cooperation — that the international community can make real progress in its efforts to prevent drug-related problems and continue to ensure the availability of controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hamid Ghodse", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hamid **Ghodse**
President
International Narcotics Control Board