



## Factsheet 6

## Regional Highlights

### Africa

#### Trafficking of opiates increased

There has been a sizeable increase in the trafficking of opiates through East Africa and cocaine in North and East Africa, as well as a sizeable increase in the illicit manufacture and trafficking of methamphetamine in the region; abuse of opioids, cannabis, amphetamine-type stimulants and cocaine is also increasing.

The 10-fold increase in seizures of heroin in East Africa since 2009 makes that subregion possibly the largest hub in Africa for heroin trafficked onward to the illicit European markets. Heroin trafficking in East Africa has led to supply-driven increase in abuse in the subregion. Heroin, departing from South-West Asia and destined mainly for the illicit European markets, is increasingly transiting West Africa. Heroin is also smuggled into Southern Africa by means of maritime transport from South-West Asia through East Africa. Cannabis is being cultivated and seized in almost all countries in Africa. Morocco, along with Afghanistan, remains the biggest source of cannabis resin in the world, although production in Morocco is decreasing.

#### Emerging markets for amphetamine-type stimulants

There is an emerging market for amphetamine-type stimulants in Africa, and at the same time those substances are being trafficked from the region to the countries of East and South-East Asia and Oceania. The increase in trafficking in ephedrine in Africa could indicate the establishment in Africa of new laboratories for the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants. The smuggling through Africa of cocaine from South America destined for Europe appears to have diminished since 2009, while the use of containerized consignments and maritime shipping of cocaine through West Africa to Europe is on the increase. In 2012, an increase in seizures of cocaine in North and East Africa could be observed.

#### Drug abuse and treatment

The prevalence of cannabis abuse continues to be high in Africa - nearly double the global average - while the abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants, cocaine and opiates remains close to the global average. West and Central Africa continue to have a prevalence of cocaine abuse that is significantly higher than the global average, while the prevalence of abuse of cannabis and opioids in those two subregions remains relatively high.

As the INCB Annual Report for 2013 that focuses on economic consequences of drug abuse shows, only 1 in 18 problem drug users receives treatment in Africa, which is significantly less compared to other regions, such as Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, where approximately 1 in 11 problem drug users receives treatment, and North America with an estimated 1 in 3 problem drug users receiving treatment interventions. INCB emphasizes that although the impact on health stands out as one of the most important consequences in terms of economic loss, investments in treatment are cost-effective versus the cost of untreated and continuing abuse or the cost of incarceration.

#### Availability of pain medications remains critical

INCB has over the years raised its concern that Africa has continued to be the region with the lowest levels of consumption of opioid analgesics for the treatment of pain. In the Annual Report, INCB reports upon its recent missions to a number of African countries – Benin, Kenya and Mozambique – where the low availability of opioid analgesics for the treatment of pain was identified. As part of ongoing efforts to address the problem of inadequate availability of drugs for medical purposes in



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Africa, INCB provided training to the national authorities of 12 West African countries in June 2013, aimed at strengthening capacity to ensure adequate availability and compliance with treaty-based reporting obligations. INCB has reiterated the importance of providing such training in other regions and sub-regions.

## Americas

### *Central America and the Caribbean*

#### **A transit and trans-shipment route for illicit drugs**

Central America and the Caribbean continue to be affected by drug trafficking and high levels of drug-related violence. The region remains a significant transit route for cocaine to North America and Europe. Large-scale illicit methamphetamine manufacture is a cause for serious concern.

The Central America and Caribbean region continues to be exploited by organized criminal groups trafficking drugs to North America and Europe. It is estimated that more than 90 per cent of all cocaine trafficked to the United States of America is of Colombian origin and transits Mexico and the Central American corridor. Conversely, the flow of cocaine through the Caribbean region has declined significantly in recent years as traffickers have looked for alternative routes, particularly along the border between Guatemala and Honduras.

### *North America*

#### **Prescription drug abuse - a growing threat to public health**

According to information provided by Governments in the region, there were approximately 48,000 drug-related deaths in North America in 2011, representing a mortality rate of 155.8 per million inhabitants aged 15-64, the highest rate in the world. While prevalence rates for the abuse of illicit drugs have remained relatively stable, they continue to exceed global averages.

Prescription drug abuse has continued to constitute a serious and growing threat to public health. Governments in the region have sought to address this threat through the adoption of various measures, including the staging of prescription drug “take-back days”. In the United States, the organization of such initiatives by the Drug Enforcement Administration has resulted in the removal of over 1,700 tons of prescription drugs which are no longer needed from circulation. Canadian authorities have also increased their efforts to deal with the widespread abuse of prescription drugs in the country through the adoption of a national strategy on prescription drug abuse and the staging of the first ever pan-Canadian prescription drug take-back day.

In North America, as in other regions, women have been disproportionately affected by prescription drug abuse. While drug abuse prevalence remains more common among men, rates of abuse among women have increased at a faster pace. Statistics released in July 2013 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveal that almost 48,000 women in the U.S. lost their lives as a result of prescription opioid abuse between 1999 and 2011. In Mexico, the National Institute of Women has indicated that drug abuse among Mexican women has doubled in the past decade. Women are also more likely than men to be affected by drug-related domestic violence, crime and sexual assault.

### **Cannabis measures**

The Board has continued to be concerned about the control measures applicable to cannabis in the North American sub-region. In Canada, the Board notes that the authorities have taken extensive measures to reform the country’s medical cannabis programme in order to tighten controls aimed at preventing diversion into illicit channels. In the U.S., medical cannabis schemes adopted by various States do not adequately implement the control measures mandated by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. In addition, the Board reiterates that cannabis legalization initiatives underway in the States of Colorado and Washington violate the 1961 Convention’s restriction of the use of narcotic drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes.



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## **South America**

### **Decrease of coca bush cultivation**

In 2012, illicit coca bush cultivation in South America decreased to 133,700 ha, the lowest level since 1999. In Colombia, the total area of coca bush cultivation decreased by a quarter, to 48,000 ha. It also decreased slightly in Bolivia, to 25,300 ha, and Peru, to 60,400 ha.

### **Coca leaf permitted in Bolivia**

In 2013, Bolivia reaccessed to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol, with a reservation on coca leaf. The chewing of coca leaf and the consumption and use of the coca leaf in its natural state for “cultural and medicinal purposes” are now permitted exclusively on the territory of Bolivia by the virtue of the reservation.

### **Increase in cannabis seizures**

In recent years several countries in the region, including Bolivia, Colombia and Paraguay, reported increased seizures of cannabis. These seizures of cannabis may warrant closer examination to determine whether they are primarily the result of strengthened law enforcement activities or whether they may indicate increased illicit cultivation of the cannabis plant in the region.

### **Dangerous trend in cannabis legalization in Uruguay**

INCB stresses that the legislation passed in Uruguay to legalize production, sale and consumption of cannabis for non-medical purposes contravenes the provisions of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic drugs, to which Uruguay is a party, and recalls the need to respect the conventions.

## **Asia**

### **East and South-East Asia**

#### **Heroin still a major concern**

Increasing demand for heroin and amphetamine-type stimulants in East and South-East Asia has led Governments to expand drug treatment services and develop demand reduction strategies, although the focus of efforts continues to be on providing resources to combat drug trafficking and illicit drug manufacture.

### **South Asia**

#### **Abuse of pharmaceutical preparations**

South Asia is facing a serious and growing drug abuse problem, including the abuse of pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. For example, abuse of codeine preparations and “yaba” tablets containing methamphetamine has reached a high level and is growing rapidly in Bangladesh; drug abuse among youth is growing in Bhutan; prescription drug abuse is growing in India; in the Maldives, the first national drug use survey revealed a serious drug abuse problem; and in Nepal, the recorded number of users of drugs is increasing rapidly.

#### **Governments take action collectively**

Governments in South Asia continue to respond strongly to the threat of drug trafficking and abuse in the region, including through an array of cooperation arrangements, both within and extending beyond the region. That cooperation takes the form of information-sharing among law enforcement agencies, training and technical assistance, cooperation on drug abuse prevention and treatment activities and training for treatment practitioners, as well as other activities in the area of reducing drug demand. Drugs enter South Asia’s illicit drug markets through a number of different channels, including diversion from India’s pharmaceutical industry, illicit cultivation and/or manufacture within the region, and smuggling from other countries, including Afghanistan (through Pakistan) and Myanmar. In addition to its existing plans to improve border security, as referred to in the INCB Annual Report for 2012, the Government of India has decided to build approximately 1,400 kilometers of strategic roads



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along its border with Nepal. In response to problems with the abuse of and trafficking in phensedyl (a codeine-based cough syrup), the Indian State of Bihar, which is close to India's border with Bangladesh, has placed restrictions on the sale of phensedyl within its territory.

Access to internationally controlled substances for medical purposes (particularly opiates for pain relief) is limited in the region, and the region's per capita medical consumption is well below the world average.

## **West Asia**

### **Illicit opium poppy cultivation threatens security**

Record-setting poppy cultivation and opium production in 2013 threaten an already fragile security situation in Afghanistan, and neighboring countries, at a time when international security forces begin their planned withdrawal. Afghanistan's eradication efforts and ability to provide alternative development options for farmers have not improved. This situation, coupled with increasingly pervasive corruption in countries of West Asia, will require far more than statements of international cooperation if a meaningful and significant improvement to the lives of the people of West Asia is to be expected.

## **Europe**

### **New psychoactive substances reported in Europe**

Unprecedented numbers and varieties of new psychoactive substances (NPS) have been reported in Europe, and their abuse continues to grow. NPS are an emerging drug phenomenon in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, where they have recently begun to have an impact. There are indications of their limited manufacture in Europe.

### **Trafficking routes for heroin and cocaine**

While the Balkan route remains the most commonly used route for drug trafficking in the subregion of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the amount of heroin trafficked declined in the past year. Consequently, declines in heroin seizures have been reported by countries in the subregion. Cocaine trafficking routes are increasingly diversified, for instance with some trafficking of cocaine through the Baltic countries or along the Balkan route traditionally used for the trafficking of heroin from Afghanistan to Europe. An increase in cocaine trafficking has been reported in particular through ports of the Black Sea, together with the increasing influence of foreign criminal organizations in the region.

### **Cannabis cultivation**

Illicit indoor cannabis cultivation continues to increase in the subregion of Western and Central Europe. Cannabis resin seizures have decreased in the subregion, while seizures of cannabis herb have increased. Cannabis herb is grown throughout Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, with large-scale cultivation detected in a number of countries, particularly Albania.

### **Abuse of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances stabilizing at historically high levels**

The abuse of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances appears to be stabilizing at historically high levels in Western and Central Europe; however, the emerging abuse of prescription opioids is of concern in Western and Central Europe, with seizures reaching record levels in a few countries of the subregion and with treatment demand for abuse of opioids other than heroin increasing. Opioid-related deaths have decreased overall in Western and Central Europe, but the proportion of deaths attributable to fentanyl and methadone has increased in some countries.



### **Methamphetamine manufacture spreading to new locations**

The use of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) remains stable in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, with a small increase reported in few countries. Illicit methamphetamine manufacture appears to be spreading to new locations in Europe. New laboratories for its manufacture have been uncovered in Bulgaria, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Seizures of MDMA (commonly known as “ecstasy”) have increased in Western and Central Europe, indicating a possible resurgence of the substance.

### **Injecting drug use at high levels in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe**

High prevalence of injecting drug use is reported in Eastern and South-Eastern European countries. About 30 per cent of the global population of injecting drug users infected with HIV/AIDS live in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. At about 22 per cent, Ukraine has the largest reported HIV/AIDS-infected population among injecting drug users.

## **Oceania**

### **Cannabis remains the most prevalent drug of abuse**

In Oceania, the increasing use and availability of new psychoactive substances poses considerable prevention, treatment, regulatory and law enforcement challenges, while cannabis remains the most prevalent drug of abuse. Speedy production, distribution and sale through the Internet, together with difficulties in the testing of such substances and gaps in legal and regulatory systems, hinder drug control and law enforcement efforts.

The proximity of the Pacific islands to major illicit markets for amphetamine-type stimulants and routes used for trafficking in other types of drugs makes that subregion particularly susceptible to drug abuse and trafficking. Unfortunately, the continuous lack of reliable and updated data for most of these countries makes a comprehensive assessment and understanding of situation difficult.