

565. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), more than 2 million people are living with HIV in Latin America and the Caribbean, with 100,000 new infections in 2015. In Brazil, the need was identified to scale up voluntary HIV testing and counselling, including among people who use drugs and are at risk of HIV infection. In response, UNODC, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, has supported strategic prevention projects with 38 non-governmental organizations under the initiative Viva Melhor Sabendo (“Live better knowing it”) to develop HIV prevention, treatment and care among people who regularly use cocaine and “crack” cocaine. Also in Brazil, UNODC, jointly with the municipal AIDS programme, supported the programme De Braços Abertos (“Open arms”), which, as at December 2015, had reached over 1,300 people who use “crack” cocaine, of whom nearly 10 per cent are living with HIV. The programme has provided them with job opportunities, housing and improved access to health services.

566. In Argentina, over 60 health and social care service providers and representatives of civil society organizations were trained in addressing the HIV risks and vulnerability of people who use drugs, improving awareness among health service providers and supporting the creation of low-threshold community-based HIV services for people who use drugs.

C. Asia

East and South-East Asia

1. Major developments

567. Illicit opiate production and trafficking continue to be a major concern for the region, as illicit cultivation of opium poppy continues to increase. In 2015, the total area under illicit cultivation of opium poppy remained high in Myanmar for the third consecutive year, amounting to an estimated 55,500 ha. A much smaller, although significant amount, of illicit opium poppy cultivation was reported in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. The proportion of opiates originating in those countries that have been seized by neighbouring countries during the past few years has continued to increase. Driven by the lucrative profits in the largest market within the region, the two-way trafficking in opium and precursor chemicals between China and Myanmar continues.

568. Further growth in the manufacture of, trafficking in and misuse of amphetamine-type stimulants, in particular methamphetamine, has become one of the biggest obstacles to the region’s supply and demand reduction efforts. A large amount of methamphetamine continues to be seized by most countries in East and South-East Asia. An increasing number of source countries, more diversified trafficking routes and greater connectivity within the region have increased the need for effective joint-border collaboration. Further increases in the abuse of methamphetamine have become increasingly problematic, as relevant treatment capacities and facilities are still lacking in most countries.

569. The markets for new psychoactive substances continue to expand, fuelling a major public health concern in the region. The recent trend of mixing new psychoactive substances with amphetamine-type stimulants such as MDMA pose serious challenges to health-care providers and drug control authorities. Measures taken by criminal organizations to circumvent existing controls are likely to persist, as existing legislation in most countries is, at present, ill-suited to addressing the emergence and growing diversity of new psychoactive substances.

2. Regional cooperation

570. The level of cooperation in the region has been extensive. Ministers attending the 4th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters, held in Langkawi, Malaysia, on 29 October 2015, welcomed the institutionalization of the Meeting as a body under the ASEAN Political-Security Community and endorsed the ASEAN position statement, in which the commitment of ASEAN to a zero-tolerance approach to drugs in realizing its aspiration of a drug-free ASEAN region, the importance of a comprehensive and balanced approach towards drug control, and support for the international drug control conventions were reaffirmed.

571. Jointly organized by UNODC, under the global Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends (SMART) programme and the National Narcotics Control Commission of China, the seventh regional SMART workshop included discussions on the production of, misuse of and trafficking trends in non-controlled substances (synthetic drugs and ketamine). New trends, including trafficking facilitated by the Internet, were also discussed.

572. The Thirty-ninth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Asia and the Pacific,

held in Bangkok from 19 to 22 October 2015, enabled law enforcement officers to exchange views on the challenges brought forth by faster regional integration on drug control. Measures to facilitate regional cooperation in law enforcement, border management and joint operations were discussed.

573. The twenty-first Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Law Enforcement Conference, held in Tokyo in February 2016 and organized by the National Policy Agency of Japan, brought together officials from within the region and, for the first time, Africa, Europe and the Americas, as drug-related matters become increasingly intertwined across regions.

574. In July 2016, competent national authorities from South and East Asia and the Pacific attended an INCB training workshop. Experts from 19 Governments received training on the technical reporting requirements of the three international drug control conventions and on the use and application of new INCB tools, including I2ES and PEN Online. During the workshop, major obstacles to the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes were considered, and the implementation of recommendations made to Governments to facilitate access to and the availability of those drugs and substances were highlighted.

575. Senior officials from the six countries in the Greater Mekong subregion (Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) met in May 2016 and agreed to coordinate and integrate their drug control efforts through the adoption of an action plan. Participating countries restated the urgent need to involve neighbouring countries and called for a balanced approach to the implementation of the action plan, which incorporated law enforcement, criminal justice, alternative development and health responses.

576. As part of the region's endeavour to transition towards a community-based treatment approach, senior representatives of nine countries (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) attended the Third Regional Consultation on Compulsory Centres for Drug Users, which was held in Manila from 21 to 23 September 2015. A road map to accelerate the move towards evidence-based prevention, treatment and support services for people who abuse drugs was drafted. The representatives adopted recommendations on the transition to voluntary community-based treatment services for people who abuse drugs, clustered around the following three pillars of action: (a) the development of national

transition plans; (b) the review of national policies that restrict voluntary access to community-based treatment programmes; and (c) the building of capacity to provide voluntary services, including treatment.

3. National legislation, policy and action

577. In the Philippines, a manual to guide the establishment of community-based treatment and care services for persons who abuse drugs was launched in September 2015, signifying a first step in efforts to establish community-based tertiary prevention facilities.

578. Reports of acts of violence and murder in the Philippines committed against individuals suspected of involvement in the illicit drug trade or of drug abuse, which may have been encouraged or condoned by members of the Government since July 2016, came to the Board's attention. The Board issued a statement calling on the Government of the Philippines to issue an immediate and unequivocal condemnation and denunciation of extrajudicial actions against individuals suspected of involvement in the illicit drug trade or of drug abuse, to put an immediate stop to such actions, and to ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are brought to justice in full observance of due process and the rule of law. **The Board wishes to bring once again to the attention of all Governments that extrajudicial action, purportedly taken in pursuit of drug control objectives, is fundamentally contrary to the provisions and objectives of the three international drug control conventions, under which all actions must be undertaken within the due process of law.**

579. **A number of countries in East and South-East Asia continue to apply the death penalty for drug-related offences; the Board wishes to draw the attention of all Governments to its statements issued in March 2014 and in August 2016 on the subject and to reiterate its call to all States that retain the death penalty for drug-related offences to commute death sentences that have already been handed down and to consider the abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offences.**

580. Amendments and changes to national legislation to strengthen the scope of control over new psychoactive substances continued in 2015, as the region dealt with the continued emergence of such substances. In Hong Kong, China, the definition of synthetic cannabinoids under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (cap. 134) was amended in November 2015 to enlarge its scope. Meanwhile, NBOME compounds were added to the first schedule of the

Ordinance, following the decision of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to include 25B-NBOMe (2C-B-NBOMe) in Schedule I of the 1971 Convention.

581. Following the scheduling of 116 new psychoactive substances in October 2015 in China,⁶³ the Central Narcotics Board of Singapore listed 20 new psychoactive substances and one tryptamine generic group in the first schedule of the Misuse of Drugs Act in May 2016. They had previously been listed in the fifth schedule of that Act. Two new substances, MT-45 and *para*-methyl-4-methylaminorex (4,4'-DMAR), were also listed in the first schedule, following the decision of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to include MT-45 in Schedule I of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol and 4,4'-DMAR in Schedule II of the 1971 Convention. As a pre-emptive measure to restrict the circulation of new psychoactive substances, four new substances (methyl 2-[[1-(cyclohexylmethyl)indole-3-carbonyl]amino]-3,3-dimethylbutanoate (MDMB-CHMICA), THJ-018, NM-2201 and 5F-NNE1) were listed in the fifth schedule of the Misuse of Drugs Act.

582. Some modifications were made to the criminal law of China in order to strengthen the legal basis for its precursor control and prevent the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in precursor chemicals. Specifically, the ninth amendment to the country's criminal law became effective in November 2015, whereby article 350 was amended to include both the crime of illegal precursor chemicals manufacture and the crime of illegal precursor chemicals trafficking. That means that a higher prescribed penalty will be applied for committing those crimes.

583. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic completed drafting the "National Drug Control Master Plan for 2016-2020" in November 2015; similar national plans were adopted in Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand in 2014. The Plan provides an overarching framework for the Government's efforts in drug control and highlights nine elements as guiding principles: expanding evidence-based policymaking; promoting integrated alternative development; reducing the harm associated with drug use; preventing drug use; using law enforcement strategically; effectively decriminalizing drug use; regulating precursors and strengthening forensic laboratories; strengthening cooperation; and developing capacity. A greater emphasis is now placed on coordinating and integrating the work of all relevant stakeholders in the country for more targeted intervention and greater efficiency.

⁶³E/INCB/2015/1, para. 502.

584. In Japan, the Act on the Suspension of Execution of a Part of a Sentence for Persons who Committed the Crime of the Use of Drugs, became effective on 18 June 2016. The Act was introduced to ensure a rehabilitation period as an alternative to incarceration for persons convicted of using drugs. Under the Act, when a person is sentenced to imprisonment with or without labour for not more than three years for the use of drugs, there is an option to suspend the execution of part of the sentence. The period of such suspension is between one and five years, during which the drug offender is on probation and is given rehabilitation services, including undertaking community service.

585. In 2015, authorities in China distributed the Work Plan on Community-Based Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation (2016-2020). The Plan outlines the support and assistance to be provided to local governments to integrate persons who abuse drugs after treatment and rehabilitation, with a focus on increasing their employability and implementing social insurance policies.

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

(a) Narcotic drugs

586. Illicit cultivation of opium poppy continued to be concentrated in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, particularly in the Shan State in Myanmar, and has displayed no sign of weakening. The total area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar was estimated at 55,500 ha in 2015: one fifth of the total global illicit opium poppy cultivation took place in Myanmar, and the country remained the second-largest opium-producing country in the world. After reaching a low of fewer than 25,000 ha in 2006, illicit opium poppy cultivation increased and then stabilized at the current level in 2013. Meanwhile, a smaller yet significant amount of illicit cultivation (5,700 ha) was recorded in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. With a combined estimated 800 tons of opium production in 2015, those two countries continued to be the main suppliers within the region and major suppliers within Oceania and South Asia. Continuation of the increasing trend, however, has put them at risk of reversing the positive gains made over the last decade.

587. Regional seizure data over the past few years point to an increase in the trafficking of opiates from the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. That increase is reflected in both the total amount of heroin

seized and the share of seized heroin originating in the region. Heroin and morphine seizures in East and South-East Asia more than doubled between 2008 and 2014, from 5.7 tons to 13 tons. Accounting for more than 30 per cent of the seized opiates in South-East Asia and Oceania in 2008, opiates originating in or departing from Afghanistan and Pakistan constituted only 10 per cent of opiates seized in the region in 2014. The trend was perhaps even more noticeable when focusing on China, where the proportion of seizures of heroin originating in Afghanistan fell from 30 per cent in 2010 to less than 10 per cent in 2014 and 2015: most heroin seized originated in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

588. As the largest heroin market and chemical-producing country in the region, China continued to be affected by the trafficking of heroin into its territory and to be the origin of precursor chemicals being smuggled to neighbouring countries. The majority of heroin manufactured in Myanmar is trafficked by land across the border to Yunnan Province in China, and a significant amount of precursor chemicals (mostly acetic anhydride) has been smuggled from China into Myanmar for opiate production. Such two-way trafficking continued in 2015, with about 8.8 tons of heroin (mostly originating in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar) seized in China, and 260 litres of acetic anhydride coming from China seized in Myanmar. Slight decreases in the amount of heroin seized were reported by Myanmar and Singapore, as well as by Hong Kong, China, for 2015.

589. Illicit cultivation of cannabis plant continued in some countries in East and South-East Asia. Recent eradication of illicitly cultivated outdoor cannabis herb was reported by the following countries: Indonesia (122 ha), Philippines (28 ha), Myanmar (15 ha) and Viet Nam (2 ha). The latest seizure data suggest that a considerable amount of trafficking continues to occur within the region. In 2015, about 29 tons of cannabis herb were seized in Indonesia. A total of 8.7 tons of cannabis herb were seized in China in 2015, much more than in previous years: the yearly average between 2010 and 2014 was about 3.7 tons. Cambodia and Singapore also reported slight increases in the amount of cannabis seized compared with the previous year. At about 100 kg in 2015, the amount of cannabis herb seized remained steady in Japan compared with the previous year.

590. The amount of cocaine trafficked among countries in East and South-East Asia has been rather insignificant for a long time. As drug markets across regions become more connected and diverse, however, a greater amount of cocaine has been seized within the region, implying its

rising popularity. The total amount of cocaine seized in Asia rose from an average of 0.45 tons per year during the period 1998-2008, to 1.5 tons per year during the period 2009-2014. East and South-East Asia accounted for more than half of that increase. Significant seizures were reported by some countries in 2015. For instance, in Hong Kong, China, around 200 kg of cocaine were seized. Authorities in Viet Nam seized 31 kg of cocaine in a container inspection in May 2015, the largest cocaine seizure in the country's history.

(b) Psychotropic substances

591. The region continues to see growth in trafficking in amphetamine-type stimulants, especially methamphetamine. The trend is evident in the amount of methamphetamine seized, which almost quadrupled in the region between 2009 and 2014. Worryingly, that upward trend continued in 2015: close to 36.6 tons of methamphetamine were seized in China during that year, an increase of 35 per cent compared with 2014. A significant rise in the amount of methamphetamine seized was also noted in Myanmar, where close to 2.3 tons were seized in 2015, which was much more than in the previous year. Similarly, the amount of methamphetamine seized by authorities in Indonesia in 2015 (4.4 tons) was four times higher than that seized in 2014 (1.1 tons).

592. Diversification in the source of methamphetamine, since 2009, was also noticed by law enforcement officers in the Republic of Korea. African countries, including Ghana, Kenya, Mali and South Africa, have been identified as likely source countries of methamphetamine entering the country. For example, about 4 kg of crystalline methamphetamine were trafficked into the Republic of Korea from Kenya during the period 2012-2013, and 4 kg of methamphetamine were identified as coming from Mali in both 2011 and 2013.

593. The large-scale manufacture of and trafficking in crystalline methamphetamine, which has a higher purity than methamphetamine pills, continue to pose significant threats to countries in the region. For instance, continued growth in the manufacture of crystalline methamphetamine was observed in China in 2015, despite years of efforts to dismantle the large number of clandestine laboratories manufacturing the substance. Close to 500 cases of illicit manufacturing were uncovered in China in 2015, an increase of 17.2 per cent over the year before. Indications of significant manufacture of crystalline methamphetamine in Myanmar have also been noticed by the country's authorities.

594. The growing popularity of crystalline methamphetamine across the region is particularly visible when focusing on countries where methamphetamine pills have been identified as the most commonly abused drug. For instance, seizures of crystalline methamphetamine continued to be reported by Thailand in 2015. Spurred on by higher profit margins, the growing availability of crystalline methamphetamine has also been reported in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, particularly in Vientiane, in major tourist destinations and in the southern provinces.

595. UNODC estimated that a total of approximately 244 million methamphetamine tablets were seized within the region in 2014. In July 2015, the largest single seizure of methamphetamine pills was reported in Myanmar, where close to 26.7 million methamphetamine pills were seized. According to the authorities in Thailand, most methamphetamine pills being trafficked into the country were manufactured in Myanmar, despite a slight reduction in total seizures in 2015. The amount of methamphetamine pills seized outside the Mekong region, for instance in Singapore (142 tablets), was insignificant in comparison.

596. East and South-East Asia have reported an increasing number of varieties of and substitutes for "ecstasy" during recent years, a likely result of tightened control over the major precursors used in the manufacture of the substance. Seizures of "ecstasy" containing little or no MDMA, but mainly a blend of non-controlled substances, have been reported throughout the region (in Brunei Darussalam; Hong Kong, China (including new psychoactive substances); Indonesia (including new psychoactive substances); Macao, China; Malaysia; Republic of Korea; Singapore (including new psychoactive substances); and Thailand). In 2015, about 3,000 tablets and 2,000 tablets of "ecstasy"-type substances were seized in the Philippines and Indonesia, respectively. In the same year, China also reported seizures of close to 200 kg of "ecstasy"-type substances.

(c) Precursors

597. As opium poppy cultivation and demand for amphetamine-type stimulants continue to grow, illicit manufacture and trafficking of precursor chemicals into the region persist. Significant quantities of the chemicals required for the manufacture of heroin (acetic anhydride) and amphetamine-type stimulants (ephedrine and pseudoephedrine) have been trafficked from China and India to various countries, as frequently noted by law

enforcement within the region. In Cambodia in 2014, authorities seized significant amounts of ephedrine and other precursor chemicals. In China in 2015, more than 500 cases of illicit manufacture of drug precursors were uncovered and close to 1,600 tons of precursors were seized.

598. The presence of sizeable chemical manufacture within the region has heightened the risk of diversion of precursor chemicals from licit channels to illicit manufacture and trafficking. According to authorities in China, an industry chain involved in the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in precursor chemicals has been formed in different parts of the country over recent years. In addition, the replacement of precursor chemicals under international control with non-scheduled ones since 2012, namely the replacement of ephedrine compound preparation and *Ephedra* plant with 2-bromopropiophenone, also presents significant challenges to effective precursor control.

599. As closer economic integration and more complex supply chains connecting China, India and the ASEAN region develop, organized criminal groups seeking to divert precursor chemicals into illicit channels might exploit the opportunities associated with that increased interconnectedness. The timely exchange of real-time intelligence between chemical companies and law enforcement authorities, and the sharing of information among all authorities concerned, is of great relevance to curbing the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in precursor chemicals in the region.

600. A comprehensive review of the situation with respect to the control of precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the region can be found in the report of the Board for 2016 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

(d) Substances not under international control

601. The global trend of ketamine seizures has been dominated by the trafficking in the substance in countries in East and South-East Asia since 2012. The total amount of ketamine seized within the region increased from 6 tons in 2012 to more than 12 tons in 2014, accounting for almost all of the ketamine seized worldwide. In particular, the amount of ketamine seized in China more than quadrupled, from 4.7 tons in 2012 to 19.6 tons in 2015. Recent intelligence in Hong Kong,

China, revealed that ketamine is being smuggled in small quantities in order to evade detection and minimize financial loss upon interdiction. Additionally, indications that it is being manufactured and misused in the region have also raised concern. Having dismantled about 100 ketamine laboratories per year during the recent past, close to 200 cases of ketamine manufacture were uncovered in China in 2015, an increase of 12.4 per cent over 2014. The first clandestine ketamine laboratory in Malaysia was dismantled in August 2016. At the same time, 269 kg of liquid and crystallized ketamine were seized. According to the *World Drug Report 2016*, there are expert perceptions of increases in the non-medical use of ketamine in East and South-East Asia.

602. Sometimes sold under the street names given to amphetamine-type stimulants, new psychoactive substances continue to be manufactured and trafficked within the region. In Singapore, the amount of new psychoactive substances seized has increased considerably, from 470 tablets in 2014 to over 3,000 tablets in 2015. Considered one of the major manufacturing countries of new psychoactive substances, a number of new synthetic cannabinoids, cathinones, phenylethylamines and piperazines were identified by China, following tighter control and the scheduling of 116 new psychoactive substances since October 2015. Authorities also reported the recent expansion of the manufacture of and trafficking in new psychoactive substances from the Yangtze River Delta to other parts of the country. Significant increases in the amount of synthetic cathinones seized were reported by Hong Kong, China, in 2015, alongside a surge in the number of newly identified substances belonging to that family of substances worldwide.

603. The region continued to report on the trafficking in and presence of plant-based psychoactive materials belonging to the khat (*Catha edulis*) group and kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*) group, the former of which originates in plants native to East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Two seizures, amounting to 4.4 tons of khat coming from East Africa, were reported by Viet Nam in mid-2016. In 2014, the presence of three plant-based psychoactive materials belonging to the khat group were reported by China and Indonesia. Meanwhile, the presence of three plant-based psychoactive materials belonging to the kratom group were reported by Indonesia and Thailand.

5. Abuse and treatment

604. Although the global trend of abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants remained stable, increases have been

reported in East and South-East Asia. That is evident in terms of the number of countries reporting them as both the most commonly abused drugs and the primary drugs of concern among new users. Caution must be exercised in interpreting the data, however, as recent, reliable data on the prevalence of drug use among the general population within the region remain scarce, and the continuous emergence of new psychoactive substances sold under the street names of amphetamine-type stimulants further complicates the picture. The Board encourages countries in the region to further strengthen their work in drug abuse data collection and analysis.

605. Annual prevalence of the use of amphetamines and prescription stimulants in East and South-East Asia in 2014 (0.57 per cent) is lower than the global average (0.8 per cent). In 2014, slightly more than 9 million people were estimated to be abusing amphetamines and prescription stimulants within the region, accounting for about a quarter of the global population of people abusing amphetamines and prescription stimulants (35 million).

606. Dominance of the two main forms of methamphetamine (crystalline methamphetamine and methamphetamine pills) varied slightly across the region. As the primary drug of concern outside the Mekong area, crystalline methamphetamine was most commonly abused in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea. Methamphetamine tablets were most commonly abused in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand.

607. Increases in the rates of abuse of methamphetamine have been identified in the region, despite it not being the most widely abused drug in some countries. According to the *World Drug Report 2016*, Cambodia, China, Malaysia and Viet Nam saw increases in the prevalence of abuse of both crystalline methamphetamine and methamphetamine tablets in 2014. Myanmar and the Philippines also saw increases in the abuse of crystalline methamphetamine and methamphetamine pills. In Singapore, methamphetamine overtook heroin as the most commonly abused drug in 2015. At the same time, amphetamine-type stimulants accounted for the main drug used by over 70 per cent of newly registered drug users in China.

608. In 2014, people receiving treatment for methamphetamine abuse in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand made up the majority of people treated for drug abuse in those countries. Given the difficulties of treating methamphetamine addiction, the increase in its use has been straining the

limited treatment facilities in some countries, such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

609. The trend of injecting amphetamine-type stimulants has been reported by some countries in East and South-East Asia. In Cambodia, methamphetamine, in the form of either crystalline methamphetamine or methamphetamine pills, was abused by most persons who inject drugs. In Thailand, a study conducted among 650 self-reported HIV-positive persons who abuse drugs by injection showed that daily methamphetamine use was associated with syringe sharing.

610. Annual prevalence of the use of opiates in East and South-East Asia in 2014 (0.21 per cent) is lower than the global average (0.37 per cent). In 2014, more than 3.3 million people were estimated to be abusing opiates within the region, accounting for almost one fifth of the global population of people abusing opiates (17.4 million). Considered as the primary drug of concern in Malaysia, Myanmar and Viet Nam, opiates were found to be abused by a large number of people in China, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand. About 1.5 million people who abuse heroin were registered in 2015 in China, slightly more than the year before, but they represent a smaller share among the total number of registered drug users in the country. That decrease suggests the diminishing popularity of heroin, while the opposite trend has been observed for registered users of amphetamine-type stimulants.

611. With an estimated 3.15 million people who inject drugs, East and South-East Asia continues to be the region with the largest number of people who inject drugs and accounts for about a quarter of the global total. The public health risk of a higher prevalence rate of HIV among people who inject drugs has been seen in some of the region's countries. Relevant interventions and treatment therefore should be expanded and made accessible to target groups, particularly in Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar and the Philippines, where the HIV prevalence rate among persons who abuse drugs by injection was estimated at more than twice the regional average (10.5 per cent) in 2015.

612. The Government of China has devoted considerable resources to the provision of community-based drug treatment and rehabilitation services to drug-dependent persons. In 2015, authorities selected 37 national model units and 51 national model sites for community-based drug treatment and rehabilitation. Close to 230,000 people were receiving community-based drug treatment services and a further 91,000 were enrolled in drug rehabilitation programmes.

South Asia

1. Major developments

613. In 2015, South Asia continued to be particularly vulnerable to trafficking in opiates and heroin. Trafficking in cannabis, synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances also persisted in the region. In addition, the region continued to witness increases in the manufacturing of and trafficking in methamphetamine, the diversion of controlled substances from licit to illicit channels and the abuse of pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Bhutan started using buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid dependence in 2015.

2. Regional cooperation

614. Sixty-fifth anniversary celebrations for the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific were held in Colombo on 1 July 2016. The Colombo Plan has provided several services and programmes in the countries of the region since its establishment. The Drug Advisory Programme of the Plan, in particular, addresses the growing drug problem in the region and promotes regional cooperation that is aimed at building capacity in the areas of drug abuse and drug control, drug demand reduction, precursor chemical control, border protection, abuse of pharmaceutical preparations and trafficking, and forensic drug analysis.

615. Between February and December 2016, India was the Chair of the BRICS countries Anti-Drug Working Group, whose membership also comprises Brazil, China, the Russian Federation and South Africa. The Working Group discusses various issues related to drug trafficking, including the diversion of precursor chemicals, new psychoactive substances, maritime drug trafficking, narco-terrorism and the laundering of the proceeds of drug trafficking, with the aim of enhancing cooperation among the participating countries to deal with such problems.

616. The Narcotics Control Bureau of India and the Central Narcotics Bureau of Singapore signed a memorandum of understanding on 24 November 2015 to facilitate and enhance cooperation in order to combat trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors.

617. The Colombo Plan International Centre for Certification and Education of Addiction Professionals, together with the Drug Advisory Programme of the

Colombo Plan, held several training events in the region for national trainers on the universal treatment curriculum for substance use disorders. In November 2015 and February 2016, treatment practitioners from the region received training on the child substance use disorder treatment programme.

618. With the aim of facilitating the collection, analysis and sharing of information related to drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka and to improve inter-agency regional cooperation between law enforcement agencies in the region, UNODC continued to assist in the creation of a South Asian regional intelligence and coordination centre on transnational organized crime. Two expert group meetings were held with key government counterparts from the region to discuss the proposed options for creating the centre.

3. National legislation, policy and action

619. Bhutan introduced computer-based training in order to upgrade the capacity of drug law enforcement officials and financial institutions to combat drug-related crime and money-laundering. Twenty-two law enforcement officers from Bhutan participated in the first e-learning training course, organized by UNODC and held in Faridabad, India, in November 2015.

620. Following Commission on Narcotic Drugs decision 58/3, to include AH-7921 in Schedule I of the 1961 Convention as amended, in June 2016, the Government of India, through the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Amendment) Rules, 2016, also brought AH-7921 under national control, under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

621. In 2016, the Central Bureau of Narcotics of India established an online registration system for controlled substances and made registration in the system mandatory for all those involved in the manufacture, sale, distribution, possession, or consumption of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and chemical precursors commonly used in the manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

622. The revised national drug law of Bhutan, entitled Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Substance Abuse Act of Bhutan 2015, was enacted in 2015. The Act repeals the 2005 law and addresses the health dimension of drug abuse, while emphasizing both supply and demand reduction. The Act also establishes a clear

difference between drug users and traffickers by setting out a threshold for the quantities that can be considered for personal use.

623. To improve security and prevent the illegal use of airports in transnational organized criminal activities, including drug and precursor trafficking, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka joined the Air Cargo Programme of UNODC (part of the Container Control Programme).

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

(a) Narcotic drugs

624. The Narcotics Control Bureau of India reported the following number of cases in which drugs were seized in 2015: cannabis (8,130), heroin (3,931) and cannabis resin (2,295). The number of cannabis seizures increased by 47 per cent, but the total quantity of cannabis seized decreased. Illicit cultivation of cannabis plant was reported to be just over 313 ha in 2015. Eradication operations were undertaken by law enforcement authorities in all identified areas of cultivation. Cannabis is one of the most widely abused substances in India. Trafficking of cannabis from Nepal to India continued to be a major concern.

625. Bangladesh is exposed to drug trafficking across the borders it shares with India and Myanmar. Bangladesh also has a history of illicit cannabis production and consumption; cannabis remains the main substance of abuse in the country. The total amount seized increased from 35 tons in 2014 to 41 tons in 2015.

626. Illicit cultivation and the wild growth of cannabis were reported in the highlands of the western and central parts of Nepal. Although the Government carries out cannabis eradication campaigns on a yearly basis, illicit cultivation continued in the reporting period. Cannabis was trafficked to India across the shared border. Nepal reported seizures of over 6.6 tons of cannabis in 2015, slightly lower than the 6.9 tons seized in 2014.

627. Bhutan reported eradication of cannabis plants in various parts of the country. In some areas, assistance in growing cash crops was given to farmers to provide them with an alternative to cultivating cannabis plants.

628. Cannabis and heroin are the major drugs of abuse in Sri Lanka. Cannabis plant is illicitly cultivated in the country and abuse of cannabis has become a significant

problem. About 99 kg of cannabis were seized in the first half of 2016, which was comparable to the amount seized during the same period in 2015, as well as 3 kg of cannabis resin.

629. In India, cannabis resin seizures in 2015 increased by 46.8 per cent compared with the previous year (3.3 tons, up from 2.28 tons seized in 2014). In addition to being produced domestically, cannabis resin is also trafficked into India from Nepal. In 2015, cannabis resin of Nepalese origin represented 21.9 per cent of the total amount of the substance seized in India.

630. The quantity of heroin seized in India increased slightly, to just under 1.42 tons in 2015, from 1.37 tons reported in 2014. The State of Punjab, which shares a border with Pakistan, accounted for most of the South-West Asian heroin seized in India. Trafficking of heroin from South-West Asia to India and then to Sri Lanka, Maldives and countries in Western Europe was identified by the Narcotics Control Bureau of India as a major trafficking trend.

631. The amount of heroin trafficked into Sri Lanka continued to increase in 2016. Seizure data for the first half of 2016 indicated a sharp increase over the same period of the previous year. The Police Narcotics Bureau reported that 134 kg of heroin had been seized between January and June 2016, compared with 18 kg during the same period in 2015.

632. Similar increases in heroin trafficking have also been observed in other countries in the region. In Bangladesh, seizures of heroin increased by 29.5 per cent, from 84.3 kg in 2014 to 108.7 kg in 2015. In Nepal, 3.8 kg of heroin were seized in 2014 and 6.4 kg in 2015.

633. The Narcotics Control Bureau of India indicated that the quantity of opium seized decreased from 1.77 tons in 2014 to 1.69 tons in 2015, although the number of reported seizures increased. The highest quantity of opium seizures (420 kg) were reported in the State of Punjab. In 2015, 61 kg of morphine were seized, compared with 25 kg in 2014. About 1,401 ha of illicitly cultivated opium poppy were identified and destroyed by the Narcotics Control Bureau in 2015.

634. There was an increase in the amount of codeine-based preparations seized in Bangladesh. In 2015, 860,429 bottles of codeine-based preparations were seized in the country, an increase of 15 per cent over the 748,730 bottles seized in 2014. Synthetic opiates such as buprenorphine and pethidine (chemical name meperidine) in injectable form continued to be trafficked into Bangladesh.

Seizures of drugs in injectable form sharply decreased to 86,172 ampoules in 2015, slightly less than half the 178,889 ampoules seized in 2014.

635. Even though trafficking in cocaine in South Asia has historically been very limited, there has been a rise in annual seizures in India over the past few years. The quantity of cocaine seized in India increased from about 15 kg in 2014 to 113 kg in 2015. During the first half of 2016, 1.7 kg of cocaine were seized in Sri Lanka. The seizure of 5.7 kg of cocaine in Bangladesh in 2015 was the first reported seizure of cocaine in that country since 2009. In Nepal, 5.5 kg of cocaine were seized in 2014 and 11 kg were seized in 2015.

636. Nepal is becoming a transit stage for international trafficking through its airspace and land routes to the world illicit drug market. In 2015, authorities in Nepal arrested 2,636 individuals for drug trafficking offences, compared with 2,918 in 2014. According to the Narcotics Control Bureau of Nepal, 9.8 kg of opium were seized in 2015 and 34 kg in 2014.

637. In Bhutan, there was a drop in the number of cases for possession of and trafficking in controlled substances, from 370 cases in 2014 to 296 in 2015. The Bhutan Narcotics Control Agency has attributed the drop to intensified inspections and awareness-raising programmes, as well as the deterrent effect of more severe sanctions.

(b) Psychotropic substances

638. The manufacture and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants are continuing challenges in the region. According to reports by the Narcotics Control Bureau of India, several attempts have been made to set up clandestine facilities for manufacturing amphetamine-type stimulants, especially in the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat. However, those attempts were successfully prevented by the Bureau. A total of 166 kg of amphetamine-type stimulants were seized in India in 2015, slightly less than the amount seized in 2014 (196 kg). In 2015, the Narcotics Control Bureau reported the dismantling of one illicit manufacturing facility, from which about 14 kg of methamphetamine were seized. Additionally, one illicit Internet pharmacy was dismantled by the enforcement agencies in India, and 14,310 tablets containing psychotropic substances weighing about 277 kg were seized in 2015.

639. Seizures of methaqualone in India increased from 54 kg in 2014 to 89 kg in 2015. After placing mephedrone under national control in 2015, India seized about

1.27 tons of mephedrone in that year. In November 2016, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence seized 23.5 tons of methaqualone in a clandestine factory in the State of Rajasthan. It was one of the largest seizures of methaqualone not only in India but also in the world.

640. Smuggling of “yaba” (methamphetamine) tablets from Myanmar across the south-eastern border to Bangladesh has continued; the quantities seized by law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh have been rapidly increasing. In January 2016, Bangladesh police seized 2.8 million methamphetamine tablets, worth an estimated \$10.5 million, in the country’s biggest ever single seizure of the drug. In 2015, “yaba” tablet seizures more than tripled (20 million) compared with 2014 (6.5 million).

641. According to the Narcotics Control Bureau of Nepal, the trafficking in and abuse of psychotropic substances continue to escalate. In 2015, 25,056 ampoules of diazepam and 18,950 ampoules of buprenorphine were seized in Nepal.

(c) Precursors

642. Since 2013 there has been a continuous decrease in the amounts of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine seized in India. However, combating the diversion of those substances from legal manufacture to illicit channels remains a major challenge for law enforcement agencies in the country. In 2015, a large number of tablets containing pseudoephedrine or ephedrine were seized along the India-Myanmar border, which were possibly being smuggled into Myanmar for extraction of the substances in order to manufacture amphetamine-type stimulants.

643. A comprehensive review of the situation with respect to the control of precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in South Asia can be found in the report of the Board for 2016 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

(d) Substances not under international control

644. India continues to be a source country for ketamine trafficked to South-East Asia. Additionally, instances of using courier parcel services to traffic ketamine from India to South Africa and the United Kingdom have been observed. In 2015, India seized approximately 211.6 kg of ketamine, a substantial increase over the amount seized in the previous year, which amounted to approximately 20.4 kg.

645. Considering the seizures of new psychoactive substances identified as originating in this region, the Board encourages Governments in the region to take part in the INCB Project Ion and IONICS, which facilitate the sharing of information on incidents involving new psychoactive substances.

5. Abuse and treatment

646. In July 2016, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of India, in collaboration with the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, began conducting a survey to compile national and state-level estimates of the numbers of persons abusing drugs. The two-year-long survey will map the presence of treatment and rehabilitation services for drug-dependent individuals and identify the gaps in service delivery. The last such survey was conducted in 2001 and the data were published in 2004. An opioid dependence survey carried out in Punjab in 2015 found that of the state’s population of 28 million, 230,000 persons were opioid dependent and 860,000 were opioid users. Most of them were male.

647. On 12 April 2016, the Government of Maldives invited interested parties (both local and international) to submit proposals to operate the Drug Rehabilitation and Treatment Centre at Kaafu Hinmafushi. The Centre is the only drug rehabilitation centre in the country. Approximately 250 clients are accommodated and treated annually at the Centre, which takes a therapeutic, community-based treatment approach.

648. The National Dangerous Drugs Control Board of Sri Lanka reported that a total of 1,482 drug users had received services in treatment facilities in 2015. Cannabis and heroin continued to be the two drugs most commonly abused in Sri Lanka. People in treatment for alcohol and tobacco abuse were also counted in the statistics. In 2015, the number of treated drug users decreased by 10 per cent compared with 2014. Among those reported as drug users, 58 per cent were receiving treatment in government facilities, 21 per cent were in the prison service drug treatment and rehabilitation programme, and 14 per cent were receiving assistance from non-governmental organizations. Almost all clients (99 per cent) in the treatment centres were men.

649. In 2015, a total of 9,987 patients (all male) were treated in private treatment centres in Bangladesh, down from 10,364 patients in 2014. Most of them (32 per cent) reported cannabis as their primary drug of abuse, followed by “yaba” (methamphetamine) (20.6 per cent and

increasing) and heroin (20.1 per cent and decreasing). The abuse of “yaba” and of codeine-based preparations continue to be widespread in Bangladesh, and are still increasing. Buprenorphine is one of the most popular drugs of abuse among those who inject drugs. Many heroin users have switched to it because it is cheap and accessible.

650. Codeine-based cough syrups, buprenorphine, diazepam, nitrazepam and morphine were the pharmaceutical preparations containing controlled substances that are most commonly abused in Nepal.

651. The National Dangerous Drugs Control Board of Sri Lanka called for research proposals for conducting a national prevalence survey during the period 2016-2017 to estimate the number of drug users in the country. In May 2016, the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board organized, in cooperation with UNODC, an expert group meeting on assessing the abuse of pharmaceutical drugs containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in Sri Lanka.

652. Bhutan reports that the majority of drug users in the country are young people and that they are mainly dependent on cannabis and pharmaceutical products such as dextropropoxyphene, nitrazepam, diazepam and codeine-based cough syrups. In 2015, Bhutan introduced pharmacological treatment with buprenorphine for opioid drug users. UNODC also facilitated capacity-building and the training of nurses and doctors to ensure the smooth implementation of the treatment. In addition, guidelines for the certification of treatment centres in Bhutan were introduced.

West Asia

1. Major developments

653. The drug control situation in West Asia continues to be heavily influenced by developments in the opiate market in Afghanistan, particularly with regard to the steady supply of opiates from opium poppy illicitly cultivated in Afghanistan transiting the region to markets around the world. As all three major transregional opiate trade routes originating in Afghanistan run through West Asia (the northern route, through Central Asian countries towards the Russian Federation; the Balkan route, through Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey towards Europe; and the southern route, through Pakistan towards

all regions of the world, except Latin America), the effectiveness of drug control efforts in the region continues to have considerable implications for illicit opiate markets globally.

654. Drug control challenges associated with the location of West Asian countries along major global drug trafficking routes remain complex and multifaceted. Progress remains tied to the region's ability to respond to broader and interrelated developmental and criminal justice challenges, such as corruption, terrorism and continued political instability, which have culminated, in parts of the region, in ineffective governmental control over significant areas. The situation is further exacerbated by protracted armed conflicts in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, massive migration flows with ever-growing refugee populations settling in shelters and camps located in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and the vulnerability of affected populations, presenting further drug control challenges for authorities in the region.

655. A further issue of concern for the region has been the continuing widespread availability and use of counterfeit tablets marketed as “captagon”.⁶⁴ Both media and anecdotal reports suggest that “captagon” pills are widely used by terrorists and combatants engaged in the armed conflicts ravaging across West Asia, in order to achieve a state of lowered inhibition to engage in violence and prolong their ability to remain alert for combat without needing rest. However, to date, there is little reliable information available to confirm the source of the chemicals and the synthesizing processes used in the manufacture of those amphetamine-based compounds, including the location of the laboratories chemically synthesizing them.

656. A new phenomenon observed in the region, which has started to develop over the past few years and, based on information available to INCB, is becoming more common, is the discovery of multiple methamphetamine production sites in Afghanistan, in particular since the beginning of 2016. Recent raids on illicit laboratories revealed the presence of equipment and precursor chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine, whereas in previous years, methamphetamine had generally entered the country as an end product. In addition to accounting for the second highest illicit production of

⁶⁴“Captagon” was originally the official trade name for a pharmaceutical preparation containing the substance fenethylamine, a synthetic stimulant. The substance currently known as “captagon”, as encountered in seizures across West Asia today and referred to in the present report, is a counterfeit drug compressed into pills or tablets that are similar in appearance but distinct from the original “Captagon”. The active ingredient in counterfeit “captagon” is amphetamine, which is typically cut with multiple adulterants, such as caffeine and other substances.

cannabis resin and the largest illicit production of opium in the world, Afghanistan now appears to be facing an additional drug control challenge related to illicit methamphetamine manufacture. The scope and magnitude of the new development and its significance for regional methamphetamine markets have yet to be seen.

657. The Board notes with concern the rapidly deteriorating safety and security situation in Afghanistan and its impact on the authorities' ability to monitor and control the illicit supply of drugs originating in the country. At the same time, the Board observed that the willingness of the international community to continue providing support to Afghanistan appeared to be declining, in particular in the area of drug control. The Board acknowledges that any possible improvement in the drug control situation in Afghanistan is intrinsically linked to broader developmental and criminal justice challenges being adequately addressed but cautions that action against drugs, money-laundering and corruption cannot be removed from the equation if sustainable development is to be achieved. **In that context, the Board calls upon partner Governments and the international community to sustain their support for the counter-narcotics efforts of Afghanistan, in the spirit of their common and shared responsibility to respond to the world drug problem and in order to ensure that the potential vacuum left by the withdrawal of international support from the country is not filled by criminal or terrorist elements.**

2. Regional cooperation

658. Cooperation at the regional level has continued in West Asia on the basis of both existing and new bilateral and multilateral agreements (some of which were concluded during the reporting period). In addition, multiple regional cooperation initiatives and processes exist, based on subregional affiliations among the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Gulf and the Middle East. Others are centred around issues of common concern for clusters of neighbouring countries, as is the case with many initiatives built around the need to address threats emanating from the drug market in Afghanistan, which also have global dimensions.

659. The Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC), a standing intergovernmental body that combats trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, continues to serve as a regional platform for exchanging information and good practices in countering drug trafficking and promoting law enforcement cooperation. Activities in the past year were centred around the coordination of

several joint operations among CARICC participating States (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), and countries including Australia and China when targeting specific trafficking routes. One concrete result, in November 2015, was a controlled delivery conducted between the competent national authorities of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, under the auspices of CARICC, which led to the seizure in Kazakhstan of close to 40 kg of cannabis, allegedly originating in Afghanistan.

660. On 30 May 2016, the members of the Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (AKT) Initiative adopted a ministerial declaration at the fourth tripartite ministerial-level meeting, held in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan. In the declaration, the importance of regional cooperation and capacity-building in drug control matters, particularly with regard to customs and border control, was emphasized. Participating countries agreed to support the establishment of border liaison offices, to develop standard operating procedures for such offices between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and to draft a memorandum of understanding to form the basis of operational information-sharing across borders and for future coordinated operations.

661. At the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, held in Tashkent in June 2016, India and Pakistan formalized their bids for membership of the organization, currently comprising China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, through the signing of "memoranda of commitment". The instruments are considered to be the last step before full-fledged membership, which is expected to be granted in 2017. Since 2006, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has taken up drug trafficking as one of the priority areas for closer cooperation among its member States.

662. The Government of Afghanistan and the European Union co-hosted the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, held on 5 October 2016. The conference was part of a series of ministerial-level meetings convened with the aim of supporting progress on the development agenda in Afghanistan throughout the so-called "Transformation Decade" (2015-2024). The Brussels Conference adopted a communiqué entitled "Partnership for Prosperity and Peace", reaffirming the commitment of participating countries and international organizations to strengthening cooperation towards achieving the self-reliance of Afghanistan. International partners further pledged to provide \$15.2 billion in support of Afghanistan's development priorities for the period 2017-2020, based on the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework,

presented by the Government at the Conference, and the “Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework”. Under the heading “Peace, security and regional cooperation”, the Conference further underlined the need for renewed efforts and a sustained and integrated approach in reducing the illicit production and trafficking of narcotics and precursors, as well as treating and rehabilitating persons with substance abuse disorders, including through the implementation of the Afghan National Drug Action Plan.

3. National legislation, policy and action

663. In October 2015, the Government of Afghanistan adopted a new National Drug Action Plan, for the period 2015-2019, which was presented to the international community at a high-level meeting convened in Vienna in December 2015. The main objectives of the Plan are to decrease the cultivation of opium poppy and the production and trafficking of opiates, reduce the illicit demand for drugs and increase the provision of treatment for users. Also in 2015, the Ministry of Counter Narcotics launched the Afghanistan Drug Reporting System, which is an interactive online system for narcotics-related data collection. The System consolidates all drug-related data on Afghanistan from officially verified sources and is the first comprehensive nationwide data repository of its kind.

664. The Government of Armenia supplemented its 2014 National Strategy for Combating Drug Addiction and Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs with a programme for 2016, setting out actions towards achieving the objectives of the three substantive components of the Strategy, namely: (a) primary prevention of drug addiction; (b) prevention of illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors; and (c) provision of medical, social and psychological care services to persons using narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances. Those actions are complemented by chapters dedicated to expected outputs and financing, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy.

665. Jordan placed six synthetic cannabinoids from the JWH group under national control during the reporting period, including JWH-018 and five substances not currently under international control. Israel placed nine new psychoactive substances not currently under international control under national control in 2015.

666. Georgia reported having reduced, in 2015, criminal penalties for the possession of drugs, which had

previously carried the same sanction as the distribution of drugs. In practice, Georgian courts had reportedly already started employing alternatives to incarceration in cases of simple drug possession. A national drug monitoring centre was also established to collect and analyse data on the drug situation, laying the foundation for evidence-based approaches to drug policy formulation in the country.

667. Lebanon introduced significant amendments to its criminal code during the reporting period to improve its response to financial crimes. Those amendments are expected to have an impact on the country’s ability to tackle drug-related crime through more effective action against illicit financial flows. The amendments introduce, *inter alia*, the concept of money-laundering as a stand-alone offence not requiring a conviction for the related predicate offence; fines amounting to double the amount of the value of laundered assets; an expansion of the concept of what can be considered as proceeds of crime; an extension of the scope of application of the law with regard to the commission of related offences outside the national territory; and a broader mandate for the special investigative commission, whose tasks were defined further in the amendments.

668. The National Strategy for Combating Drugs of Oman for the period 2016-2020 was updated to include additional stakeholders, in line with its aim to reflect a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach, including legislative and operational measures in the sphere of law enforcement, as well as a strong prevention component focusing on awareness-raising among the general population.

669. In the State of Palestine, a presidential decree adopted in 2015 further defined the mandate of the Anti-Narcotics Department of the Palestinian Police to include the development of a crime prevention plan concerning drug trafficking, cultivation and manufacture; information-gathering and exchange of information on drug trafficking cases through increased international and regional cooperation; and the maintenance of registers and monitoring of drug manufacturers, traffickers and trafficking suspects, as well as users.

670. In addition to the recent expansion of the definition of new psychoactive substances to include generic (as opposed to substance-specific) definitions, Turkey amended its Penal Code to add synthetic cannabinoids and their derivatives to the list of substances for which higher penalties may be applied. An additional 29 substances were placed under national control during the reporting period. Article 191 of the Penal Code was also

amended to consider the sale of any type of drug or stimulant in schools, dormitories, hospitals, barracks or places of worship as an aggravating circumstance in sentencing. Turkey also upgraded its national counter-narcotics infrastructure by according the former counter-narcotics branch within the Turkish National Police the status of a fully-fledged department.

671. Uzbekistan amended its law No. 293, on the import, export and transit of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals, through Council of Ministers decree No. 330, in November 2015. Changes introduced through the amendment include a simplification of procedures for the acceptance of import and export authorizations concerning narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and the inclusion of some 80 substances, mainly new psychoactive substances, into the national list of prohibited substances.

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

(a) Narcotic drugs

672. West Asia, in particular Afghanistan, continues to be a major source of illicitly produced opiates. As a region, West Asia also saw the largest share of opiate seizures in the world during the reporting period. The Balkan route, which runs through Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey to reach mainly European markets, remains the most prominent among the three established opiate trafficking routes. However, recent reports indicate that other routes are gaining in importance. Turkey observed the gradual emergence of a second Balkan route, encompassing Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic in addition to the countries traditionally lying on the Balkan route. At the same time, the southern route, using Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan as distribution hubs to supply markets in virtually all regions of the world, except Latin America, is growing in importance. Even the traditionally least frequented northern route, reaching the Russian Federation and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States via Central Asian countries that border Afghanistan, has recently shown signs of increased use after a decline during the period 2008-2012.

673. Afghanistan has, for more than a decade, accounted for the world's largest illicit production of opium, despite the significant decline in opium poppy cultivation and estimated production reported in the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015*. Figures for 2016

confirm that there is little cause for optimism, as practically all surveyed indicators of opium production in the country show increases in production, suggesting that the developments observed in 2015 have effectively been reversed.

674. According to the executive summary of the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016*, the estimated total area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has increased by 10 per cent compared with 2015, reaching 201,000 ha in 2016; that is the third highest level since estimations began in 1994. Increases in the estimated area under illicit opium poppy cultivation were noted in all regions of the country except the southern region, where the level of cultivation continues to be by far the highest but is considered to have remained stable compared with 2015 levels. In other words, no decrease in cultivation was reported in any part of the country in 2016.

675. Helmand remained Afghanistan's main province of illicit opium poppy cultivation in 2016. The area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in Badghis Province increased by 184 per cent between 2015 and 2016, and the number of poppy-free provinces declined from 14 in 2015 to 13 of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan in 2016.

676. The estimates for both potential opium production (4,800 tons in 2016, compared with 3,300 tons in 2015) and for average opium yield (23.8 kg per hectare in 2016, compared with 18.3 kg per hectare in 2015) rose significantly in 2016, namely by 43 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively. The higher rate of potential opium production in 2016 is mostly attributed to the increase in yield, which, in contrast to 2015, was not affected by lack of water, crop diseases or similar unfavourable conditions. At the same time, the estimated figures are likely to be underestimates, as some of the main cultivating provinces were excluded from the yield survey for security reasons. The increases in potential production affected all regions of Afghanistan without exception, most strikingly the estimated 286 per cent increase in the northern region, where the security situation deteriorated significantly in 2016.

677. A decline of 91 per cent in verified governor-led eradication of illicit opium poppy country-wide meant an almost complete halt in eradication in 2016 compared with 2015. A total of 355 ha of opium poppy were reportedly eradicated in Afghanistan in 2016, a negligible amount compared to the estimated total area under illicit opium poppy cultivation.

678. While the socioeconomic analysis attached to the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016* was not available at the time of drafting the present report, data published in

March 2016 relating to the results of the 2015 Survey further explain the factors that may have contributed to the decrease in the illicit cultivation of opium poppy and the production of opium in 2015. Sharp decreases in 2015 in the farm-gate value of opium (33 per cent decrease compared with 2014 and the lowest level since 2009) and the gross income from opium per hectare (18 per cent decrease compared with 2014 and the lowest level since 2002), coupled with the consistently moderate to poor yields of opium poppy observed over the previous four years, had a severe impact on the extent of illicit opium poppy cultivation and opium production in the country. In addition to unfavourable climatic conditions that directly reduced yield per hectare, the decline in the value of and income from opium led many farmers to abandon cultivation of opium poppy in 2015 because of its low profitability. Notably, 12 per cent of farmers, who discontinued the cultivation of opium poppy in 2015, reported having replaced the crop with cannabis. However, findings also suggest that farmers' general lack of access to markets to sell alternative products — including wheat, which was the main substitute crop grown in 2015 — may be a more significant factor in their dependence on illicit crop cultivation than the level of profit attainable from such crops.

679. In 2015, opium poppy cultivation was also reported in Lebanon and Uzbekistan, with areas of cultivation in Lebanon being concentrated around the Beqaa Valley where, according to government sources, illicit cultivation of cannabis is also taking place. In the same year, some eradication efforts (of opium poppy and cannabis plants) were reported by Uzbekistan, whereas none were reported by Lebanon. Tajikistan reported seizures of more than 4.5 tons of narcotic drugs in the course of 2015, of which more than 1.5 tons consisted of heroin and other opiates. Saudi Arabia observed that heroin was still being smuggled into the country by individuals carrying the substance across the border in their clothes or intestines in pure form, and that a variety of cutting agents were being added later, thus confirming that significant adulteration of the drug happens inside the country.

680. Cannabis is the most widely produced, trafficked and consumed drug in the world, and cannabis plant continues to be widely cultivated in West Asia. Of the five countries in the world where the most cannabis resin is produced, three are located in West Asia, namely Afghanistan, Lebanon and Pakistan. Those three countries mainly supply markets in the Near and Middle East, where 25 per cent of global cannabis resin seizures in 2014 took place (mainly in Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan). Saudi Arabia reported large seizures, totalling close to 3 tons of cannabis over 2015.

681. Cocaine seizures in Asia, although still comparatively small in absolute terms, have tripled in the last decade, according to the latest estimates by UNODC, with almost 50 per cent of seizures in Asia carried out in the Middle East subregion. Entering from Latin America, the most frequently mentioned final destination for cocaine trafficked into West Asia was Israel. No data were available with regard to seizures of cocaine in Central Asia and the Caucasus, except for Armenia, where 26 kg of cocaine were reported to have been seized.

682. Several cross-border operations were conducted in countries of the region during the reporting period. For example, Tajikistan reported having conducted 25 joint operations in 2015 with Afghanistan and neighbouring countries in Central Asia, as well as the Russian Federation, resulting in the seizure of more than 950 kg of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

(b) Psychotropic substances

683. West Asian countries, in particular in the Middle East and Gulf subregions, continue to be used mainly as points of transit for methamphetamine trafficking. In contrast, for amphetamine, they are both points of transit and source and destination countries, mirroring the largely intraregional pattern of the current amphetamine trafficking.

684. A considerable challenge with regard to psychotropic substances in the region remains the supply of counterfeit “captagon” tablets, which continue to be seized in large quantities, especially in countries in the Gulf and Middle East subregions. In 2015, authorities in Lebanon and Turkey reported seizures of more than 15 million “captagon” tablets each. In 2016, “captagon” seizures continued to make headlines in the media across the region, for example in Jordan, where two seizures, one of more than 4.5 million tablets and the other of more than 3.5 million tablets, were made within 10 days of each other in April 2016, and the biggest seizure of “captagon” tablets on record in the country, of more than 13 million tablets, took place in September 2016. Authorities in Lebanon have also detected an increased number of trafficking cases involving “captagon” and an increase in the number of clandestine laboratories manufacturing the tablets in the country, possibly as a result of the destruction of production facilities associated with the ongoing conflict in the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic. Other countries that reported large “captagon” seizures include Saudi Arabia, where foodstuffs or construction materials were reportedly being used to conceal the tablets smuggled in trucks and passengers' vehicles.

685. According to information provided to the Board, government authorities in Oman registered more than 3,000 drug-related seizures in 2015, none of which, however, involved “captagon”.

686. Few countries in the region reported seizures involving psychotropic substances other than “captagon”, such as diazepam or lorazepam (reported, for instance, by Armenia). However, Turkey reported a significant amount of seizures involving MDMA or “ecstasy”-type substances, namely more than five and a half million tablets in 2015, as well as seizures of LSD.

(c) Precursors

687. Given the significant illicit production of a number of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the region, West Asia continues to be a target destination for precursor chemicals diverted from licit trade, such as acetic anhydride (for heroin manufacture), ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, 1-phenyl-2-propanone (P-2-P), phenylacetic acid (for the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants) and others.

688. With regard to seizures of acetic anhydride, the declining trend seen in recent years has continued in Afghanistan, dropping by nearly half every year since 2011. The substance reportedly continues to enter the country from neighbouring Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan, where occasional large-scale seizures continued to be carried out in the course of 2015 and 2016. Overall, however, the number and volume of acetic anhydride seizures in the region are continually going down, possibly because of increased domestic diversion, or because traffickers may have started to resort to using non-scheduled substances instead of acetic anhydride as a key ingredient in illicit heroin manufacture.

689. There is insufficient information to date about the synthesizing processes, locations and sources of precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of “captagon”, which has been reported to originate in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. However, Lebanon reported seizures of some 16 tons of phenylacetic acid in 2015, which authorities suspect may have been intended for use in the manufacture of “captagon”.

690. Against that backdrop, a time-bound operation of the Board’s Project Prism entitled “Missing Links” was launched in October 2016, with the aim of filling information gaps with regard to the types and sources of scheduled and non-scheduled chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of “captagon” tablets, how they are getting

into clandestine laboratory environments, the trafficking organizations involved and any links between them. Results of the operation will be reported by the Board in its annual report for 2017.

691. Another recent development of concern is the increased detection by authorities in Afghanistan of methamphetamine precursors in illicit laboratories in the country, suggesting that Afghanistan may be emerging as a site of production rather than merely a destination country for methamphetamine. Further detailed information on the precursors control situation in West Asia can be found in the 2016 report of the Board on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.⁶⁵

692. INCB urges all relevant stakeholders in the region to increase the exchange of drug-related intelligence among their competent national law enforcement authorities, including by using electronic tools developed by the Board for that purpose, such as PICS, and through relevant regional intelligence centres, such as CARICC, the Joint Planning Cell of Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan, and the Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf.

(d) Substances not under international control

693. Plant-based psychoactive substances such as khat (*Catha edulis*) are still widely used in parts of West Asia, for example in Oman, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. However, despite the continually increasing number of synthetic new psychoactive substances emerging every year at the global level, relatively few of such substances were identified in countries in West Asia between 2008 and 2015. In 2015, Kyrgyzstan reported the emergence of new psychoactive substances in its territory for the first time, while data for large parts of South-West Asia (comprising Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan) are not available to date. Turkey was one of the few countries reporting large seizures of synthetic cannabinoids (more than 500 kg) in 2015.

694. There continue to be indications of large-scale prescription drug abuse in the region. One substance of concern to several countries in West Asia is tramadol, a synthetic opioid, which is considered a substance of abuse in Armenia, Jordan, Lebanon (imported from Egypt), Oman (where it is reportedly imported from China and Egypt), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Turkmenistan. One sizeable seizure, of 142,000 ampoules of tramadol,

⁶⁵E/INCB/2016/4.

was reported to have been carried out by authorities in Jordan in 2015. It was one of a series of seizures of counterfeit and trafficked goods that Jordan had undertaken since it joined the World Customs Organization (WCO)-UNODC Container Control Programme in September 2015. In March 2016, according to information available to the Board, 1 million tramadol pills originating in India were seized by customs authorities at Imam Khomeini International Airport, Tehran. The pills had been falsely declared as “advertising and exhibition substances”.

695. In Saudi Arabia, pregabalin, a medicine with anti-convulsant properties used widely to treat epilepsy, neuropathic pain and anxiety, has recently been placed under national control as a result of its abuse by school students. Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey also reported significant seizures of unspecified diverted prescription drugs.

5. Abuse and treatment

696. Efforts to improve systematic data collection on drug abuse and treatment measures are under way in several countries of the region, yet a realistic assessment of the availability of treatment services compared with the need for such services remains difficult. A comprehensive situation assessment regarding the extent and patterns of drug use in the State of Palestine was envisaged to be completed by the end of 2016 and could provide a valuable update against baseline data last collected there in 2006.

697. Based on available data, cannabis, opioids and amphetamine-type stimulants are among the most frequently used substances in West Asia. Drug abuse in Afghanistan has continued to rise and, according to the latest estimates, now affects some 12.6 per cent of the adult population (or one in three households). That figure is more than double the global drug abuse rate, which is estimated at just over 5 per cent. Opioids remain the most commonly used drug in Afghanistan, with abuse rates estimated at 4.9 per cent among the general population and 8.5 per cent among adults.

698. In 2015, Saudi Arabia reported a new trend in drug use, namely methamphetamine being injected (rather than smoked) by young people. That observation was based on information provided by emergency and outpatient treatment facilities at a hospital in Jeddah (situated in the west of the country). At the same time, data from treatment and other registers of drug users in the country’s eastern provinces show that more than 1,000 problem drug users (defined in Saudi Arabia as persons who inject drugs and people using drugs on a daily basis)

take amphetamine-type stimulants, which is more than double the number of problem drug users reported to be taking opioids (some 450). Persons in treatment for the use of amphetamine-type stimulants also represent the highest number (more than half) of people receiving drug abuse-related treatment in the country. In the same geographical area in 2015, more than 5,200 non-fatal, drug-related emergency-room visits were recorded, with drug-related deaths remaining stable and associated exclusively with the use of opioids.

699. With regard to overdose deaths, the data available for West Asia mirror the global trend, with drug-related mortality mostly being attributed to the abuse of opioids. Most countries in the region that reported on drug-related death cases for 2015 (including Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates) named opioids (predominantly heroin) as the cause of drug-related deaths. In an effort to reduce drug-related mortality, Georgia has removed a significant obstacle for drug users seeking medical assistance, as it no longer requires medical personnel to inform law enforcement authorities of overdose cases.

700. More than 200,000 persons are estimated to be in need of treatment for drug abuse in Turkey. In 2015, Turkey reported an increase in the residential treatment of methamphetamine addicts, while inpatient treatment of users of synthetic cannabinoids remained stable. While no general prevalence data for drug abuse were reported, Turkey observed a slight decrease in the overall number of persons who inject drugs (mainly related to heroin), with some increase in the use of amphetamine-type stimulants, tranquilizers and stimulants, as well as pharmaceutical products containing opioids. The most prevalent disease among persons who inject drugs was hepatitis C (affecting close to 40 per cent of those who received inpatient treatment in Turkey in 2015). Of all cases of drug-related mortality caused by overdose deaths in Turkey, more than half involved poly-drug use, with just as many deaths associated with the use of opioids; close to one third of all cases involved amphetamine-type stimulants and/or cannabis use.

D. Europe

1. Major developments

701. Illicit drug markets remain one of the main threats to the security of European countries. According to estimates by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drugs Addiction (EMCDDA), around one fifth of global