

C. Asia

East and South-East Asia

1. Major developments

568. The illicit manufacture of, trafficking in and abuse of methamphetamine continue to be the biggest drug threat for East and South-East Asia. While illicit manufacture continues to take place mainly in China and Myanmar, it has also been detected in other countries in the region. Considerable increases or record high levels of methamphetamine seizures have been reported in recent years, with the result that the region had the greatest percentage of global methamphetamine seizures in 2015. Driven by high street prices, significant quantities of methamphetamine have also been trafficked into the region from other parts of the world, a situation also reflected in the growing levels of abuse reported by most countries in the region.

569. Illicit opium poppy cultivation and opium production continue to be concentrated in the Golden Triangle. In Myanmar, the total area under illicit opium poppy cultivation remained steady yet at 55,000 ha in 2015, considerably more than in the Lao People's Democratic Republic which was reported to have 5,700 ha. Trafficking in and abuse of heroin continue to be of concern for some countries in the region.

570. The greater integration of the region poses new challenges for border control. An increasing number of drug-related criminal activities have been detected at the borders of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia and Viet Nam. Closer collaboration and the more timely sharing of intelligence among neighbouring countries are crucial for effective joint-border operations.

571. Online drug-related crimes have become more prevalent in some countries. In Singapore, the number of

people arrested for buying drugs and drug-related paraphernalia online increased more than sixfold, from 30 individuals arrested in 2015 to 201 in 2016. Authorities in China noted that online drug-related crimes remained widespread and stepped up the corresponding supervision and management of the situation. Legislative change has also been introduced by the Government of the Republic of Korea to prohibit the advertising of illicit drug trade via the Internet.

2. Regional cooperation

572. The Fortieth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Asia and the Pacific, was held in Colombo on 24–27 October 2016. Over 150 participants from the region discussed the status of drug control and treatment and adopted a number of expert recommendations.

573. The 22nd Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference was held in Tokyo from 20 to 24 February 2017. About 130 participants exchanged views on global cooperation to counter the smuggling of amphetamine-type stimulants and actions to address the threat posed by new psychoactive substances.

574. Ministers and senior officials from countries of the Greater Mekong subregion (Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) and UNODC met in May 2017 to endorse a new strategy to address the persistent and evolving drug issues in the region. The new Mekong Action Plan strengthened capacities in four areas: drugs and health; law enforcement cooperation; legal and judicial cooperation; and sustainable development. The new action plan has been adjusted to incorporate the recommendations set out in the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem held in 2016, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

575. The 38th Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Senior Officials on Drug Matters was held in Viet Nam from 25 to 27 July 2017. The annual meeting included meetings of five working groups (preventive education; treatment and rehabilitation; law enforcement; research; and alternative development) and serves as a platform to enhance coordination of joint operations and investigations among drug law enforcement agencies.

576. The Third BRICS Anti-Drug Working Group Meeting was held on August 16, 2017 in Weihai, China. The Working Group adopted "The Working Rule on Drug Control for the Working Group" and decided to strengthen

the bilateral cooperation in drug control under the BRICS framework (Brazil, China, India, Russian Federation and South Africa) and establish consultation mechanisms on information exchange, anti-drug law enforcement cooperation, international drug control policy coordination, personnel training and exchange of experience.

3. National legislation, policy and action

577. The Central Narcotics Bureau of Singapore continues to strengthen controls over a number of controlled substances in order to contain the rapid emergence of new psychoactive substances and their adverse impact on public health. With effect from 1 May 2017, four new psychoactive substances were transferred from the fifth to the first schedule of the Misuse of the Drugs Act. One additional substance, U-47700, was added to the first schedule of the Act, following the decision of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to include U-47700 in Schedule I of the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol in March 2017. Once listed in the first schedule of the Misuse of the Drugs Act, the trafficking, manufacture, sale, possession and consumption of any of these substances become a criminal offence.

578. In China, four fentanyl-class substances (carfentanil, furanylfentanyl, valeryl fentanyl, and acryl fentanyl) were placed in the List of Non-Medicinal Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances under Control on 1 March 2017. In addition, four substances (4,4'-DMAR, MT-45, PMMA and U-47700) were added to the list of controlled substances as of 1 July 2017, following the decisions of the Commission in 2016 and 2017.

579. The Republic of Korea placed benzodiazepine diclazepam (chlorodiazepam) and 13 other substances under temporary control in August 2016. A temporary scheduling system was introduced in the country in 2011 in response to the rapid emergence of new psychoactive substances. Substances can be placed under temporary control for a maximum of three years when deemed to require urgent scheduling as if they were narcotics. Once under temporary control, the possession, management, import and export, trade and assistance in the trade of those substances, or the giving or receiving of materials that contain the temporary scheduled substance shall be prohibited.

580. A total of 15 new psychoactive substances, including several hallucinogenic (NBOME compounds) and cannabinimimetic (JWH compounds) compounds, were added to the list of controlled substances in Viet Nam in 2015 to restrict their availability.

581. An amendment was made to the Narcotic Control Act in the Republic of Korea as a response to the increasing use of bitcoin for transactions on illegal online pharmacies. As of June 2017, any dissemination of information related to the illicit cultivation, manufacturing and trade of narcotic drugs through various media shall be prohibited. Any act of advertising drug trades and the posting of a manual for processing narcotic drugs via the Internet will be subject to punishment under the Act.

582. An executive order was signed in March 2017 by the President of the Philippines creating the "Inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs". The Committee, which consists of 21 State agencies, chaired by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, ensures that the Government's anti-illegal drug campaign is implemented in an integrated and synchronized manner.

583. The Board is aware of the continuing extrajudicial actions, including murder, taking place in relation to purported drug-related activities and/or crimes in the Philippines.

584. **The Board reminds 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, as well as to human rights instruments to which all countries are bound. All drug control actions should be undertaken in full respect of the rule of law and due process of law.**

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

(a) Narcotic drugs

585. Within East and South-East Asia, the illicit cultivation of opium poppy remains concentrated in two countries of the so-called Golden Triangle. In Myanmar, illicit opium poppy cultivation fell to its lowest level in 2006 but has climbed steadily since then. The total area under illicit opium cultivation was estimated to be 55,000 ha in 2015. Myanmar thus remained the world's second largest opium-producing country after Afghanistan. Close to 90 per cent of the total cultivation comes from the north-eastern part of the country, Shan State of Myanmar. According to the latest socioeconomic survey conducted by UNODC in the villages of Shan State, illicit opium poppy cultivation became more concentrated in 2016. While the proportion of villages producing opium

poppy fell by 30 per cent, the size of the average area under opium poppy cultivation increased. Meanwhile, illicit opium poppy cultivation in the Lao People's Democratic Republic continued to be considerably lower than in Myanmar (5,700 ha in 2015).

586. A significant and growing amount of opium illicitly cultivated and produced in the region continues to be trafficked into neighbouring countries and Oceania. According to UNODC, seizures of heroin and morphine made from opiates produced in the region rose from 7.1 tons in 2010 to 13.3 tons in 2015. The latest seizure data suggest that most heroin seized in China originates in Myanmar. In 2016, China reported heroin and opium seizures of 8.8 tons and 3.1 tons, more than the preceding year. Opium seizures in Myanmar also edged up from 962 kg in 2015 to 1,005 kg in 2016.

587. The illicit cultivation of, trafficking in and abuse of cannabis continues to be of major concern in Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam. Philippine authorities eradicated close to 290 cannabis plantation sites in 2015, most of them located on the island of Luzon. The country also reported considerable seizures of cannabis (dried leaves) in 2016 (1.3 tons). Cannabis herb seizures in Myanmar increased from about 88 kg in 2015 to about 188 kg in 2016. Some cannabis herb has also been trafficked into East Asia, although in much smaller quantities. In China, cannabis herb seizures fell from about 9 tons in 2015 to less than 600 kg in 2016. Close to 160 kg of cannabis herb was seized in Japan in 2016, compared with 105 kg in 2015. In the Republic of Korea, about 21,000 cannabis plants were seized in 2016, compared with about 7,000 plants in the preceding year.

588. The amount of cocaine trafficked into the region has been rather limited, owing to its relatively low prevalence of use. Recent seizure data, however, seem to suggest its growing availability. Between 2010 and 2015, East and South-East Asia accounted for more than half (56 per cent) of the cocaine seized in Asia. Specifically, the amount of cocaine seized in Viet Nam jumped from 2.4 kg in 2013 to 178 kg in 2015. In China, a total of 431 kg of cocaine was seized in 2016, more than four times the amount in 2015 (98 kg). The drug was mainly trafficked in parcels to Guangdong and Hong Kong, China. The Republic of Korea also noted increased seizures of cocaine being trafficked into the country from South America through the United Arab Emirates in 2016. About 430 kg of cocaine was seized in Hong Kong, China, in 2016, considerably more than the year before (227 kg). Meanwhile, Japan and the Philippines reported 113 kg and 70 kg of seizures of cocaine powder.

(b) Psychotropic substances

589. The region continues to witness the further expansion of the methamphetamine market. Annual seizures of methamphetamine in East and South-East Asia increased more than fivefold between 2006 and 2015, according to UNODC. In addition, the total amount of methamphetamine seized in the region in 2015 (64 tons) surpassed the amount seized in North America (55 tons), as well as all other regions, making it the subregion with the greatest amount of methamphetamine seizures worldwide. While such increases may be indicative of the effectiveness of law enforcement, they also signal that trafficking of the substance continues to escalate.

590. China continues to report the largest amount of methamphetamine seizures in the region. Methamphetamine (in tablet and crystalline forms) seized in the country rose from 19.5 tons in 2013 to 36.6 tons in 2015. About 31 tons of methamphetamine seizures was reported in 2016. Almost all methamphetamine tablets were seized in the south-western part of the country neighbouring the Golden Triangle.

591. About 2.2 tons of methamphetamine seizures were reported by the Philippines in 2016, much higher than the average level in the previous five years. A similar trend was found in Japan, where a total of 1.5 tons of methamphetamine were seized in 2016, the second largest amount on record for that country. Around 2.5 tons of methamphetamine were seized in Myanmar in 2016, 200 kg more than in 2015 (2.3 tons). While the amount of methamphetamine seized in the Republic of Korea was comparatively small (28.6 kg in 2016), law enforcement authorities noted a diversification since 2010 of the source of supply (including supply from some African countries and Mexico).

592. Substantial methamphetamine seizures were reported by Indonesia in 2015 (4,420 kg), compared with annual seizures of not more than 2,100 kg in the previous few years. According to the national authorities, the share of crystalline methamphetamine trafficked by sea increased considerably, from around 4 per cent in 2013 to 80 per cent in 2015. This trend poses particular challenges and demands specific attention in the light of the large number of islands and the lengthy coastline of the country.

593. Malaysia has been increasingly used as a transit country for the trafficking of methamphetamine to other countries in the region and Oceania. Between 2004 and 2008, an average annual seizure amount of 135 kg was reported by country officials. However, annual seizures have surged to more than 1 ton per year since 2009. Another 1.1 tons of methamphetamine were seized in 2015.

594. For the first time since 2008, the crystalline methamphetamine seized in the region in 2015 was larger by weight than that of methamphetamine tablets seized. Data for 2016 suggested that that trend was continuing.

595. More than 34 tons of crystalline methamphetamine was seized in the region in 2015, with significant quantities being reported by Cambodia, China, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam. Countries in the Greater Mekong subregion (Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) continued to account for the majority (75 per cent) of these seizures. Meanwhile, the retail price and average purity of crystalline methamphetamine remained at high levels.

596. A total of 287 million methamphetamine tablets were seized in the region in 2015. Most of those seizures were reported by the six countries of the Greater Mekong subregion. The average purity of methamphetamine tablets seized in those countries remained steady.

597. Large quantities of methamphetamine tablets (6.33 million tablets) were seized in the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 2015, almost double the level in 2014 (3.83 million tablets). While that spike was mainly due to a single large-scale seizure case, the significant quantities of methamphetamine tablets seized since 2010 suggest that the country remains a major country of transit for tablets originating in the Golden Triangle.

598. In recent years, Cambodia has been frequently used as a source, transit and destination country of amphetamine-type stimulants. A significant increase in methamphetamine seizures was reported in the country, with seizures of crystalline methamphetamine reaching a record level of 73 kg in 2015, more than twice the level in 2013 (32.5 kg). A similar trend was also observed for methamphetamine tablets. More than 260,000 methamphetamine tablets were seized in 2015, compared with around 170,000 tablets in 2013.

599. Both the number and scale of clandestine synthetic drug manufacturing facilities dismantled in the region have increased, indicating a greater capacity for illicit manufacture of methamphetamine. In 2015, close to 600 illicit manufacturing facilities were dismantled in the southern provinces of China, an 8 per cent increase over the preceding year. These facilities were mainly used for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine. Authorities also noted that organized criminal groups engaging in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine and ketamine have become equipped with more advanced facilities and have better manufacturing capabilities.

600. Annual total quantities of "ecstasy" seized in the region have often varied greatly due to single seizure cases involving huge drug quantities, and thus no clear pattern or trend is discerned. Large seizure cases reported recently included nearly 2.4 million "ecstasy" tablets containing MDMA seized in Myanmar in 2014, and more than 400,000 "ecstasy" tablets seized in Malaysia in 2015. Malaysia was perceived as being one of the major embarkation points for "ecstasy" found in Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia. In 2016, seven "ecstasy" tableting facilities were dismantled in Malaysia. Indonesia also reported significant seizures between 2010 and 2015, and accounted for more than half of the "ecstasy" seized in the region.

(c) Precursors

601. Despite the large and growing use of methamphetamine in East and South-East Asia, only China had reported significant seizures of ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine to the Board in recent years. In 2015, ephedrine seizures reported by the country (23.5 tons) accounted for almost all of the region's total. The limited amounts of precursors seized contrast sharply with the data on the amount of methamphetamine seized in the region.

602. The trafficking of acetic anhydride and other precursor chemicals into China and Myanmar shows no sign of regression. In 2015, more than 11,000 litres of acetic anhydride were seized in China and 60 litres were seized in Myanmar. According to the annual report on the drug situation in China of 2016, close to 1,600 tons of precursors were seized in 2016. Increasing amounts of caffeine, an adulterant used in methamphetamine tablets, had been seized in Myanmar in 2015 and 2016.

603. 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 2017 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

(d) Substances not under international control

604. Close to 170 new psychoactive substances, mostly synthetic cathinones and synthetic cannabinoids, were reported by countries in the region between 2008 and 2016.

605. The emergence of several synthetic opioids, benzodiazepine derivatives and a range of other substances suggests a growing diversity of new psychoactive substances.

They are often sold in tablet form, as “ecstasy”, or under various street names. Health authorities find the trend disturbing because users are often ignorant of the related health risks.

606. Authorities in China reported that the manufacture and trafficking of new psychoactive substances had been somewhat contained after the scheduling of 116 new psychoactive substances in 2015. However, new legal alternatives and even newly developed analogues have emerged as a way to circumvent legal and regulatory controls.

607. Considerable quantities of ketamine continue to be seized in some East and South-East Asian countries. In 2015, ketamine seizures in the region reached 20.4 tons and made up 97 per cent of the global total. In 2016, China continued to report sizeable seizures (10.4 tons). Around 940 kg of ketamine was seized in Myanmar. A total of 113 illicit ketamine manufacture facilities were dismantled by the Chinese authorities in the same year. While most of the ketamine manufactured was consumed locally, some had been trafficked into Macao and Hong Kong, China, and other countries within the region. Malaysian authorities dismantled an industrial-scale illicit ketamine laboratory in 2016. The misuse of ketamine in China is indicated to have increased over the past six years. Similarly, ketamine use in Brunei Darussalam has increased for three consecutive years since 2013, according to the government expert perception.

608. Some countries continue to report considerable seizures of kratom and khat, two plant-based psychoactive drugs, the former of which is illicitly cultivated in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. Nearly 29 tons of kratom was seized in Malaysia in 2015, the greatest amount reported by that country. Close to 28 tons of kratom was also seized in Thailand. In 2016, authorities in Viet Nam seized considerable amounts of khat entering the country from South Africa and destined for Australia and the United States. In March 2017, a single operation in China resulted in the seizure of 86 kg of khat originating in Africa that was being trafficked by express mail.

5. Abuse and treatment

609. Most countries in the region have struggled with the lack of quantitative data on drug abuse among the general population for some years. Drug abuse surveys usually focus on specific population groups, like registered drug users or those receiving treatment and

rehabilitation services. Some positive developments have been observed recently, with the release of results from the 2015 national drug use survey in Indonesia and the Philippines, and the first ever national drug use survey being conducted in Myanmar, with support from UNODC. **The Board takes note of such developments and encourages UNODC and other international organizations to continue providing technical assistance in this regard, taking into consideration the continuous emergence of new psychoactive substances in the region and health threats posed by them.**

610. Qualitative information collected by UNODC on perceived trends in the abuse of drugs indicated by government experts provides an overview of the regional situation. All countries in the Greater Mekong subregion except Thailand perceived increases in the abuse of methamphetamine tablets in 2015. At the same time, almost all countries of East and South-East Asia, except Indonesia and Japan, registered increases in the perceived misuse of crystalline methamphetamine. Several countries, including Cambodia, China, the Philippines, Singapore and Viet Nam, reported perceived consecutive increases in the abuse of crystalline methamphetamine in the past few years. Heroin abuse continued to be a major concern for some countries (Myanmar, Malaysia and Viet Nam), with increasing trends of abuse being perceived in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam in 2015.

611. For most countries, people receiving treatment for the abuse of crystalline methamphetamine constituted the largest share of people admitted for treatment. Over 90 per cent of all persons in drug treatment in Brunei Darussalam in 2015 used crystalline methamphetamine. Three quarters of the drug users admitted for treatment in Cambodia in 2014 used crystalline methamphetamine.

612. Some countries witnessed a spike in the number of drug treatment admissions. For instance, the number of temporary drug treatment admissions in Cambodia jumped from around 1,000 in 2011 to close to 5,000 in 2015. A similar surge was also found in Myanmar, where the total number of persons admitted to drug treatment centres rose from less than 2,000 in 2011 to slightly over 7,500 in 2015, the highest annual total ever reported in the country.

613. Results from the latest national drug use survey in Indonesia revealed that 0.6 per cent of the general population aged 10-59 years was estimated to have used an illicit drug at least once in 2015. Cannabis remained the major drug of concern, with an annual prevalence rate of 0.18 per cent. Second came methamphetamine (0.09 per cent). The abuse of dextromethorphan, a cough suppressant, has increased rapidly, while the abuse of heroin declined.

614. There were about 1.8 million drug users in the Philippines, according to the results of its 2015 national drug use survey. Cannabis remained the most widely used drug in the country, followed by crystalline methamphetamine. The abuse of crystalline methamphetamine continued to account for the majority of drug-related arrests and treatment admissions. The most recent drug treatment admission data (for 2016) revealed that admissions at residential facilities increased from about 5,400 in 2015 to slightly over 6,000 in 2016.

615. China estimated that there were about 2.5 million registered drug users in the country at the end of 2016. The majority of the registered drug users used synthetic drugs (60 per cent), while about 38 per cent of all users used opiates and the remaining portion used cannabis and cocaine. The proportion of synthetic drug users in the country continued to rise in recent years, making it the primary drug group of concern for the country. The trend is particularly dominant among newly identified drug users, among which over 80 per cent used synthetic drugs in 2015.

616. Recent data from Hong Kong, China, suggested a slight decline in the extent of drug use. The total number of reported drug users decreased from about 10,200 in 2013 to less than 9,000 in 2015. While heroin continued to be the most commonly used drug, the number of users of crystalline methamphetamine reached almost 2,200, slightly overtaking the number of ketamine users.

617. The Provincial Committee for Drug Control in the Lao People's Democratic Republic estimated that there were about 65,000 to 70,000 drug users in the country in 2015, equivalent to about 1 per cent of the total population. Methamphetamine tablets remained the primary drug of concern.

618. The number of registered drug users in Viet Nam rose rapidly between 2010 and 2015, from around 143,000 to slightly over 200,000. Although heroin users still accounted for the majority of registered drug users (75 per cent), the number of amphetamine-type stimulant users has grown considerably and constituted the majority of newly registered drug users in recent years. UNODC reported that about 24,000 persons received compulsory drug treatment from drug treatment centres, and another 25,000 drug users received community-based treatment in 2015.

619. Heroin remains the major drug of concern in Malaysia. Yet the number of treatment admission for amphetamine has been rising. Of the drug treatment admissions in 2015 (6,032), around 4,300 were for opiates, followed by amphetamines (1,571). The number of

admissions for amphetamine treatment in 2015 was almost twice that of the previous year (839 admissions).

620. The number of persons admitted for drug treatment in Thailand declined considerably in recent years, partly as a result of the Government's promotion of voluntary treatment for drug users. The total number of drug treatment admissions dropped from almost 230,000 in 2014 to about 120,000 in 2015. Methamphetamine continued to be the most common drug of abuse reported by those in treatment, followed by cannabis. The total number of methamphetamine users in the country was estimated to be 2.89 million in 2014; close to 80 per cent of those individuals reported abuse of methamphetamine tablets.

621. National authorities in Singapore reported that almost two thirds of the new drug users in 2016 were less than 30 years old, underscoring the problem of young drug users in the country. Methamphetamine and heroin continued to be the two most commonly used drugs, followed by cannabis.

South Asia

1. Major developments

622. In 2016, the rise in the illicit manufacturing of, trafficking in and abuse of methamphetamine, as well as of the diversion and abuse of pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances remained among the major drug-related challenges in the region. In India, the quantities of amphetamine-type stimulants seized increased tenfold over the previous year's figures. In November 2016, a large quantity of methaqualone (23.5 tons) was seized in India. In 2016, Bangladesh reported one of the largest seizures of methamphetamine tablets ever made in the country. In addition, the region continued to be particularly vulnerable to trafficking in opiates and heroin. The amount of heroin trafficked into Sri Lanka increased almost fivefold in 2016.

2. Regional cooperation

623. The Fortieth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Asia and the Pacific, was held in Colombo from 24 to 27 October 2016. Over 150 participants from the law enforcement, foreign affairs and health sectors discussed the status of drug control and treatment in the region and adopted a number of

expert recommendations focusing on the following topics: national and regional responses to the evolving threat posed by amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances; measures to ensure comprehensive and balanced efforts at the national level to reduce drug demand; and best practices in preventing and countering drug-related money-laundering and illicit financial flows.

624. As part of the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime, Sri Lanka hosted a high-level meeting of security and interior ministers of countries in the Indian Ocean region with a view to countering drug trafficking on the high seas. The meeting, which was held on 28 and 29 October 2016, focused on developing operational priorities and mechanisms for cooperation in the region.

625. In India, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence under the Central Board of Excise and Customs hosted the fourth regional customs enforcement meeting in New Delhi on 10 December 2016. The meeting was attended by heads of customs enforcement and senior officers from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Mauritius and Maldives. The participants shared experiences in combating smuggling and evasion of duties and exchanged information about, among other topics, the *modi operandi* for the smuggling of gold, fake Indian currency notes, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, antiques and foreign currency.

3. National legislation, policy and action

626. The Bhutan Narcotics Control Authority held several training and capacity-building activities on drug-related issues. In January 2017, school counsellors from around the country, non-governmental organizations and government organizations completed their final curriculum on the universal treatment certification programme on addiction counselling initiated by the Authority in 2013 with the technical support of the Colombo Plan. In March 2017, a conference on addiction prevention was held for the peer counsellors from various drop-in centres in Bhutan. In June 2017, a training and awareness-raising programme on drug testing and on the provisions of drugs and tobacco laws was held for security officials of Paro Airport.

627. On 11 April 2017, the High Court of Delhi, India, in a ruling on the challenge to a conviction for ketamine trafficking, upheld the inclusion of ketamine in the list of psychotropic substances for the purposes of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. In India, ketamine was included in the list of psychotropic substances with a notification dated 10 February 2011.

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

(a) Narcotic drugs

628. Cannabis is one of the substances most cultivated, trafficked and abused in the region. Law enforcement agencies in India reported seizures of 100 tons of cannabis per year on average between 2013 and 2015. The number of cannabis seizures rose from 8,130 in 2015 to 14,401 in 2016, while the quantities of cannabis seized rose from 94.4 tons to 294 tons over the same period. It was the largest quantity of cannabis seized in India in 15 years. About 45 tons of cannabis were seized in the first half of 2017. Law enforcement authorities eradicated 3,414 ha of illicitly cultivated cannabis in 2016, the largest area since 2010 and a tenfold increase compared with the previous year (331 ha). Trafficking in cannabis from Nepal to India continued to be a major concern.

629. Seizures of cannabis in Bangladesh have been showing an upward trend since 2013. In 2016, the quantities of cannabis seized in the country increased slightly from 41 tons in 2015 to 47 tons. Bangladesh has a history of illicit cannabis production and consumption, and cannabis remained the main substance of abuse in the country. Bangladesh is exposed to drug trafficking of cannabis from its neighbours India and Nepal.

630. Despite eradication efforts and campaigns by the Government of Nepal, the illicit cultivation of cannabis continued during the reporting period. The open border between Nepal and India is vulnerable to cannabis trafficking in the region. Nepal reported seizures of over 4.4 tons of cannabis in 2016, compared with 6.6 tons seized in 2015.

631. Maldives has also emerged as a transit point for narcotic drugs being trafficked to other destinations. The geographical location of Maldives and multiple sea routes around the country make it a vulnerable trans-shipment point for illegal consignments of drugs intended for other countries. Drugs are smuggled into Maldives through seaports and airports. In Maldives, 67.4 kg of cannabis were seized in 2016.

632. Cannabis is the only plant-based drug that is illicitly cultivated in Sri Lanka. Cannabis seizures in Sri Lanka have been declining since 2011, when 203 tons were seized. Since that year, seizures have declined significantly to 81.9 tons in 2013 and 6.56 tons in 2015. In 2016, the decline in cannabis seizures continued and the amount seized was 4.17 tons.

633. In India, while cannabis seizures underwent a large increase, cannabis resin seizures declined from 3.3 tons in

2015 to 2.7 tons in 2016, whereas the number of seizures increased by 10 per cent over 2015 to 2,562 cases in 2016. In addition to having its domestic production of cannabis resin, Nepal is a major source of cannabis resin trafficked in India.

634. In Sri Lanka, about 40 kg of cannabis resin were seized in 2016. The total number of drug-related arrests in the country was 79,398 in 2016, a 4 per cent decrease compared with the previous year.

635. Cannabis resin consignments bound for Tokyo using cargo and couriers were intercepted in Kathmandu. According to the police of Nepal, Japan is becoming a drug trafficking destination for criminal syndicates in the country. In 2016, the quantity of cannabis resin seized in Nepal increased to above 1.9 tons, from 1.5 tons in 2015.

636. In recent years, the South Asia region has been experiencing the impact of the increasing use of the southern route, with larger than usual amounts of heroin from Afghanistan being seized, particularly in Sri Lanka (the southern route is a collection of trafficking routes used by organized criminal groups for the southerly flows of heroin out of Afghanistan). The southern route often originates from ports in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Heroin is the second most common drug of abuse in Sri Lanka. Heroin and other opiates are not manufactured in Sri Lanka. Heroin trafficking into the country has been steadily increasing. In 2016, it increased almost five-fold to 207 kg, from 46.6 kg in 2015.

637. The quantity of heroin seized in India increased to 1.67 tons in 2016, from 1.42 tons reported in 2015. It was the largest quantity of heroin India reported seized in 20 years.

638. Similar increases in heroin trafficking have been observed in Bangladesh, where seizures of heroin more than doubled from 108.7 kg in 2015 to 266.8 kg in 2016. On the other hand, heroin seizures in Nepal decreased from 6.4 kg in 2015 to 3.7 kg in 2016. In Maldives, about 46.9 kg of heroin were seized in 2016.

639. There was a decline in opium seizures in India from 2010 to 2015. However, in 2016, they increased again to 2.3 tons, 30 per cent more than the 1.69 tons seized in 2015. The number of opium seizures also increased during the same period, from 860 to 933, while the quantities of morphine seized declined from 61 kg recorded in 2015 to 28 kg in 2016.

640. Agencies in India use satellite imagery and field surveys coupled with local intelligence-gathering to track and reduce illicit opium poppy and cannabis cultivation.

The amount of illicitly cultivated opium poppy destroyed in India rose by almost 90 per cent, from 1,401 ha eradicated in 2015 to 2,635 ha in 2016, the highest in five years.

641. In 2016, authorities in Nepal made 3,696 arrests for drug trafficking offences, compared with 2,656 in 2015. The Narcotics Control Bureau of Nepal reported that the amount of opium seized in the country increased significantly to 64.2 kg in 2016, as compared with 9.8 kg seized in 2015.

642. Trafficking in cocaine in South Asia has historically been limited. The quantity of cocaine seized in India decreased significantly from about 113 kg in 2015 to 28 kg in 2016. Around 5.7 kg of cocaine were seized in Sri Lanka in 2015. In 2016, at the port of Colombo, authorities seized 928 kg of cocaine concealed in a container holding a consignment of timber from Ecuador. The consignment was en route to India and was being transhipped at the port when the seizure was made. It was the largest seizure of cocaine ever made in the history of South Asia by any law enforcement agency. In 2016, the authorities in Sri Lanka made several more cocaine seizures totalling around 500 kg. The cocaine was being trafficked in container cargo originating from Latin America.

643. In Bangladesh, less than 1 kg of cocaine was seized in 2016. That compared with 5.7 kg seized in 2015, the first reported seizure of cocaine in that country since 2009. The trend of increasing seizures of cocaine in Nepal continued in the reporting period. The first case of cocaine trafficking in Nepal was reported in 2012; since then seizures of cocaine in the country have been growing. In 2016, authorities in Nepal seized 13.62 kg of cocaine, the largest quantity of cocaine seized in the country so far and significantly more than the 11 kg seized in 2015. In Maldives, approximately 5 kg of cocaine were seized in 2016.

644. Codeine-based cough syrups were widely abused in Bangladesh and were being smuggled into the country in large quantities. In 2016, 566,525 bottles of codeine-based preparations were seized in Bangladesh. It was the lowest quantity seized in the country since 2010. Synthetic opioids such as buprenorphine (an opioid controlled under the 1971 Convention) and pentazocine in injectable form continued to be trafficked into Bangladesh. Seizures of drugs in injectable form sharply increased to 152,740 ampoules in 2016, from 86,172 ampoules seized in 2015.

(b) Psychotropic substances

645. The manufacture of, trafficking in and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants in the region remains a challenge. According to reports by the Narcotics Control

Bureau of India, in 2016, the quantities of amphetamine-type stimulants seized increased tenfold over the previous year. In 2016, India seized 1,687 kg of amphetamine-type stimulants in 20 seizures, while in 2015, it seized 166 kg in 21 cases.

646. Seizures of methaqualone in India increased from 89 kg in 2015 to 24.1 tons in 2016. In November 2016, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence seized 23.5 tons of methaqualone at a clandestine factory in the State of Rajasthan in the country's hinterland. It was one of the biggest seizures of methaqualone in India.

647. In January and February 2017, the anti-narcotics cell of the Mumbai police reported having made a number of mephedrone seizures. On 29 January 2017 it reported a particularly large seizure of 104 kg of mephedrone, together with 38 grams of cocaine. In the course of February 2017, Mumbai police reported a number of additional mephedrone seizures consisting of smaller quantities ranging from 1 kg to 25 kg.

648. In April 2017, the Narcotics Control Bureau of India closed down one illegal Internet pharmacy and a large quantity of psychotropic substances including alprazolam, amphetamine, diazepam, clonazepam, lorazepam was seized. Two persons were arrested in relation to this operation under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.

649. The smuggling of "yaba" (methamphetamine) tablets from Myanmar across the country's south-eastern border to Bangladesh has continued; the quantities seized by law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh have been rapidly increasing since 2010. The Department of Narcotics Control of Bangladesh reported seizures of 29.4 million methamphetamine tablets in 2016, the largest amount seized in the country to date. It surpasses the previous high of 20.1 million tablets seized in 2015.

650. Trafficking in and the abuse of psychotropic substances continue to escalate in Nepal. In 2016, 34,977 ampoules of diazepam and 25,191 ampoules of buprenorphine were seized. In the period from January to April 2017, law enforcement authorities seized 11,640 ampoules of diazepam and 11,632 ampoules of buprenorphine.

(c) Precursors

651. Seizures of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine in India increased from 827 kg in 2015 to 21.27 tons in 2016. This sharp rise was the result of one single seizure of more than 20 tons of ephedrine from a facility allegedly

involved in the clandestine manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants. In the same case, 2,661 litres of acetic anhydride were seized. In 2015, only one seizure of acetic anhydride was reported, totalling 4 litres.

652. 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 2017 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

(d) Substances not under international control

653. Ketamine seizures in India continued in 2016. In April, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence in Bangalore seized 13.8 kg of ketamine and 170.9 kg of alprazolam in one single case.

654. The emergence of new psychoactive substances poses a unique and difficult challenge for governments and law enforcement agencies in the region. There is an urgent need to strengthen the enforcement and forensic capacities of agencies in the region to meet this challenge. In 2016, UNODC held capacity-building workshops for law enforcement officials and forensic experts from the region on the identification and detection of new psychoactive substances.

5. Abuse and treatment

655. The lack of representative surveys on household drug use and of regular national assessments concerning the nature and extent of drug abuse has made it difficult to keep track of the latest trends in the region. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of India has constituted a committee to conduct a survey on the use and abuse of drugs in the country. The last such survey was conducted in 2001.

656. According to a study by the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh, entitled "Epidemiology of substance use and dependence in the State of Punjab", between 100,000 to 270,000 people, mostly young, poorly educated males, were dependent on opioids in the State of Punjab, India. Their average age was 30 years, and half of them were unmarried. The study was conducted from 2015 to 2017 and the results were released in September 2017. The study revealed that among the 6,600 Punjabis enrolled in the survey from 22 districts, 88 per cent were dependent on opioids. Lifetime

dependency was 99 per cent. The study identified opium and poppy husk as the most common types of opioids abused in the state, while injection opioid abuse was the second most common form. According to the study, there were 78,000 people who injected opioids in Punjab. Among injection opioids, heroin (61.6 per cent) was the most common drug, followed by buprenorphine (used to treat opioid addiction). The study found that the problem of substance abuse and dependence in Punjab was serious, especially in rural areas. There were more than 22 rehabilitation centres, at least one in each district, and more than 30 so-called drug de-addiction centres, in Punjab. The Government has moved forward to tackle the drug problem in the state and has expressed its plans to integrate the drug de-addiction centres with rehabilitation centres.

657. In Sri Lanka, in 2016, cannabis and cannabis resin, heroin and cocaine were the drugs most abused. The estimated number of registered drug users dependent on cannabis was 200,000, whereas for opioids the number was 45,000. According to the drug abuse monitoring system, the number of people who received drug treatment for any controlled substance in Sri Lanka in 2016 was estimated at 2,355. The number of drug users receiving treatment had increased by 59 per cent compared with 2015. Their average age was 34, and only 1.5 per cent were female. Opium and heroin were the main drugs for which they sought treatment. Of the total number of reported drug users, 35 per cent were in government treatment facilities, 29 per cent were in prison drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes and 20 per cent were in treatment facilities operated by non-governmental organizations.

658. According to the survey of the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board of Sri Lanka, among the 45,000 heroin-dependent persons in the country, about 2.5 per cent were people who injected drugs. The majority of them lived in Colombo and the coastal areas. The majority of the people who injected drugs took more than one type of drug. According to the survey findings, 69 per cent of people who injected drugs did so regularly and 31 per cent occasionally.

659. Drug abuse is on the rise in Maldives. Various drugs have become more available in Maldives in recent years. Heroin and hash oil were the most common types of drugs abused by a majority of drug-dependent people in the country.

660. Pharmaceutical preparations of codeine-based cough syrups and controlled substances such as buprenorphine, diazepam and nitrazepam were among the most commonly abused substances in Nepal.

661. In 2016, a total of 12,815 patients with drug-related disorders were treated in private treatment centres in Bangladesh, up from 9,987 patients in 2015. The abuse of “yaba” (methamphetamine) tablets and of codeine-based preparations continued to be widespread in Bangladesh, and was still increasing.

662. Bhutan reported that the majority of drug users in the country were young people and that they were mainly dependent on cannabis and controlled substances such as diazepam, nitrazepam and preparations such as codeine-based cough syrups.

663. Bhutan carried out a national survey on drug use from October to December 2016 that covered 20 districts. Beside being the largest of its kind in Bhutan, the survey was also the first for which prevalence data among young people were collected. The national drug use survey was conducted in schools and university colleges, as well as in community-based settings. The survey found that one in every five students abused cannabis and one out of six students reported abusing solvents. The survey has revealed that the average age at which young people start using tobacco and alcohol was 14 and 15 years, respectively. The average age at which they started abusing cannabis and other illicit drugs was 16 years. The research was coordinated by the Bhutan Narcotics Control Authority.

West Asia

1. Major developments

664. West Asia continues to face major challenges to drug control efforts due to opiate trafficking from Afghanistan. Accounting for two thirds of the estimated global area under illicit opium poppy cultivation, Afghanistan has itself seen increasing social, environmental and economic costs associated with the illicit cultivation, production and consumption of opiates. Moreover, drug trafficking is benefiting the insurgency and terrorism in the country at the hands of the Taliban and other groups, which has potential spillover effects for the entire region and the rest of the world.

665. Although the so-called Balkan route continues to be the main conduit for trafficking in opiates from Afghanistan worldwide, another route, one that transits the Caucasus countries, is being used more frequently. This is because Turkey, one of the countries on the Balkan route, has strengthened its border controls in response to the movement of migrants and refugees.

666. The current instability in the Near and Middle East, due to prolonged conflicts, has led to a significant increase in drug trafficking and abuse affecting many countries in the region. Most notably, recent reports of drug raids and arrests in Iraq indicate that that country's drug problem is growing more severe and, possibly, that there is a shift towards illicit local drug production. Regional instability also seems to have exacerbated the situation in Lebanon, where there are reports that cannabis resin and possibly opium are being produced illicitly. There are indications of increased cocaine trafficking affecting Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates. According to the very limited information available with respect to drug-related developments in Yemen, drug trafficking in that country is on the rise owing to the protracted conflict there. Concerned about the ever-stronger links between drugs and violence in the Near and Middle East, INCB urges concerned countries to enhance information-sharing and regional and international cooperation to counter drug trafficking flows into, through and out of the region. In that context, INCB encourages the countries in the region to avail themselves of the technical assistance initiatives implemented by the international community, including UNODC, in the areas of border management, container control, counter-terrorism and the strengthening of criminal justice systems in line with rule of law, and calls upon the international donor community to support such initiatives in the region.

667. In South-West Asia, challenges posed by cannabis trafficking continued to be faced by Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. In addition, there were indications of increasing activity in the synthetic drug market in Afghanistan and the wider South-West and Central Asian subregions.

668. Relatively limited information is collected and reported on trafficking in and the abuse of new psychoactive substances in most countries in West Asia. Nevertheless, the latest available information for 2016 suggests that several of those countries, including Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, witnessed an increase in the abuse of new psychoactive substances, in particular synthetic cannabinoids. Several countries in the region continued to see trafficking in and the abuse of tramadol, a synthetic opioid not under international control.

669. Most countries in the region faced a lack of resources for comprehensive and regular drug use surveys. Even though opioids remained a major concern in South-West and Central Asia, some countries reported decreases in the number of persons using heroin in 2016,

possibly owing to a shift towards new psychoactive substances such as synthetic cannabinoids. There were concerns about increasing methamphetamine use in South-West Asia, and there was growing evidence of tramadol trafficking and abuse in the countries of the Near and Middle East.

2. Regional cooperation

670. Central Asian countries continued to intensify their cooperation in combating drug trafficking. In 2016, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) provided assistance to the competent authorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan in coordinating seven international anti-drug operations. As a result, drug deliveries were intercepted on their way from Afghanistan to Tajikistan, from Tajikistan through Kyrgyzstan to the Russian Federation, and from Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Lithuania. Forty-five organizers and active members of transnational drug trafficking organizations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan were arrested and 192 kg of drugs were seized.

671. On 17 March 2017, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2344 (2017), in which it extended the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2018. In that resolution, the Security Council called upon States to strengthen international and regional cooperation to counter the threat to the international community posed by the illicit production of, trafficking in and illicit consumption of drugs originating in Afghanistan, which significantly contributed to the financial resources of the Taliban and its associates, in accordance with the principle of common and shared responsibility in addressing the drug problem in Afghanistan, including through cooperation against the trafficking in drugs and precursor chemicals. The Council also expressed appreciation for the work of the Paris Pact initiative and its "Paris-Moscow" process, and the efforts of SCO. It underlined the importance of border management cooperation and welcomed the intensified cooperation of the relevant United Nations institutions with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Collective Security Treaty Organization and CARICC in that regard.

672. The thirteenth Policy Consultative Group meeting under the Paris Pact initiative was held in Vienna on 1 and 2 February 2017. It was attended by more than 100 participants from 30 countries and 11 organizations. Discussions focused on the four pillars of the Vienna Declaration, which was the outcome document of the

Third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact Partners in Combating Illicit Traffic in Opiates Originating in Afghanistan, held in Vienna in 2012, namely regional cooperation and initiatives, preventing illicit financial flows, precursor chemicals and drug demand reduction.

673. The twelfth senior officials meeting of the Triangular Initiative, which involves Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan, was held in Vienna on 3 February 2017 to take stock of progress made and discuss future cooperation in jointly addressing drug trafficking. The three countries renewed their commitment to strengthening joint operational activities and intensifying border controls, including by developing mechanisms for border meetings among the commanders of border protection forces and the counter-narcotics police to exchange information and intelligence, and by having the heads of the counter-narcotics agencies of the three countries hold regular meetings.

674. In Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, in March 2017, representatives of the Triangular Initiative countries gathered for the first time with representatives of African and Indian Ocean States including Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United Arab Emirates, as well as with Colombia, for the interregional sharing of experiences and best practices in detecting, investigating and disrupting the methods used by transnational organized crime groups to finance their activities. At the conclusion of the meeting, experts recommended that a similar meeting should be held every six months to exchange updates on current money-laundering threats, new methods for disrupting the finances of organized crime networks and priorities for technical assistance.

675. The seventh meeting of senior officials of the counter-narcotics agencies of the SCO member States vested with authority to combat drug trafficking was held in Astana in April 2017. Participants exchanged views on the drug control situation in the SCO member States, the prospects for developing international cooperation in countering drug trafficking and on measures to enhance practical interaction between the counter-narcotics agencies of the SCO member States. In that connection, officials stressed the need to support and preserve the current international drug control system and to adopt adequate measures to improve the regional drug control situation.

3. National legislation, policy and action

676. The Government of Armenia approved a programme of measures for 2017 aimed at tackling drug addiction and countering drug trafficking. The

programme consisted of a comprehensive set of measures for addressing prevention, treatment and rehabilitation and combating drug trafficking. Georgia reported that its Government had approved a new regulation on the import and export of precursors.

677. The Anti-Narcotics Force of Pakistan took multiple steps in 2016 to address drug trafficking. It completed the deployment of its personnel at all international airports, seaports and dry ports in Pakistan; continued the destruction of opium poppy crops in coordination with the provincial governments and the administration of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas; established sniffer dog units at each of its regional directorates (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, North, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan) and trained its personnel in countering trafficking in precursors and drugs. In 2016, the authorities also carried out intelligence-led operations with their counterparts from Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Qatar, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and the United States, resulting in seizures of heroin, methamphetamine and other substances.

678. In June 2016, the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan adopted a decree approving new rules on the carrying of medicines for personal use, including medicines containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

679. From 9 to 14 July 2017, the Government of Afghanistan, with assistance from UNODC, held a campaign entitled “National mobilization against narcotics” to raise public awareness of the dangers associated with drug production and trafficking. On the first day, a national event was held in which more than 200 people participated, including the Second Vice-President, ministers, religious scholars, members of the National Assembly and representatives of national and international organizations and civil society. Speakers discussed various challenges in addressing the drug problem and called for national, regional and global efforts to overcome them. The national mobilization campaign focused on such issues as responsibilities and actions of the Government, women’s affairs, community engagement, religious platforms and engagement with the development sector.

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

(a) Narcotic drugs

680. As discussed in section E of chapter II of the present report, the Board is extremely concerned about the continued substantial increase in cultivation of opium

poppy and production of opium in Afghanistan over the past two years. In 2017, opium production reached a record 9,000 tons, representing an increase of 87 per cent from 2016, according to the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017*, released by UNODC and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of Afghanistan on 15 November 2017. The area under opium poppy cultivation also increased substantially, by almost 63 per cent, reaching a record 328,000 ha in 2017. These are the highest levels ever recorded for opium poppy cultivation and opium production in Afghanistan. According to the survey, the rise in production is attributable mainly to an increase in the area under opium poppy cultivation and in opium poppy yield per hectare.

681. Opium poppy cultivation expanded into new areas, resulting in an increase from 21 to 24 provinces affected by such cultivation. The survey also indicated large increases in cultivation in almost all major opium poppy-cultivating provinces, including in Helmand (an increase of 63,700 ha, or 79 per cent), Balkh (an increase of 10,000 ha, or 37 per cent), Kandahar (an increase of 7,500 ha, or 37 per cent), Nimroz (an increase of 6,200 ha, or 116 per cent) and Uruzgan (an increase of 6,000 ha, or 39 per cent). Most of the cultivation took place in the southern region of the country (almost 60 per cent of total cultivation), followed by the western region (17 per cent), northern region (13 per cent) and eastern region (7 per cent).

682. In May 2017, UNODC and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of Afghanistan published the chapter of the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016* devoted to sustainable development in an opium production environment. According to that report, illicit drug crop cultivation and drug production have a multifaceted impact on the economic, environmental and social development of Afghanistan. Illicit drug crop cultivation and drug production have given rise to an illicit economy that affects rural society, making it to a large extent dependent on income from growing opium poppy. Agricultural productivity has also been affected owing to poor land management. In addition, drug users, their families and society in general are burdened with increasing social and economic costs associated with the consumption of opiates.

683. Also according to the chapter of the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016* on sustainable development in an opium production environment, the value of opiates produced in Afghanistan was estimated to be about 16 per cent of the country's gross domestic product and worth more than two thirds of the output of its entire agricultural sector. The value of the illicit opiate economy was estimated at \$3.02 billion in 2016, almost twice the amount estimated for 2015.

684. On 26 December 2016, the President of Afghanistan, along with a number of ministers and other high-ranking Government officials, held a videoconference with 34 provincial governors and officials on the counter-narcotics and opium poppy eradication operations proposed for 2017. During that videoconference, the President ordered the civilian and national military authorities of the 34 provinces to step up the fight against drugs. He also referred to the Afghan National Drug Action Plan (2015–2019) and the planned annual eradication of 5 per cent of illicit opium poppy cultivation. The President added that the 2017 opium poppy eradication programme had been approved by the National Security Council and targeted a volume of eradication higher than that in 2016. As discussed in section E of chapter II of the present report, Afghanistan began its annual opium poppy eradication campaign in March 2017. As a result, in 2017 a total of 750 ha of poppy fields were destroyed. While this represents an increase of 111 per cent in the number of hectares eradicated compared with 2016, when 355 ha were eradicated, it is a negligible amount, representing less than one quarter of 1 per cent of the total area under illicit opium poppy cultivation.

685. In Afghanistan, the illicit production of and trafficking in drugs occur mostly in areas where State institutions are weak or unable to exercise full control because of the deteriorating security situation, although trafficking is not limited to areas controlled by insurgents. According to the eighth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2255 (2015) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan,¹⁰⁴ up to 90 per cent of drug production in Afghanistan currently falls within Taliban-controlled areas. The value and illicit production of drugs in Afghanistan rose markedly in 2016, as reported in the INCB annual report for 2016, and so did the income the Taliban generated from the drug trade. This compensated for the slight drop in income that the Taliban received from external sources in 2016. In its eighth report, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team also stated that the Taliban now play a direct part in the illicit production of, processing of and trafficking in virtually all heroin produced and trafficked from Afghanistan, rather than simply “taxing” these activities.¹⁰⁵

686. The Balkan route continues to be the main route in the world for trafficking in opiates from Afghanistan. It runs from Afghanistan to Europe through the Islamic

¹⁰⁴See S/2017/409.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

Republic of Iran and Turkey. Almost 40 per cent of global heroin seizures are made in the countries located along the route. At the same time, according to UNODC, another route has gained importance in recent years. It transits the Caucasus countries Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and then continues across the Black Sea to Ukraine and Romania. Traffickers may have started to use this route more frequently because the movement of migrants and refugees via Turkey to the European Union countries had heightened the attention of law enforcement agencies.

687. Armenia reported an increase in 2016 in seizures of cocaine, opium and cannabis resin trafficked to the country. The drugs originated mainly from South American countries (in the case of cocaine) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (in the case of cannabis resin and opium). In cooperation with the competent authorities of the Russian Federation, the authorities in Armenia dismantled several drug trafficking routes transiting Armenia from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

688. Georgia reported illicit cultivation of wild cannabis for personal consumption on its territory. Heroin is reported to enter the country mainly from Azerbaijan and Turkey. Also in Georgia, there was an increase in trafficking in preparations containing buprenorphine, such as Subutex and Suboxone, mainly from European countries.

689. Opiates continue to be trafficked from Afghanistan along two other major routes: the southern route, which runs through South Asia, the Gulf region, the rest of the Near and Middle East and Africa, and the northern route, which runs through Central Asia to the Russian Federation.

690. The Islamic Republic of Iran reported fewer incidents involving the use of sea routes by drug traffickers because it had strengthened interdiction measures in recent years. Both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan continued to be confronted with trafficking in opiates and cannabis originating in neighbouring Afghanistan.

691. In Pakistan, in 2016, the area under illicit opium poppy cultivation was 1,599 ha, of which 1,470 ha were destroyed as part of the Government's eradication efforts throughout the year. At the same time, Pakistan reported an increase of 10 per cent in opium seizures (64.6 tons in 2016, compared to 58.9 tons in 2015) and an increase of 42 per cent in heroin seizures (23.1 tons in 2016, compared to 16.3 tons in 2015).

692. There were growing concerns about drug trafficking in Iraq. Reports of drug raids and arrests in 2016 indicated that the country's drug problem was growing more severe, and that, possibly, there was a shift towards

increased illicit drug production. There were reports of illicit opium poppy and cannabis cultivation. In October 2016, the security forces reportedly discovered an opium poppy farm of 6.5 ha in Erbil.

693. Uzbekistan reported an increase in opium seizures of nearly 64 per cent to 1.4 tons in 2016, compared to 863 kg in 2015. During the same period, heroin seizures in Uzbekistan decreased by 41 per cent to 108 kg in 2016, compared to 148 kg in 2015. Tajikistan reported a decrease of nearly 56 per cent in its seizures of opiates to 700 kg in 2016, compared to 1.6 tons in 2015.

694. In 2016, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan carried out their annual campaigns to combat trafficking and eradicate illicitly cultivated crops containing narcotic drugs. As a result, Kazakhstan seized 33.5 tons of drugs, including 52 kg of heroin, 110 kg of cannabis resin and 32.5 tons of cannabis herb. Uzbekistan seized 1.3 tons of drugs, including 3.4 kg of heroin, 49.3 kg of opium, 46 kg of cannabis resin, 462 kg of cannabis herb and 760 kg of opium poppy straw. Uzbekistan reported a substantial increase in so-called anonymous smuggling, whereby traffickers bury the packaged drugs in the ground or leave caches of drugs in the border areas to be picked up by other traffickers for further transportation.

695. Although the cocaine market in West Asia is smaller than those in other regions of the world, cocaine trafficking in West Asia continued to rise. The Near and Middle East (mainly Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates) accounted for about 40 per cent of total cocaine seizures in Asia over the period 2010–2015. In 2016, a number of cocaine seizures were reported by Lebanon, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Israel and Lebanon were most frequently cited as destination countries for cocaine trafficking in the region. Two large seizures of cocaine made in October 2016, one of 18 kg at the international airport of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and one of 24.5 kg at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, were destined for Lebanon. Reports indicated that King Abdullah port in Saudi Arabia had served as a transit point for cocaine from South America.

696. Nigerian criminal syndicates appeared active in the Middle East and North Africa. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency of Nigeria reported the arrest during the reporting period of three female couriers at Murtala Muhammed International Airport. They were caught carrying cocaine to Saudi Arabia in amounts ranging from 300 grams to 1.6 kg each.

697. Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan observed a substantial increase in seizures of

cannabis resin during the period 2010–2015. Both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan reported that, in 2016, they continued to be confronted by trafficking in cannabis herb and cannabis resin originating from neighbouring Afghanistan.

698. Lebanon was another country in West Asia where cannabis resin continued to be produced. From Lebanon, cannabis resin was trafficked mainly to Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey. Lebanon also remained one of the five largest cannabis herb producers in the world. In 2016, the Lebanese authorities seized 7.6 tons of cannabis resin. In the first five months of 2017, several significant seizures of cannabis resin were made in Lebanon, including one of 5.5 tons hidden in a shipment of apples bound for Europe and another of almost 500 kg hidden in soap boxes bound for Canada. There were also reports, some based on statements made by Government officials, that the cultivation of cannabis in the Bekaa Valley was expanding because the Government's efforts to eradicate the industry had diminished significantly. In the past, annual eradication programmes had been conducted before each harvest.

(b) Psychotropic substances

699. On 27 January 2017, UNODC released its first assessment of the synthetic drug situation in Afghanistan. According to that report, there were indications of increasing activity in the synthetic drug market in Afghanistan and the wider South-West and Central Asian subregions. Although data and information remained scarce, reports suggested not only that more methamphetamine was being seized in Afghanistan, but also that illicit manufacturing facilities could be operating in the western part of the country. The report stressed that, given the presence of synthetic drugs in Afghanistan, it was important to enhance data collection and monitoring. While reporting mechanisms with regard to opiates had been established in Afghanistan, data on methamphetamine seizures might be incomplete because different law enforcement agencies were using different reporting formats. Afghanistan's current national drug control law provided for considerably lower penalties for trafficking in methamphetamine than it did for trafficking in other drugs such as heroin or cocaine.

700. Although Afghanistan was a growing source of illicitly produced methamphetamine, the Islamic Republic of Iran reported a decrease in methamphetamine trafficking through its territory due, in part, to stronger action being taken at the country's borders, including against precursor trafficking. Armenia reported an increase in

seizures of methamphetamine in 2016. The drug was being trafficked mainly from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

701. Instability and continuing conflicts in the Middle East, coupled with a lack of monitoring, led to a significant increase in the manufacture of counterfeit "captagon".¹⁰⁶ It is believed that instability was also a reason behind the major shift in the illicit manufacture of "captagon" from South-Eastern Europe to Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Furthermore, the chemical precursors needed to manufacture "captagon" seemed to be available within the region. Although data were scarce, there had been media reports of several large seizures: 1 million "captagon" tablets bound for Saudi Arabia seized at the port of Tripoli, Lebanon, at the end of 2016; 1 million tablets bound for Oman seized at Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport in July 2017; and 250,000 tablets bound for Nigeria seized at the port of Beirut in August 2017. For the first time, "captagon" coming from Lebanon was seized at Charles de Gaulle Airport in France (one seizure of 70 kg in January 2017 and another of 67 kg in February 2017). Investigations showed that, for one of the seized consignments, the end destination was Saudi Arabia via Czechia and Turkey. In October 2016, the authorities in Lebanon intercepted a shipment of "captagon" manufacturing equipment at Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport that originated in India. The security forces in Lebanon reported the seizure of 12.7 million "captagon" tablets in 2016.

702. Even though most of the synthetic drug seizures in the Middle East were reported by Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, there were concerns that amphetamine-type stimulants (in particular "captagon") were also being manufactured in Iraq. In April 2017, police raided a drug laboratory in Kirkuk in the north of the country, arresting two suspects and seizing 51 cartons of "captagon" tablets.

703. Illicit markets for amphetamines continue to operate in the Gulf countries, in particular in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In May 2017, border guards in Saudi Arabia reported the interception of 2.1 million "captagon" pills hidden in bags of rice in Al Jawf province, near the border with Jordan. United Arab Emirates police intercepted 116 kg of "captagon" in Dubai in February 2017 and, in May 2017, another shipment comprising 1 million tablets, both having the United Arab Emirates as their final destination.

¹⁰⁶Captagon was originally the registered trade name for a pharmaceutical preparation containing fenethylamine, a synthetic stimulant. "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 pharmaceutical preparation Captagon. The active ingredient in counterfeit "captagon" is amphetamine, which is typically combined with other substances such as caffeine.

704. The authorities in Jordan reported a record seizure of more than 13 million “captagon” pills hidden inside tumble dryers in a house near Amman.

(c) Precursor chemicals

705. West Asia continues to be a target destination for precursor chemicals diverted from licit trade, such as acetic anhydride (for the manufacture of heroin), ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, P-2-P, phenylacetic acid (for the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants) and others.

706. With regard to seizures of precursors in Afghanistan, the declining trend of recent years was reversed in 2016. Seizures increased again, from 1.7 tons of solid precursor chemicals in 2015 to almost 72 tons in 2016, and from 3,900 litres of liquid precursor chemicals in 2015 to 15,000 litres in 2016, indicating a potential increase in the illicit production of drugs in the country.

707. Even though only one methamphetamine laboratory was officially reported to have been dismantled in Afghanistan in 2015, precursors such as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, which can be used to manufacture methamphetamine, were widely available in the country. Afghanistan legally imported ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, and additional amounts of those substances may have entered the country across uncontrolled sections of the border. Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine were also available in the form of pharmaceutical preparations in Afghanistan. At the same time, as information was not being collected effectively, there was a lack of official data on seizures of those substances, even though there was a high risk of their being diverted for use in the production of amphetamine-type stimulants in Afghanistan.

708. As reported in the INCB annual report for 2016, 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 counterfeit “captagon” tablets, how they were reaching clandestine laboratories, the trafficking organizations involved and any links between them. The operation was concluded in mid-January 2017 and resulted in several findings. The authorities in Lebanon informed the Board of seizures of derivatives of P-2-P methyl glycidic acid (2-methyl-3-phenylglycidic acid, methyl ester), the first time a non-scheduled “designer” amphetamine precursor chemical had been reported to have been seized outside Europe. In addition, forensic analysis of “captagon” tablets seized in the region identified traces of *alpha*-phenylacetonitrile

(APAAN), which is an immediate precursor of P-2-P and a pre-precursor of amphetamine and methamphetamine.

709. Further details about the precursor control situation in West Asia can be found in the report of the Board for 2017 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

(d) Substances not under international control

710. In most countries in West Asia, relatively limited information is collected and reported on trafficking in and abuse of new psychoactive substances. The latest information available for 2016 suggests that the abuse of new psychoactive substances, in particular synthetic cannabinoids, increased in several countries in the region. In Georgia, new psychoactive substances were being trafficked into the country from countries in Europe, and their abuse was spreading among young people. Kazakhstan reported a new trend: young people under 30 were being referred to medical care for their abuse of synthetic cannabinoids, especially in the bigger cities of Almaty, Astana and Pavlodar. Similarly, Uzbekistan reported incidents involving the consumption of synthetic cannabinoids contained in so-called “Spice” products. For the first time, Tajikistan seized packages of smoking mixtures containing the synthetic cannabinoid QCBL-2201 (5F-PB-22). Lebanon saw some new patterns of drug abuse, in particular the abuse of the plant *Salvia divinorum* and of synthetic cannabinoids. In addition, in high schools in Lebanon new cases of abuse of pregabalin were detected, a medicine with relaxing properties used widely to treat epilepsy, neuropathic pain and anxiety, and GHB, a sedative-hypnotic included in Schedule II of the 1971 Convention.

711. Some countries in the region have placed many central nervous system depressants under national control owing to a recent increase in the number of those substances, in particular benzodiazepines, detected in illicit markets. Thus, Turkey placed adinazolam, deschloroetizolam, diclazepam, flubromazepam, flubromazolam, meclonazepam and pyrazolam under national control, and the United Arab Emirates did the same for diclazepam, etizolam, flubromazepam and pyrazolam.

712. Several countries in the region continued to experience trafficking and abuse relating to the prescription drug tramadol, a synthetic opioid not under international control. In the United Arab Emirates, police arrested two men in possession of 110,000 tramadol pills in June 2017, while the customs authorities reported seizing 700,000 tramadol pills at the port of Jebel Ali in 2016. According

to the authorities in Lebanon, one million pills of tramadol were seized in the country in 2016.

5. Abuse and treatment

713. Most countries in the region face problems with the availability of resources for comprehensive and regular drug use surveys. It is therefore difficult to thoroughly analyse rates of and trends in drug abuse in the region as a whole. Nonetheless, individual country reports may shed light on some possible developments and indicate overall trends in the region.

714. Even though opioid abuse remains a major concern in South-West and Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and several other countries reported a decrease in the number of persons abusing heroin in 2016 as a result of heroin being replaced by other types of psychoactive drugs, such as cannabinoids.

715. In Central Asia, the Caucasus and South-West Asia, the prevalence of drug abuse by injection is above the global average. At the same time, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan reported a decrease in 2016 in the number of persons who abused drugs by injection. Within West Asia, South-West Asia had the highest prevalence of HIV among people who abused drugs by injection, at 28.5 per cent, which was almost twice the global average of 13.1 per cent.

716. Also in South-West Asia, concern was mounting about methamphetamine use. Afghanistan reported an increase in synthetic drug abuse in 2016, as reported by law enforcement agencies, health-care providers and treatment centres in certain parts of the country. The data suggest that the main cause of the rise could be an increase in the use of methamphetamine by opiate users, as smuggling and possibly illicit local manufacture had expanded the market for synthetic drugs in Afghanistan, as discussed in section 4 above.

717. As reported in section 4 above, there is growing evidence that tramadol is being trafficked and abused in the Near and Middle East, especially in Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Many countries in the region, including Bahrain, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, have placed tramadol under national control to address the increased risk of abuse.

718. INCB urges countries in the region to allocate sufficient human, financial and institutional resources to improve access to drug treatment for all affected segments of the population, including women and youth, and to strengthen mechanisms for the effective collection of

information, including through comprehensive national drug abuse surveys based on recognized methodologies, in order to assess the extent and patterns of drug abuse. INCB notes that effective assessments of the extent of drug abuse in the countries of the region could result in information that can be used in formulating evidence-based policies and designing prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and other services. In that regard, the Board urges all relevant stakeholders, including international organizations and partner Governments, to provide to the countries in the region financial and technical advisory support in the design and conduct of such surveys.