

E. Oceania

1. Major developments

814. Oceania continues to be vulnerable to drug manufacturing and drug and precursor trafficking. Countries in Oceania reported seizures of considerable amounts of various drugs, including crystalline methamphetamine, the increase in manufacturing capacity and growing market for which have become a significant concern in the region. National wastewater drug monitoring has shown that Australia has become a major consumer of methamphetamine, cocaine and “ecstasy”. Australia’s lucrative illicit market for drugs continues to attract transnational organized criminal groups.

815. In recent years, seizures of large amounts of cocaine have been reported in a number of countries in the region. The general annual prevalence rate of cocaine abuse in Oceania is high, with Australia having a 2.5 per cent prevalence rate among the population aged 14 years and older in 2016. The weight of cocaine seized in Australia also exceeded the total estimated weight of cocaine that would be required to meet the estimated size of the national demand of the substance for abuse. The significant amount of cocaine seized in Tonga indicates that, in addition to being used as a transit point, cocaine abuse has spread to the country.

816. The lack of data related to drug trafficking and abuse in the region, other than for Australia and New Zealand, coupled with the fact that many countries have not yet become parties to the drug control treaties, is a matter of great concern to the Board. The Board has conducted bilateral meetings with the Governments of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands to address those issues and has followed up with the Governments of all non-States parties to one or more of the international drug control conventions in the region. In that connection, the Board was informed that the authorities of Papua New Guinea were to commence the national process of adhering to the 1988 Convention in September 2018.

2. Regional cooperation

817. The Oceania Customs Organization⁸⁴ held its twentieth annual conference, on the theme “Strengthening regional connections to support a safe and prosperous Pacific”, in Melbourne, Australia, from 11 to 14 June 2018. During the meeting, customs administrations from the 23 members signed a memorandum of understanding on customs cooperation to facilitate the exchange of information between relevant border security agencies. Members endorsed the re-establishment of the Information Working Group and the progression of the Small Craft Mobile Application Project, developed by Australia, to phase 3 as of July 2018. The members also endorsed the signing the Declaration of Partnership between the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, the Pacific Immigration Development Community and the Oceania Customs Organization in March 2018.

818. Under the UNODC global SMART programme, two national technical workshops were organized for the Governments of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The workshops brought together representatives of various national authorities and civil society organizations involved in countering the drug problem. They were composed of training and discussion sessions on enhancing illicit drug data collection in the countries. The workshops were held in Port Vila from 26 to 27 July 2018 and in Honiara on 1 and 2 August 2018. Also under the global SMART programme, UNODC provided support to the Government of Fiji, in particular by contributing to the third National Narcotic Committee meeting, held in Suva on 30 July 2018.

⁸⁴ Customs administrations from the following countries and territories are members of the Oceania Customs Organization: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna Islands.

819. In April 2018, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of) and Palau signed an agreement establishing the Micronesian Regional Transnational Crime Unit. Attorneys general from each of those countries were assigned to develop, create and establish a binding framework that could strengthen the Unit. It is anticipated that the Unit will strengthen mutual assistance in the national jurisdictions of each country by fostering stronger regional collaboration in areas including the prevention, investigation and prosecution of drug trafficking and drug smuggling, cybercrime detection and prevention, and information-sharing concerning national and regional criminal activity trends.

820. The Nauru Police Force, in collaboration with the Australian Border Force and the Australian Federal Police, conducted training for police and border control officers and health-care staff on detecting illicit drugs from 4 to 6 July 2017. The training focused on the use of the narcotic identification kits to identify a variety of substances. It also covered detection and search principles such as examination procedures for bags and cargo, safety during examination of substances and post-detection procedures. Drug seizures have taken place recently in Nauru, but the country had a lack of technical capacity to detect and test the drugs.

821. The second standing meeting of Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers was held in Suva on 11 August 2017. The foreign ministers discussed a wide range of issues affecting the political and security environment of the Pacific, including the increased incidence of transnational organized crime. The increasing incidence of such crime in the region, including the rise in drug trafficking, is a concern.

3. National legislation, policy and action

822. Several countries in Oceania are not yet parties to the international drug control conventions.⁸⁵ This is a specific concern to INCB as it increases the vulnerability of those countries to drug and precursor trafficking and to being used as transit points for drug trafficking from other regions. **The Board calls upon all States that are not yet parties to one or more of the international drug control conventions to accede to them without delay and**

⁸⁵Kiribati and Tuvalu have not adhered to any of the three international drug control conventions; the Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa and Vanuatu are not parties to either the 1961 Convention or the 1971 Convention; Solomon Islands is not a party to either the 1971 Convention or the 1988 Convention; and Palau and Papua New Guinea are not parties to the 1988 Convention.

reiterates its readiness and willingness to support them in that undertaking in any way possible.

823. Australia introduced an instrument, the Narcotic Drugs Amendment (Cannabis) Regulations 2018, in February 2018. The purpose of the instrument is to amend the Narcotic Drugs Regulation 2016 to permit the export of medicinal cannabis products and allow medicinal cannabis products and raw cannabis and cannabis resin to be supplied directly to the holder of a manufacturing licence under the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 for subsequent supply to patients in Australia or for export.

824. The Misuse of Drugs (Medical Cannabis) Amendment Bill was introduced in the New Zealand Parliament in December 2017. The Bill would amend the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 to improve access to medical cannabis for terminally ill people and those in chronic pain, with the intention of improving access to affordable cannabis products that meet quality standards. According to the amendment, the Bill would also include a regulation-making power to enable the setting of quality standards for medicinal cannabis products available on prescription and the de-scheduling of CBD as a controlled substance. The Bill would provide an exception and a statutory defence for the possession and use of cannabis by people who have less than 12 months to live. The changes are expected to come into force in 2019.

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

(a) Narcotic drugs

825. The amount of cannabis herb seized in 2016 (the latest year for which data are available) increased by 6 per cent in Oceania compared with 2015. Cannabis herb seizures in Oceania accounted for 0.2 per cent of total global seizures. Most of the cannabis trafficked to the Pacific island States is cultivated within the region. However, in Australia, the main cannabis market in the region, illicit imports of cannabis were detected from different countries during the 12-month reporting period 2015/16.

826. In New Zealand, the quantity of cannabis seized was 538.8 kg in 2017, which was comparable to the 524.2 kg seized in 2016. However, the number of cannabis plants seized declined to 40,481 in 2017, from 78,358 in 2016. The number of outdoor cannabis plants eradicated decreased significantly, to 19,559 plants in 2017 from 104,725 plants in 2016. The number of indoor cannabis

plants eradicated increased slightly to 19,992 in 2017, from 18,903 in 2016. The quantity of cannabis herb seized in Australia increased substantially, to 19,200 kg in 2017, from 11,174 kg in 2016.

827. The latest available data show that the quantity of cocaine seized in Oceania increased by more than 75 per cent between 2015 and 2016, reaching a record high level in the region, with Australia accounting for 98 per cent of all cocaine intercepted. The Australian Federal Police also reported making the largest cocaine seizures in the Pacific through different operations conducted in the country during the 12-month reporting period 2016/17. Another major cocaine seizure was of 1.28 tons of the drug, intercepted through Operation Amorgos in January 2018 in collaboration with the New Zealand Police. Australia reported that the amount of cocaine seized doubled in 2017, to 4,140 kg, compared with 2,159 kg in 2016.

828. In Tonga, 58 kg of cocaine were seized by police in the Ha'apai group of islands in June 2018, with the help of the country's naval forces. Considering the size and population of Tonga (109,008 in 2018), it was a very large seizure to be made in one operation. The final destination of the cocaine was thought to be New Zealand or Australia. However, the seizure might also indicate the existence of local abuse of the drug.

829. In New Zealand, the amount of cocaine seized tripled, to 108 kg in 2017, from 36 kg in 2016, as reported by the country's police and customs authorities. That was supported by data on drug interceptions from the New Zealand Customs Service, which indicated a significant increase of cocaine seizures in 2017 compared with previous years. The number of seizures also increased, to 199 in 2017, from 132 in 2016. The much smaller increase in the number of seizures compared with the amount seized between 2016 and 2017 indicates that drug traffickers are trying to smuggle a larger amount of cocaine at a time. The joint police and customs Operation Heracles saw a single seizure of 46 kg of cocaine in November 2017, the largest ever in New Zealand.

830. According to the Australian Federal Police, 196.9 kg of heroin were intercepted in 2016/17, which was substantially lower than the amount seized in 2015/16 (282.1 kg). About 30 kg of heroin destined for Australia had been intercepted in Fiji as part of Operation Okesi during the period 2016/17. East and South-East Asia remained the main source of heroin in Oceania, although there were indications of a decrease in heroin trafficking in the region. The amount of heroin seized in New Zealand increased significantly, from 49.27 g in 2016 to 829 g in 2017.

(b) Psychotropic substances

831. The increasing amount of methamphetamine seizures in Oceania might indicate the existence of a growing market in the region. Both the tablet and crystalline forms of methamphetamine are available in Oceania; however, crystalline methamphetamine is increasingly becoming a concern given the growing market for the substance and an increase in the amount of consumption, manufacturing capacity and seizures in the region.

832. Australian Federal Police reported seizing 3.5 tons of methamphetamine in the 12-month period 2016/17, which was lower than in the previous 12 months (3.9 tons). The seizures were a result of the different task forces and operations working in collaboration with the Australian Border Force. For example, through Taskforce Blaze, the Australian Federal Police and the National Narcotics Bureau of China jointly targeted a syndicate and seized 64 litres of liquid methamphetamine that had been trafficked from China. In December 2017, a record amount of methamphetamine, 1.2 tons, was seized in Australia through a multi-agency investigation involving the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Border Force, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and other regional offices.

833. The quantity of methamphetamine seized in New Zealand decreased by half, to 477.5 kg in 2017, from 927.3 kg in 2016. However, the amount of the liquid form of methamphetamine seized in 2017 was 160.6 litres, significantly higher than the 31 litres seized the previous year. The price of methamphetamine decreased to 500 New Zealand dollars per gram in 2017, from 600 New Zealand dollars per gram in 2016, indicating a high availability of methamphetamine, despite a decrease in seizures. Annual surveys in New Zealand have found that increasing methamphetamine supply and lower prices are consistent with the record amounts of methamphetamine seized in the past two years. Police in Tonga intercepted 297 g of methamphetamine in April 2018: this and other recent seizures in Tonga indicate that the country is becoming a target of drug traffickers and indicates the potential spread of drug abuse among residents of the country.

834. In Australia, seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants by the Federal Police increased slightly, to 7.3 tons in 2016/17, compared with 7.2 tons in 2015/16. Methamphetamine accounted for the highest share (47 per cent) of the total amount of such substances seized in 2016/17. That growth was mainly a result of the significant increase in seizures of "ecstasy" in 2016/17 (1.3 tons) compared with the previous year (0.2 tons).

835. The amount of “ecstasy” seized in New Zealand increased from 11.4 kg in 2016 to 39.5 kg in 2017. By contrast, 1.18 kg of amphetamine were seized in 2017, which was a considerable decrease from 2016 (27.3 kg). Smaller amounts of “ecstasy” mimics such as α -PVP were seized in 2017 compared with previous years; however, a large amount of cathinone *N*-ethylpentylone was seized.

(c) Precursors

836. The quantity of precursors seized in Australia in 2016/17 was 2.3 tons, a considerable increase from the 0.3 tons seized during the previous 12 months. The Australian Border Force also reported seizing a sizable amount of ephedrine, including a single seizure, in October 2017, of 3.9 tons that had been intended for the manufacture of methamphetamine. This indicates that the strong demand for methamphetamine in the country continues.

837. Seizures of methamphetamine precursors (the majority being ephedrine) by customs and police authorities in New Zealand decreased to 723.8 kg in 2017, from 1,237.9 kg in 2016. That was the lowest amount seized since 2012 (498 kg), when pseudoephedrine was the most prevalent imported precursor. In contrast, the amounts of finished methamphetamine seized remained high, supporting intelligence that suppliers and users are choosing to import the end product.

(d) Substances not under international control

838. According to the Australian Federal Police, a considerable amount (1.32 tons) of sedatives, including GBL and GHB, were seized during the 12-month period 2016/17. That was more than three times the amount seized in the previous year (364.2 kg). A significant amount (2.52 tons) of other stimulants, including cathinone analogues, amphetamine analogues, khat, methylphenidate, phentermine, ethylphenidate and methiopropamine, was also seized during the reporting period.

839. In New Zealand, *N*-ethylpentylone, a synthetic cathinone, was seized in large volumes both at the border and within the country in 2017. *N*-ethylpentylone is sold as a form of “ecstasy” and has a similar form and appearance to “ecstasy”, in both powder and crystalline form. In 2017, benzodiazepine seizures decreased to 18,309 tablets, from 23,619 tablets in 2016. Benzodiazepine abuse is believed to be widespread, despite the decreasing trend reported in New Zealand. Seizures of

methylphenidate remained stable, with 2,817 tablets seized in 2017 and 2,700 tablets in 2016.

5. Abuse and treatment

840. Cannabis continued to be the most widely abused drug globally in 2016, with 192.2 million past-year users among the population aged between 15 and 64. Oceania falls among the top three regions in terms of rates of cannabis use, with an 11 per cent prevalence rate, after West and Central Africa (13.2 per cent) and North America (12.9 per cent).

841. The annual prevalence rate of cannabis use among the general population in New Zealand is 11.6 per cent, with an estimated 445,000 users. The annual prevalence rate among young people in the country is higher, at 22.2 per cent. The number of drug-related deaths in New Zealand increased from 178 in 2013 to 254 in 2015, as a result of an increase in abuse of cannabis, which might include synthetic cannabis. However, amphetamine is the number one cause for deaths resulting from drug overdose.

842. According to data collected in October and December 2017 and covering over half of the country's population, methamphetamine continued to be the most abused drug of the substances measured as part of the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program (namely, amphetamine-type stimulants, cocaine and opioids) in all regions of Australia. Estimated average cocaine abuse had doubled in the capital city and increased threefold in regional sites since August 2016. Estimated consumption of other stimulants, including “ecstasy”, was lower, and overall consumption of heroin in Australia may have slightly decreased from August 2017 to December 2017. Similar to previous findings, mephedrone and methylone were detected at a number of sites, but in negligible amounts. However, the number of detections of mephedrone more than doubled between August 2017 and December 2017.

843. In the *Drug Use Monitoring in Australia: 2015 and 2016 report on drug use among police detainees*, published by the Australian Institute of Criminology, the use of drugs by 1,896 detainees in Australia in the 12-month period 2015/16 was analysed together with that of the 1,551 detainees assessed for the same study in 2013/14. According to the report, the proportion of prison detainees testing positive for methamphetamine increased significantly, from 34 per cent in 2013/14 to 48 per cent in 2015/16, making methamphetamine the most-frequently abused drug. The number of detainees testing

positive for cannabis was 831 (44 per cent) in 2015/16 and 708 (46 per cent) in 2013/14. There were 116 detainees (6 per cent) testing positive for heroin in 2015/16 and 117 (8 per cent) in 2013/14; 20 detainees (1 per cent) tested positive for cocaine in 2015/16 and 31 (2 per cent) in 2013/14. Regarding “ecstasy”, the test showed an increase from 1.3 per cent in 2013/14 to 2.3 per cent in 2015/16. In 2015/16, the proportion of self-reported drug abuse in the last 30 days for heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine was 73 per cent, 78 per cent and 65 per cent, respectively, of the total number of detainees who tested positive for those drugs. Those figures show that self-reported use of those drugs was underreported by 22–35 per cent of detainees.

844. In its report entitled *Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services in Australia 2016–17*, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicated that amphetamines (i.e., methamphetamine and amphetamine), cannabis and heroin were the three principal illicit drugs of concern for patients seeking treatment for drug use in Australia in 2016/17, with 26 per cent, 22 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively. The proportion of persons seeking treatment for amphetamines increased from 23 per cent in 2015/16 to 26 per cent in 2016/17, meaning that amphetamines replaced cannabis as the second-most common drug of concern after alcohol. Counselling was the most common type of treatment that was provided, followed by assessment only and support and case management only. The rate of drug-induced deaths in Australia has been increasing since 2007 and reached 1,808 deaths in 2016, which was the highest on record since the late 1990s. The deaths were mainly a result of the non-medical use of benzodiazepines and oxycodone; deaths resulting from the use of other controlled substances have also been increasing.

845. In New Zealand, the proportion of persons detained by the police who had used methamphetamine in the previous year increased from 26 per cent in 2010 to 38 per cent in 2016. That could be attributed to the increase in reported availability, coupled with the decrease

in price. However, abuse of cannabis in the previous year by detainees declined from 76 per cent in 2011 to 68 per cent in 2016, as a result of cannabis being considered to be very difficult to find and of the effectiveness of police cannabis crop eradication operations. Likewise, the proportion of those who had abused “ecstasy” in the previous year decreased from 28 per cent in 2011 to 14 per cent in 2016. The percentage of detainees who had tried opioids in their lifetime was 17 per cent in 2016, with no change from previous years. However, the percentage of detainees who had tried cocaine in their lifetime increased from 17 per cent in 2010 to 26 per cent in 2016, despite cocaine being reported as difficult to procure. The proportion of detainees who had used synthetic cannabinoids in the previous 12 months declined from 47 per cent in 2013 to 20 per cent in 2016 and the proportion of detainees who had tried a drug for the first time declined from 32 per cent in 2013 to 17 per cent in 2016: 19 per cent cited the new drug they had tried as methamphetamine, 14 per cent cited “ecstasy”, 13 per cent cited synthetic cannabinoids and 9 per cent cited cocaine.

846. The 2016/17 annual health survey in New Zealand showed that 1.0 per cent of the population aged between 16 to 64 abused amphetamine, which was slightly lower than the 2015/16 survey result (1.1 per cent). In general, the level of abuse had been stable over the previous six years. According to the survey, 11.6 per cent of the population aged 15 and above had used cannabis. The trend of cannabis use showed an increase from year to year since 2011/12 (8.0 per cent), with the exception of 2014/15.

847. Oceania is the region with the second-highest rate of use of amphetamines among those aged between 15 and 64 in the past year. The abuse of “ecstasy” continued to be high in Oceania, and the estimated past-year prevalence rates for “ecstasy” abuse in the region are among the highest in the world. In a number of pilot testing areas in New Zealand, wastewater testing exhibited higher-than-anticipated levels of MDMA, showing that “ecstasy” use is still prevalent in the country.