

# Chapter III.

## Analysis of the world situation

### A. Global issues

#### 1. Respect for human rights in the elaboration and implementation of drug control policy

369. Over the current reporting period, the Board has noted with great concern continued reports of grave human rights violations purportedly perpetrated in furtherance of national drug control policies. The Board is compelled to remind all States parties to the international drug control conventions that the primary objective of these instruments is to safeguard the health and welfare of humanity and to recall that the goal of protecting the welfare of humanity must be understood to include respect for human rights.

370. The Board therefore wishes to reiterate in the clearest possible terms that in order to comply with their legal obligations under the international drug control conventions, States parties must adopt and pursue drug control policies in compliance with internationally recognized human rights which, as described in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights,<sup>70</sup> are both inherent and inalienable.

371. Ensuring the consistency of drug control policies and programmes with human rights obligations means accepting that the drug control treaties are not in conflict with human rights. Rather, the three international drug control conventions ought to be read within the international human rights framework, including the protection

of fundamental freedoms and due process rights, stemming from the inherent dignity of all people. Compliance with the drug conventions can therefore lead to the direct and positive fulfilment of human rights, especially the realization of our universal right to health, which includes access to treatment. Current approaches to drug use need to avoid the pathway that easily leads from stigmatizing and alienating drug users to violating their fundamental rights to humane treatment and care. Non-consensual drug treatment programmes should be replaced, and the inequality of access to treatment that women and minority groups face needs to be addressed and remedied.

372. The human rights challenges inherent in responding effectively to widespread drug abuse and drug-related crimes are exacerbated when States try to justify disproportionately repressive and punitive measures. Protecting the rights and dignity of individuals suspected of having committed drug-related offences may at times seem counter-intuitive, but drug control policies that protect all human rights principles and standards have proved to be the most effective and sustainable. A human rights-based approach to address the spread of problematic drug use specifically requires proportionate criminal justice responses for drug-related offences, including when they are allegedly committed by people who use drugs, and ending extrajudicial responses, which cannot be justified in any circumstances.

373. International cooperation in the field of drug control could be enhanced through increased respect for the binding and cross-cutting nature of international human rights. No State is exempt from human rights norms and principles when interpreting the drug control conventions. From this perspective, the Board has consistently recommended to States that human rights norms should

<sup>70</sup>General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

form an integral part of their drug-related strategies and policies. Together, States and civil society can embrace the core objectives of the international drug control treaties by designing drug policies that are harmonious with the human rights conventions and fully promote the health and welfare of humankind.

## 2. Linkages between the international drug control conventions and the Sustainable Development Goals

374. The international drug control system was elaborated by Member States to act on their concern for the health and welfare of humankind. It is founded primarily on three conventions: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. At the most recent special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, held in 2016, Member States underscored that, together with other relevant international instruments, those conventions constitute the cornerstone of the international drug control system.

375. Fundamentally, the international drug control conventions are based on the principle that the medical use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances is indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and that accordingly their availability should not be unduly restricted. At the same time, Governments have the responsibility to prevent drug abuse and diversion, including of substances controlled by the conventions. As a source of international law, the conventions are to be interpreted in good faith and in the light of that objective.

376. On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,<sup>71</sup> adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015, came into force. The Sustainable Development Goals, which build on and supersede the Millennium Development Goals of the period 2000–2015, are aimed at ending all forms of poverty. Over the next 15 years, these new universal goals are to guide countries in mobilizing efforts to develop strategies for economic growth by addressing a range of social needs including education, health, social protection and employment, while tackling climate change and promoting environmental protection and sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals are consistent with the three

international drug control conventions as the Goals foster coordinated action and shared responsibility to address the world drug problem. At the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, on the world drug problem, held in 2016, Member States noted that efforts to achieve the Goals and to effectively address the world drug problem were complementary and mutually reinforcing.

377. Drug-related issues and challenges are vast, and currently there are great disparities in health and welfare in different regions of the globe. These challenges include the limited access to pain medication, including opioid analgesics and medicines used for substitution therapy, as well as the medication required for the treatment of mental illnesses. In many parts of the world, prevention initiatives are lacking, treatment and rehabilitation services to people with drug use disorders are inexistent or poor, and mechanisms to eliminate stigma and foster social reintegration have yet to be established.

378. The conventions establish a system of administrative controls regulating production, manufacture, import and export of substances under international control allowing States to estimate their domestic requirements and ensure that adequate amounts of medicines are available to their populations. Similarly, the conventions require States to give special attention to and take all practicable measures for the prevention of abuse of drugs and for the early identification, treatment, education, aftercare, rehabilitation and social reintegration of the persons involved. Despite their clarity, these provisions have to a large extent not been widely and sufficiently implemented by States.

379. The Board therefore welcomes Sustainable Development Goal 3, which is to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Achieving that Goal entails, inter alia, access to high-quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, high-quality and affordable essential medicines; ending the epidemic of AIDS; and strengthening the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse. Sustainable Development Goal 3 and its associated targets demonstrate the awareness of the global community in that regard.

380. However, the world drug problem encompasses more than the health aspect. Illicit crop cultivation and drug trafficking perpetuate poverty, corruption, violence and criminality. In many parts of the world, human rights violations in the name of drug control, extrajudicial responses to drug-related criminality, the stigmatization of people with drug use disorders, disproportionate punishment and the general lack of rule of law continue to hinder efforts to successfully address drug-related challenges.

<sup>71</sup>General Assembly resolution 70/1.

381. The conventions oblige States to establish certain types of conduct as punishable offences, and they also require States to implement responses to drug-related crime that are proportionate. The conventions further provide States with the possibility of applying alternative measures to conviction, punishment and incarceration, including education, rehabilitation or social reintegration. They contain provisions on international cooperation in criminal matters and mutual legal assistance.

382. In the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community undertook to promote peaceful and inclusive societies and provide access to justice for all (Goal 16), to reduce inequality within and among countries (Goal 10) and to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Goal 11). In that regard, the Board reiterates its call on States to counter drug trafficking and related violence while ensuring that responses to drug-related criminal conduct are proportional and founded upon respect for human rights and dignity, in line with the three international drug control conventions and the rule of law.

383. The adoption of the international drug control conventions was based on the understanding among the international community that the challenges posed by the world drug problem required a coordinated response by States. Reflecting this, the conventions are today among the most widely ratified international instruments in existence. Addressing the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility and requires joint action. In this regard, international platforms and networks for dialogue, information-sharing and debate among States are crucial. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs acts as the principal policymaking body of the United Nations with prime responsibility for drug control matters. The Board calls on Governments to use the Commission as a forum for accessing and providing knowledge and experiences on drug-related successes and challenges and to support the international community in addressing the world drug problem in a comprehensive and collaborative manner.

384. As with other international treaties, the choice of policy, legislative and administrative measures to implement the conventions is left to the discretion of States parties. The Board will continue to urge Governments to take concrete action to guide their policymakers, institutions and people to work towards full implementation of the conventions, guided by the key objective of promoting health and welfare in harmony with human rights standards and norms and the rule of law. It is the action taken by Governments at the national level, founded on international law, that will determine whether global

agreements and partnerships such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be achieved.

### 3. Reducing the negative consequences of drug use through effective public health policies

385. Managing pervasive and complex drug abuse risks requires adopting strategies that not only are scientifically proven to be effective but also avoid unintended negative consequences. The effects of epidemic-level drug abuse and addiction rates can be countered through balanced public health policies and practices that aim to provide all necessary treatment and recovery services and prevent the initiation of illicit drug use. Ending the devastation for individuals, families and entire communities caused by drug abuse primarily entails reducing demand and curbing supply, focusing efforts on treatment, education, aftercare, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

386. The Board has written extensively about measures that aim to minimize the adverse public health and social consequences of drug abuse as forming a tertiary prevention strategy for demand reduction purposes that can play a part in comprehensive drug demand reduction. This long-standing vision of INCB with respect to reducing negative drug-related consequences is consistent with the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, on the world drug problem, held in 2016, in which Heads of State and Government invited relevant national authorities to consider such effective measures, including appropriate medication-assisted therapy programmes.

387. In many States, drug control policy focuses exclusively on the demand reduction and supply reduction aspects of drug control and does not include measures to curtail the adverse consequences associated with substance abuse and addiction. While demand reduction and supply reduction constitute two fundamental pillars of drug control policy, the Board also encourages States to take a balanced approach to countering drug use and dependence through the adoption of measures intended to reduce the associated negative public health consequences. The Board notes that in some States, limited resources have resulted in civil society and community-based groups taking the lead in the delivery of these services.

388. Drug control policies, in order to be consistent with the international treaties, should be evidence-based and should not lead to the promotion of substance abuse

or facilitate trafficking or other illicit activities and thereby violate the treaties and the obligation to combat drug trafficking. In the past, the Board has expressed its support for strategies which met that threshold, including needle exchange programmes, opioid agonist therapies, psychosocial counselling and the use of drug consumption rooms, as long as they were part of an integrated approach for referral and improved access for underserved populations to treatment and support services.

389. The Board acknowledges the need for initiatives and measures aimed at minimizing the negative consequences of drug abuse based on reliable and proven scientific data and encourages the exchange of good practices through greater dialogue between relevant stakeholders, including Governments, civil society groups, public health authorities and law enforcement authorities.

#### 4. Exempted preparations under the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971

390. Since the 1990s, INCB has noted an overall increase in the quantity of psychotropic substances used in the manufacture of preparations exempted pursuant to article 3 of the 1971 Convention (see figure XVII). According to INCB records, during this time, nearly 1,000 pharmaceutical preparations containing psychotropic substances under control were considered for exemption from certain control measures. In recent years, the Board has noted with concern the lack of clarity surrounding article 3 of the 1971 Convention and the control measures that countries are still required to apply in the case of an exempted preparation.

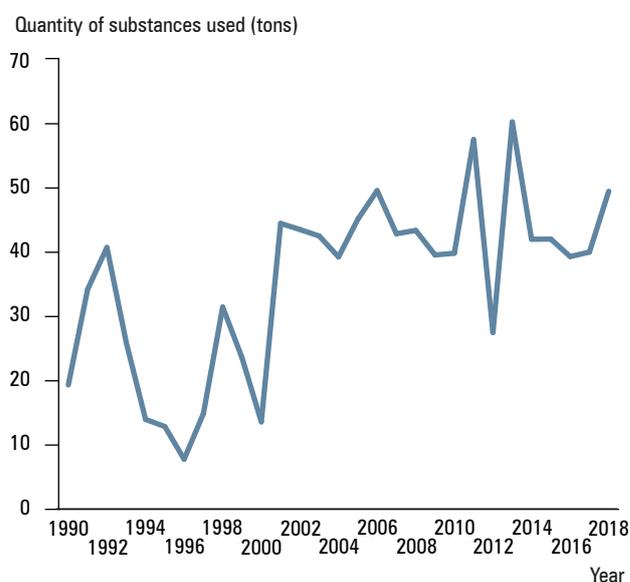
391. The 1971 Convention defines a preparation of a psychotropic substance as any solution or mixture, in whatever physical state, containing one or more psychotropic substances or one or more psychotropic substances in dosage form.<sup>72</sup> According to article 3, paragraph 1, of the 1971 Convention, if a preparation is not exempted, it is subject to the same measures of control as the psychotropic substance that it contains, and if it contains more than one such substance, the control measures of the most strictly controlled of those substances are applicable.

392. Furthermore, under article 3, paragraph 2, States parties are permitted to exempt a preparation that contains

<sup>72</sup>According to the *Commentary on the Convention on Psychotropic Substances*, dosage form refers to a measured small quantity of a psychotropic drug or combination of psychotropic drugs in whatever form (tablet, ampoule or powder) ready for consumption.

a psychotropic substance included in Schedule II, III or IV from international control measures under certain conditions. While article 3 of the 1971 Convention provides the opportunity to reduce the regulatory requirements and measures of control that competent national authorities need to apply, the use of that article must be warranted in order to ensure that the exemptions from certain control measures do not pose a public health risk or encourage illicit activity.

Figure XVII. Reported use of psychotropic substances for the manufacture of exempted preparations



393. To warrant an exemption, the preparation must be compounded in a way that it presents no risk or negligible risk of abuse or of a public health problem and cannot be recovered by readily applicable means in a large enough quantity as to pose a risk. In determining whether this latter condition holds, the expense and technical difficulty of recovering the psychotropic substance from the preparation should be considered.<sup>73</sup>

394. While a country can decide to exempt a preparation from certain measures of control under the 1971 Convention, article 3, paragraph 3, outlines the control measures that must be applied regardless. Those measures of control are provided in the following articles of the Convention: (a) article 8 (licences), as it applies to manufacture; (b) article 11 (records), as it applies to exempted preparations; (c) article 13 (prohibition of and restrictions on export and import); (d) article 15 (inspection), as it applies to manufacture; (e) article 16 (reports to be furnished by the parties), as it applies to exempted

<sup>73</sup>*Commentary on the Convention on Psychotropic Substances*, p. 116.

preparations; and (f) article 22 (penal provisions), to the extent necessary for the repression of acts contrary to laws or regulations adopted pursuant to the stated obligations.

395. Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 1 (S-VIII) of 1984 provides further control measures from which preparations should not be exempted. In particular, the resolution states that exempted preparations should not be exempted from the requirements of article 12 on provisions relating to international trade. More specifically, international trade in exempted preparations shall still require separate import and export authorizations and post-export declarations.

396. If a country wishes to exempt a preparation from control measures, it must submit a notification to the Secretary-General with the trade names of the intended exempted preparation, as well as the name of the substance as listed in the schedules of the Convention or the international non-proprietary name if the former is not available. The notification must include a description of the composition of the preparation including the chemical structure and the formulae of all its ingredients, list the control measures from which the preparation is exempted, and confirm the control measures mentioned in article 3, paragraph 3, that would continue to apply.

397. Upon receipt of such notification, the Secretary-General will transmit the notification to the other parties to the Convention, WHO and the International Narcotics

Control Board. If a party or WHO receives information regarding an exempted preparation which in its opinion warrants the termination, in part or in whole, of the exemption, it will notify the Secretary-General, providing the information in support of the notification. The Secretary-General, will transmit such information to the parties and the Commission. WHO shall communicate to the Commission an assessment of the preparation in regard to the risk of abuse and potential recoverability, with a recommendation of the control measures, if any, from which the preparation should cease to be exempted.

398. Taking into account the assessment provided by WHO on medical and scientific matters, and considering the economic, social, legal, administrative and other factors it may consider relevant, the Commission may decide to terminate the exemption from any or all control measures. Any decision made by the Commission will be communicated by the Secretary-General to all parties. All parties must take measures to eliminate the exemption from the control measure or measures within 180 days of that notification from the Secretary-General.

399. Between 2010 and 2018, 66 different psychotropic substances under international control were reported in the manufacture of exempted preparations in 22 countries. In 2018 alone, 34 psychotropic substances under international control were reported to the Board as being used in the manufacture of exempted preparations in a combination of 11 countries (see figures XVIII and XIX).

Figure XVIII. Number of psychotropic substances reported for use in the manufacture of exempted preparations

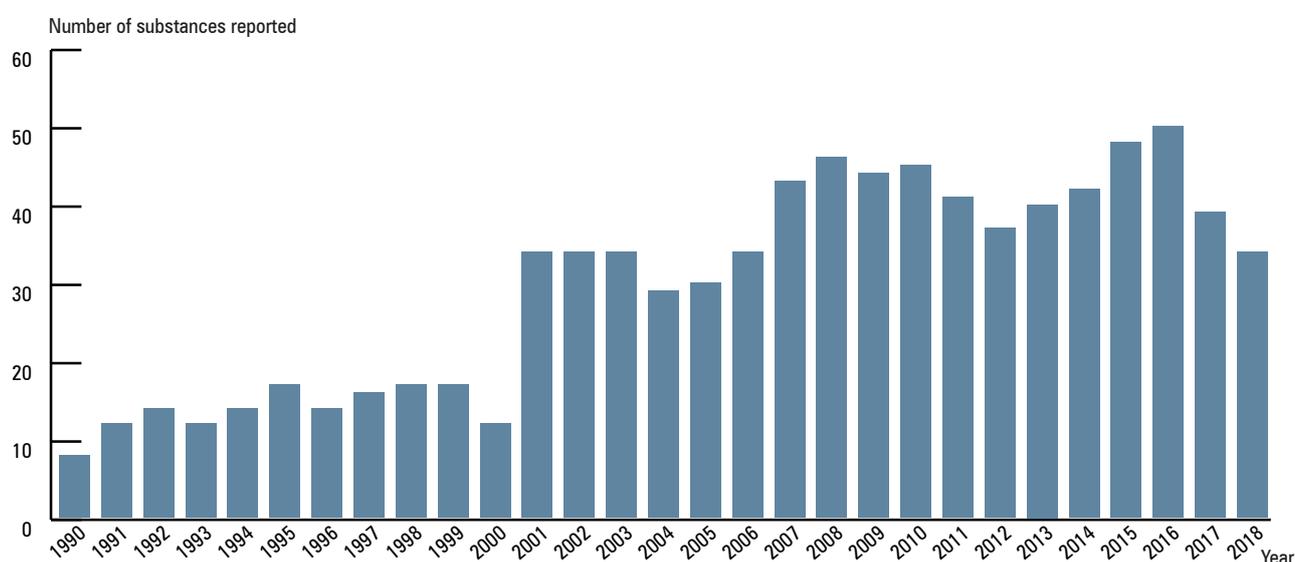


Figure XIX. Countries reporting the manufacture of exempted preparations on form P

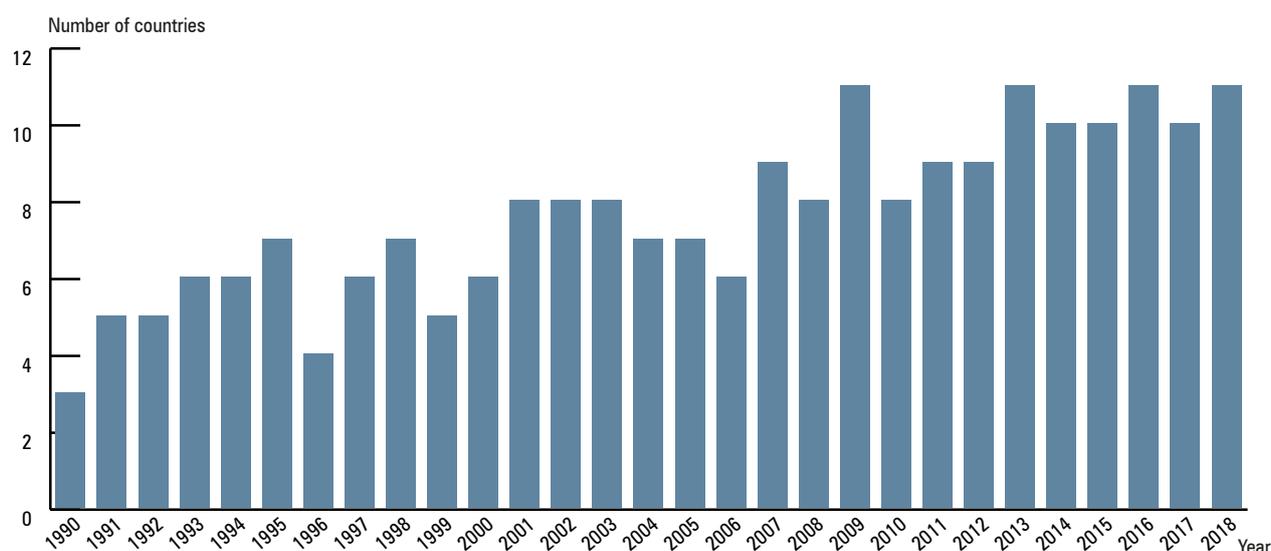


Table Quantity of psychotropic substances reported for use in the manufacture of exempted preparations, 2014–2018, in descending order (kg)

| Substance     | Year   |        |        |        |        |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|               | 2014   | 2015   | 2016   | 2017   | 2018   |
| Phenobarbital | 26 923 | 18 975 | 20 224 | 23 331 | 20 850 |
| Butalbital    | 3 292  | 12 095 | 8 296  | 5 090  | 15 814 |
| Oxazepam      | 3 081  | 3 128  | 2 390  | 2 455  | 2 718  |
| Zolpidem      | 1 626  | 1 216  | 2 191  | 2 036  | 1 700  |
| Barbital      | 826    | 1 060  | 482    | 548    | 1 394  |
| Diazepam      | 2 053  | 1 361  | 1 885  | 1 914  | 1 235  |
| Amfepramone   | 579    | 581    | 691    | 862    | 862    |
| Temazepam     | 414    | 464    | 754    | 207    | 663    |
| Prazepam      | 676    | 416    | 312    | 520    | 312    |
| Bromazepam    | 525    | 373    | 461    | 346    | 290    |

400. Phenobarbital is by far the most commonly used substance in the manufacture of exempted preparations, with tens of thousands of kilograms of the substance being used each year for exempted preparations (see table). Exempted preparations containing phenobarbital tend to be medications used for mild pain and sedation. Aside from phenobarbital, over the last five years,

butalbital, oxazepam, zolpidem and diazepam have been the most reported substances used in the manufacture of exempted preparations.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup>According to information furnished to the Board by Governments pursuant to the 1971 Convention and resolutions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Economic and Social Council, as maintained in the database of the INCB International Drug Control System.

401. The Board calls upon Governments to ensure that all aspects of article 3 of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 are correctly implemented if they wish to exempt a preparation from certain measures of control. The Board also reminds Governments that they are still obligated to uphold certain measures of control even in cases where a preparation has been exempted, such as in reporting annual data and provisions relating to international trade. Ensuring that all provisions of the 1971 Convention are upheld is imperative for eliminating the possibility of diversion to illicit channels while allowing for countries to benefit from the flexibility that the Convention provides in cases where an exemption is warranted.

## 5. Non-medical use of synthetic opioids

402. The world is currently in the midst of a global synthetic opioids crisis. New data suggest that the problem is greater than was previously known, with current estimates indicating that more than 53 million people, or 1.1 per cent of the general population aged 15–64, abused opioids in the past year, of whom almost 30 million had reportedly used opiates such as heroin and opium. Although global estimates specifically for non-medical use of synthetic opioids are not available, the large increase in users has been attributed to increases in the non-medical use of synthetic opioids.

403. While non-medical use of synthetic opioids is reported in many countries, the crisis manifests itself in different forms from region to region. In some high-income countries such as Canada and the United States, synthetic opioids such as hydrocodone, oxycodone and fentanyl are widely and readily available, and their aggressive marketing and subsequent over-prescription has contributed to increases in dependency. In several countries in Europe, there are also indications of an increased non-medical use of synthetic opioids, with methadone, buprenorphine and fentanyl being reported as the main pharmaceutical opioids misused. Past-year abuse of opioids in Australia is also higher than the estimated global average, with the non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids being the main concern.

404. The Board has noted for years that the non-medical use of tramadol, an opioid analgesic not under international control, is a significant and growing problem in several countries, in particular in West and North Africa, the Near and Middle East and South Asia. In Nigeria, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, collecting data for 2017, found that 4.7 per cent of the general

population aged 15–64 reported past-year non-medical use of prescription opioids, most commonly tramadol. In India, the national drug use survey found that nearly 1 per cent of the general population engaged in non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids in 2017. Non-medical use of high-concentration tramadol tablets continues to be reported throughout Egypt, the State of Palestine and the United Arab Emirates (see also sect. A.9 below on tramadol).

405. The rate of global drug overdose deaths has been steadily increasing since 2000. In particular, it is estimated that 66 per cent of deaths attributed to drug use disorders were related to opioids. Increases in drug-related deaths are in part due to the emergence and abuse of illicitly manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogues in North America.

406. Globally, newly emerging fentanyls accounted for 19 of the 22 new synthetic opioids identified in 2017. The largest share of those are from North America, where the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that overdoses in the United States alone increased to more than 70,000 in 2017 and that 47,600 of those overdoses were opioid-related. In Canada, the rate of opioid-related deaths rose to 12.0 per 100,000 population in 2018; the percentage of accidental apparent opioid-related deaths that involved fentanyl or fentanyl analogues was 73 per cent in 2018.

407. While overdose death rates worldwide are currently far lower than in Canada and the United States, indications of the potential for increasing abuse of synthetic opioids have been reported in other regions. In Europe, 9,400 overdose deaths were reported in 2017, with opioids accounting for between 80 and 90 per cent of drug-related deaths. States members of the European Union have reported increases in the amount of synthetic opioids in their illicit drug markets. Of a total of 38 new psychoactive substances detected since 2009, 28 were fentanyls.

408. In Australia, by 2016, reported deaths caused by opioid overdose had nearly doubled since 2007, rising from 3.8 to 6.6 deaths per 100,000. While the increase is attributed mostly to pharmaceutical opioids, including as used in combination with heroin, overdose deaths due to synthetic opioids such as fentanyl increased more than tenfold over the same period.

409. There are indications that the situation may be stabilizing in some regions. In the United States, where prescription practices have become more stringent, drug overdose deaths declined by about 5 per cent from

December 2017 to December 2018, to about 68,000 deaths, due in part to decreases in overdose deaths related to prescription opioids (e.g., oxycodone). Following tramadol control changes in India in mid-2018, experts in Ghana and Nigeria noted a significant decline in large border and port seizures of tramadol, decreases in grey market availability and a corresponding increase in the price of tramadol tablets in the illicit market. The Government of China implemented group scheduling of all fentanyl-related substances effective May 2019, ensuring class-wide control, inter alia, of all manufacture and export.

410. The Board, in its annual report for 2017, identified and reiterated the risks associated with long-term opioid use and the consumption of opioid analgesics. **The Board once again encourages Governments to work together with public health officials, pharmacists and physicians, manufacturers and distributors, consumer protection associations and law enforcement agencies to promote public education about the risks associated with prescription drugs and adopt appropriate measures to decrease their abuse and potential to cause dependence.**

## 6. Abuse of codeine-based cough syrups

411. The 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol allows for certain preparations of narcotic drugs (including codeine) which are included in Schedule III of the Convention to be exempted from some provisions when compounded with one or more other ingredients and containing not more than 100 milligrams of the drug per dosage unit and with a concentration of not more than 2.5 per cent in undivided preparations.

412. These preparations, in particular those containing codeine, are widely used for medical purposes for the treatment of cough. Since 2000, of the total amount of morphine utilized globally, the majority (88 per cent, on average) was converted into other narcotic drugs (mostly codeine), and almost all of the codeine manufactured (89 per cent) was used to manufacture cough medication. In 2010, over 255 tons of codeine were used for preparations listed in Schedule III. This amount has gradually increased, reaching over 291 tons in 2016, but decreased to 240 tons in 2017.

413. Codeine syrups are easy to purchase as over-the-counter medicine in many countries. They are relatively cheap and are perceived to have low risk of negative health consequences (e.g., dependence and overdose) in comparison with other drugs.

414. The abuse of cough syrups has been a common occurrence in some countries for many years. More recently, there have been reports of the misuse of preparations containing codeine that are listed in Schedule III in Bangladesh, Hong Kong, China, India, Japan and the United States.

415. In the United States, the abuse of cough syrups containing codeine has been recently popularized through the use of videos posted on social media illustrating the process of preparation of the so-called “purple drank” (purple is the typical colour of the cough syrups), a mix of cough syrup with alcohol or soft drinks. This phenomenon expanded to other regions and has been described as an epidemic in Nigeria and other countries in West Africa. In Thailand, cough syrups have sometimes been used to prepare “cocktails”, made by boiling kratom leaves and mixing the resulting liquid with cough syrup, ice and soft drinks.

416. In its annual report for 2008,<sup>75</sup> the Board, while recognizing that cough syrups containing narcotic drugs were an effective medication for many patients and important in medical practice and health care, expressed concern about the fact that cough syrups were also known to be abused in several countries. The Board recommended that the Governments of countries experiencing abuse of cough syrups consider the introduction of stricter control and supervision of the channels of distribution of cough syrups containing narcotic drugs. The Board also recommended using programmes for drug abuse prevention to increase awareness of the risks associated with inappropriate use of cough syrups.

417. To address the negative health and social consequences of misuse of cough syrups containing codeine, a number of health authorities have introduced control measures to avoid diversion, recommended the use of cough suppressant preparations not containing codeine, discouraged the use of cough syrups containing codeine for children below a certain age and/or have required a prescription for the purchase of such preparations. These actions are in line with article 39 of the 1961 Convention as amended, which enables countries to adopt stricter control measures than those provided in the Convention and in particular requiring that preparations in Schedule III or drugs in Schedule II be subject to all or some of the measures of control applicable to Schedule I substances if it is deemed to be necessary or desirable for the protection of public health and welfare.

<sup>75</sup>E/INCB/2008/1.

418. The Board reiterates its call on Governments that are affected by the abuse of preparations containing codeine to make use of the possibility given by the 1961 Convention as amended for the introduction of stricter control measures and to implement appropriate prevention and treatment interventions focusing specifically on this problem.

## 7. Activities to address trafficking through international post, express mail and express courier services

419. As a response to the shift from the shipping of controlled substances in comparatively large amounts to small shipments of new psychoactive substances not under international control, the Board launched Project Ion in 2013 and its IONICS platform for the global real-time exchange of information. In order to address the problem of non-medical synthetic opioids, in particular illicitly manufactured fentanyls, the Board began activities under its OPIOIDS project in 2017. The OPIOIDS project has focused on developing partnerships between Governments, international organizations and the private sector as an effective means of preventing the manufacture, marketing, movement and monetization of non-medical<sup>76</sup> synthetic opioids.

420. Numerous non-medical synthetic opioids have emerged on global markets, and some such as fentanyl analogues are particularly dangerous substances when abused due to their high potency even in extremely small doses. Vendors use the open Internet, the darknet and social media sites to market a wide range of fentanyls, with purchases made using online financial services or cryptocurrencies. Purchases are shipped among the billions of letters and express parcels shipped around the world every year using international mail and express courier services. Because of the high potency of the substances, the transport of fentanyls in trace amounts makes detection and interdiction extremely challenging. Postal, express mail and express courier service staff and customs officers unwittingly handle these potentially dangerous substances, raising concerns over safety due to possible contamination and harm due to unintentional exposure.

421. In April 2018, the Board, recognizing the need to partner with other international agencies at the front-line of trafficking, entered into a cooperative agreement with the Universal Postal Union (UPU). The agreement

effectively responded to challenges posed by dangerous substances by promoting technical assistance and the provision of training designed to increase cooperation against trafficking and improve the ability to detect and safely seize these substances. INCB and UPU share information and alerts which allow for the improved profiling of high-risk shipments and increase the chances of officers identifying and interdicting shipments.

422. Through its partnership with UPU and the World Customs Organization (WCO), INCB Project Ion and the OPIOIDS project trained 160 postal security and customs officers from over 80 Governments in 2019 on information exchange, interdiction and intelligence-sharing on dangerous substances trafficked through the postal and express courier services. Experts provided materials and instruction on safe handling, interdiction and communication methods for working with suspected fentanyls.

423. INCB convened two international meetings of the expert group on trafficking in synthetic opioids through postal and courier services, held in April 2018 and September 2019. The meetings brought together postal, customs and law enforcement experts from numerous affected countries and international partners including INTERPOL, the Oceania Customs Organization, UPU, UNODC and WCO. The meetings were also attended by representatives of the private express mail and courier industry, in order to share information, experiences and ways for future cooperation to stem the flow of synthetic opioids through the express post and courier systems.

424. In January 2019, the OPIOIDS project initiated a time-bound global intelligence gathering operation, Operation Fast Forward, targeting sources and re-distribution points for the trafficking of non-medical fentanyl, fentanyl analogues and related synthetic opioids through the international post, express mail and courier services. Operation Fast Forward, involving 81 officers from 45 countries and two international organizations, resulted in the communication, through the Board's IONICS secure communication platform, of more than 50 seizure events involving a total of nearly 30 kg of seized fentanyl, fentanyl analogues and related pre-precursors. The special operation also produced for government investigators intelligence that identified pre-precursors, sources and modi operandi, as well as previously unknown trafficking routes.

425. The sanctity of the seal is a principle which protects the privacy of communications by post, and many Governments do not allow the inspection of international mail, thus making the consignment of potent fentanyls in small, lightweight amounts in letter-class envelopes

<sup>76</sup>The term "non-medical" is used to refer to synthetic opioids and their products that are made specifically for illicit markets.

difficult to detect and interdict. Governments are encouraged to make use of risk-profiling approaches, information-exchange tools, such as the INCB IONICS platform, intelligence packages and alerts, in order to increase the likelihood of interdiction of substances trafficked through international post, express mail and express courier services.

426. The Board's significant expansion of activities under Project Ion and the OPIOIDS project resulted in the growth of the intelligence-sharing capacity of the IONICS system, the nomination of government postal security officers to increase the global focal points network, and expanded training in the field that resulted in a 93 per cent increase since 2017 in seizure events as well as intelligence on trafficked dangerous substances.

## 8. Methamphetamine trafficking and abuse

427. Over almost three decades, INCB, in its mandated role as a quasi-judicial body monitoring the compliance of States with the international drug control conventions, has observed the global expansion of illicit markets for amphetamine-type stimulants, in particular methamphetamine. Year after year during that period, and notwithstanding the focus of the international community on various drugs, including new psychoactive substances and, most recently, non-medical synthetic opioids, more and more countries and regions have set new records in the amounts of methamphetamine seized by their law enforcement agencies. At the same time, the ever-growing worldwide abuse of this drug has fuelled a threat to the health and welfare of people.

428. UNODC estimates that, in 2017, roughly 0.6 per cent of the global population aged 15–64 (that is, about 29 million people) had used amphetamine and methamphetamine in the past year. There are indications of an increase in the use of methamphetamine, in particular in East and South-East Asia and North America. While the lack of sufficient good-quality data based on household surveys makes it difficult to estimate the prevalence of methamphetamine use globally, data on illicit supply reported to UNODC show an increase of 50 per cent in the last decade in the number of countries reporting seizures of methamphetamine.

429. The regions which have been traditionally most affected by methamphetamine trafficking and abuse are North America, East and South-East Asia and Oceania, specifically Australia and New Zealand. In Europe, the illicit manufacture and use of methamphetamine had long

been a localized issue in parts of central Europe, but there is now evidence of large-scale illicit methamphetamine manufacture elsewhere in Europe. Since 2011, illicit methamphetamine manufacture has also been documented in West Africa, specifically Nigeria. Unlike in the past, there are now also indications of large-scale inter-regional trafficking of methamphetamine, with seizures of unprecedented size being made en route from North America to Australia.

430. The most significant increases have been observed in East and South-East Asia, where, according to UNODC, methamphetamine seizures have increased eightfold between 2007 and 2017, accounting, with 83 tons, for 45 per cent of global methamphetamine seizures, and reaching a record high level in 2018. Data received indicate that Thailand alone accounted for more than half of the methamphetamine seized in the region in 2018. Available data also indicate a geographical shift of illicit manufacturing to areas outside of government control, for example, north-eastern parts of Myanmar.

431. At the same time, the region is seeing a shift from low-purity methamphetamine tablets ("yaba") to high-purity crystalline methamphetamine. In some countries in the region, crystalline methamphetamine users now account for a major share of people receiving treatment for drug use. Annual prevalence rates reported from household surveys conducted in Thailand show an increase from a low of 0.1 per cent of the population aged 12–65 in 2008 to 0.2 per cent in 2011, before rising rapidly to 0.9 per cent by 2016. The number of crystalline methamphetamine users has also started to increase. Proportions of people in treatment for the abuse of methamphetamine (in tablet and crystalline form) exceeding 50 per cent of all drug-related treatment in East and South-East Asia in 2017 were reported for Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand.

432. The Board is also concerned about recent indications of growing illicit methamphetamine manufacture and trafficking in Afghanistan. With more than 650 kg seized in the first six months of 2019, the amount of methamphetamine seized represented a tenfold increase compared to the same period of 2018. Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran witnessed an increase of some 25 per cent in methamphetamine seizures in 2018, to a total of 2.9 tons, compared with 2017. Countries in West Asia have also reported increasing levels of methamphetamine abuse.

433. INCB has continuously expressed its concern about these developments and has noted in particular the

apparent mismatch between the large amounts of methamphetamine end-product seized and the comparatively low number and limited volume of methamphetamine precursors seized in comparison, especially in East and South-East Asia. Substances, such as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, that for years had been the most used in known methamphetamine-manufacturing methods in some regions are no longer the only precursors of concern. There is limited yet growing evidence of the use of P-2-P-based manufacturing methods in regions where this was not previously common. To complicate matters further, P-2-P itself is often manufactured illicitly from pre-precursors, including non-scheduled “designer precursors” made specifically to circumvent existing regulations. As law enforcement experience with those chemicals is limited in most regions, information about changes in manufacturing trends is often only identified through the forensic analysis of seized methamphetamine. Those issues are addressed in the report of the Board for 2019 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

434. The Board wishes to highlight that much remains to be done to enable a more effective response to the ongoing methamphetamine crisis. In addition to measures to prevent the initiation of methamphetamine use and treatment, the Board believes that no discernible change in this worrying trend will be achieved without adequate attention being given to ensuring control over methamphetamine precursors and the exchange of related intelligence information. The Board has put a range of tools at the disposal of Governments to help to close existing gaps in knowledge, intelligence and operational responses to precursor trafficking and diversion from legitimate trade. These tools include the Board’s PICS, the PEN Online system and the two initiatives of the Board focusing on precursors used in the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs and on chemicals related to the illicit manufacture of cocaine and heroin, namely Project Prism and Project Cohesion, respectively.

435. The Board urges Governments to make full use of the relevant tools available and to keep the Board abreast of their efforts, successes and challenges. Only with the best available data and understanding of the issues can the international community live up to its common and shared responsibility in facing the world drug problem.

## 9. Tramadol abuse and trafficking in Africa and Asia

436. Trafficking of illicitly manufactured, falsified or substandard preparations containing tramadol, an opioid analgesic not under international control, has become a

significant problem, as tablets containing high-potency dosages exceeding 200 mg are often seized. Since 2013, the Board has repeatedly identified non-medical use of tramadol as a significant and growing problem in many countries, particularly in parts of West and North Africa, the Near and Middle East and South Asia. Tramadol may in high doses produce euphoria for the user.

437. Such falsified, substandard or illicitly manufactured tramadol tablets are the most often reported synthetic opioids seized, with a record 125 tons interdicted globally in 2017, the majority of which were seized in Africa, in particular in Egypt and Nigeria. According to the WCO *Illicit Trade Report 2017*, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Togo all reported that border seizures of synthetic opioids were exclusively of tramadol, and 75 per cent of drug seizures reported in Cameroon and the Niger were of tramadol. Intelligence communicated through IONICS indicated that there were large seizures of synthetic opioids, in particular high-potency tablets containing tramadol.

438. Tramadol abuse in Ghana became a national issue in 2016, when intelligence gathered across the country indicated the seizure of significant quantities of high-potency tramadol tablets with a non-medical concentration of 120 mg or greater, and more than 527,000 tablets were seized in 2017. Tramadol abuse and seizures have also been reported in Benin, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the Sudan. Illicit tramadol sales have previously been associated with the funding of violent extremist groups operating in parts of Africa.

439. The first comprehensive drug use survey conducted in Nigeria, in 2017, found that 4.7 per cent of the general population aged 15–64 reported past-year non-medical opioid use, predominantly in the form of tramadol. One in five high-risk drug users injects drugs (0.1 per cent of the population), and the most common drugs injected were pharmaceutical opioids such as tramadol, codeine and morphine.

440. In Egypt, the third most populous country in Africa, 3 per cent of adults self-reported past-year non-medical use of tramadol in 2016, and 0.74 per cent of students aged 15–19 reported non-medical use of tramadol. The misuse of tramadol was also reflected in treatment data, as tramadol users accounted for 68 per cent of persons admitted to treatment.

441. Demand for tramadol in Africa is exacerbated by lax regulatory and border controls, which have allowed trafficked or unregulated imports of tramadol originating in India.

442. India is a significant source of trafficked, falsified, substandard or illicitly manufactured products branded and marketed as tramadol that are seized worldwide. As part of the efforts by India to reduce such incidents, the Government scheduled tramadol under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, effective August 2018. As noted above, following the changes in control measures in India, experts in Ghana and Nigeria noted a significant decline in large seizures of tramadol and a corresponding increase in prices for tramadol tablets in the illicit market.

443. In Africa, where substantial non-medical market demand currently exists, a demand could be created for a replacement product with brand recognition. A similar phenomenon was observed in North America, where reduced availability of diverted oxycodone tablets has been linked to the emergence of illicitly manufactured tablets branded as oxycodone but containing fentanyl. The supply of such tablets by organized criminal groups subsequently filled part of the large market demand in North America.

444. Furthermore, there have been reports of the emergence of illicitly manufactured tablets that contain tramadol as well as fentanyl. In North America, there have been reports of seizures of tramadol mixed with fentanyl. **Governments should therefore remain vigilant to the possibility of such a development occurring in other regions and communicate without delay through IONICS the details of tramadol seizures, in particular any seizure suspected of containing fentanyl.**

## B. Africa

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Record seizures among several countries in West Africa indicate that the subregion remains a major transshipment hub for trafficking in cocaine from Central and South America to Europe.

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Nigeria published its first-ever national study on drug use, reporting a past-year drug use prevalence rate of 14.4 per cent in the country.

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### 1. Major developments

445. Africa continues to confront numerous challenges posed by both the trafficking of drugs and the abuse of drugs. Record seizures from several countries in West

Africa indicate that the trafficking of cocaine from Central and South America to Europe remains high, although insufficient data are available to determine the rate of growth. Trafficking of heroin is increasing among African countries bordering the Indian Ocean, while the illicit cultivation of cannabis remains a problem for countries throughout the region. Although the data are limited, it can be seen that trafficking in illicitly manufactured tramadol remains high and that tramadol is becoming a major substance of abuse, mostly in North, West and Central Africa. In addition, despite the newly available prevalence data from some countries, major gaps in the data remain and continue to impede efforts to determine the full extent of drug abuse in Africa.

446. According to a special report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1086), the drug trafficking situation in Guinea-Bissau has begun to show modest improvement, although significant challenges remain. In that regard, Security Council resolution 2458 (2019), aimed at strengthening the international response to the political situation in Guinea-Bissau, contains provisions on combating drug trafficking in the country.

447. In January 2019, the Government of Nigeria, with the support of the European Union and UNODC, released its first-ever *National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, for 2018. This first comprehensive survey on drug use conducted in the country collects data from 38,850 households and 9,344 high-risk drug users across Nigeria.

### 2. Regional cooperation

448. At the thirty-second Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, held in February 2019, Heads of State and Government of States members of the African Union formally adopted the Treaty for the Establishment of the African Medicines Agency. Once it has been ratified by 15 member States, the Agency will serve as the continental regulatory body for standardizing and strengthening regulatory systems across Africa, in order to ensure access to safe, effective, high-quality and affordable medicines and medical products.

449. The African Union and the Indian Council of Medical Research signed a memorandum of understanding in March 2019 establishing a framework to formalize cooperation between India and Africa in the health sector, including the facilitation of trade in pharmaceuticals, as well as support for the manufacture of drugs and medicines in Africa, including those under international control.

450. In July 2019, heads of navies, coast guards and gendarmeries from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone signed a memorandum of understanding for joint maritime operations in the maritime zone of the Economic Community of West African States. The memorandum of understanding is aimed at improving the response of the subregion to piracy and criminal activity in the Gulf of Guinea and ensuring security within the exclusive economic zones of these countries.

451. Seychelles received a mission from the European Union Action against Drugs and Organised Crime project in March 2019 to assess the drug situation in the country. The aim of the mission, the first of its kind in Seychelles, was to determine how the country could strengthen its efforts against drug trafficking, in particular trafficking in heroin, and improve drug demand reduction efforts in Seychelles.

452. The third Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control was held by the African Union Commission from 29 July to 2 August 2019. During the ministerial segment of the session, ministers from African Union member States reviewed and adopted the Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2019–2023) of the African Union.

### 3. National legislation, policy and action

453. Egypt has amended its national drug control law, stiffening penalties for drug trafficking in the country and placing additional substances under national control. The amendment includes penalization for trafficking in synthetic cannabinoids that is equal to that for other narcotic drugs and extends the existing application of capital punishment for drug trafficking to trafficking in synthetic drugs.

454. **Although the determination of sanctions applicable to drug-related crime remains the prerogative of States parties to the conventions, INCB reiterates its position on the issue of capital punishment for drug-related offences and encourages States that retain capital punishment for drug-related offences to consider the abolition of the death penalty for that category of offence.**

455. A special report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1086), published in December 2018, containing an assessment of UNIOGBIS, highlighted that modest progress had been made in Guinea-Bissau to counter drug

trafficking and transnational organized crime. However, it noted that officials in the Government of Guinea-Bissau acknowledged that the scope of drug trafficking remained a problem and that some military and security officials were involved in drug trafficking. The report also indicated that powerful implicated parties in the country that did not want effective State institutions would hinder UNIOGBIS and other United Nations entities in their efforts to counter drug trafficking in the country.

456. Pursuant to the above-mentioned report, the Security Council, in its resolution 2458 (2019), reiterated its concern at the threat to peace and stability posed by drug trafficking and related transnational organized crime in Guinea-Bissau. The Council stressed that long-term political and economic stability in the country was not possible without combating drug trafficking, called upon the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to continue to improve efforts to deal with trafficking in drugs and called upon the international community, regional organizations and the United Nations system to increase support to the country to address the problem.

457. In connection with the report of the Secretary-General and Security Council resolution on Guinea-Bissau, in early November 2019, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union issued a communiqué regarding the deteriorating political and situation in Guinea-Bissau. The Peace and Security Council noted with concern the increase in drug-related crimes in the country and their major impact on the general political and security situation, including hindering efforts to conduct new elections.

458. The Gambia has developed and launched its first-ever National Drug Control Strategy, for the period 2019–2023. The Strategy will guide the policy and operational approaches taken by the country to counter drug trafficking.

459. In December 2018, Nigeria established the Presidential Advisory Committee for the Elimination of Drug Abuse to address all aspects of drug control in the country. The Committee comprises high-level officials from several departments of the Government and representatives of civil society organizations and is charged with providing the President of Nigeria with sustainable recommendations for addressing the country's drug problems.

460. The Parliament of Kenya approved an amendment to the country's drug control law whereby it significantly increased the penalties and fines for trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The amendment sets out additional penalties for any law enforcement

officer who aids or abets any offence under the drug control law.

461. Health authorities in Morocco launched the national multisectoral strategy for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases for the period 2019–2029. The strategy, which covers many non-communicable health conditions, contains several measures to monitor and address health consequences related to drug use in the country and advocates for health-centred approaches to assist persons who abuse drugs.

462. On 23 May 2019, South Africa issued a notice updating the schedules of its Medicines and Related Substances Act of 1965, moving CBD from schedule 7 of the Act, the highest level of control, to schedule 4, which will allow for preparations containing CBD to be made available on prescription. In addition to the rescheduling, the Government indicated that CBD-based products that contain a maximum daily dose of 20 mg of CBD and that are produced from raw cannabis material containing no more than 0.001 per cent of THC and no more than 0.0075 per cent of CBD would not be controlled after 12 months following the issuing of the notice. That allows the purchase of CBD products below those established thresholds without any prescription.

463. Following amendments to its Dangerous Drugs Act in 2018, Zimbabwe now permits the cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes. The amendment establishes the regulatory framework for the cultivation of cannabis, including provisions to ensure the security of cultivation areas and the quality of cannabis products.

464. In September 2019, Mauritius launched the new National Drug Control Master Plan for the period 2019–2023. The Master Plan establishes four strategic pillars to address drug control issues in Mauritius: drug supply reduction; drug demand reduction; harm reduction; and coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

#### 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

465. Africa remains a major transit region for drug trafficking, as well as a growing illicit market for drugs. Trafficking in cocaine remains a major problem, as several countries in West Africa reported record seizures of the drug, taken from vessels that had departed from Central and South America and were bound for North Africa and Europe. Trafficking in heroin is also a growing problem in countries on the coast of the Indian Ocean. Trafficking of tramadol, an opioid analgesic not

under international control, remains a major problem for parts of Africa, and tramadol is becoming one of the most trafficked and abused drugs, in particular in North, West and Central Africa. Cannabis continues to be one of the most trafficked drugs in the region. Although most of the trafficking appears to take place within the region, some North African countries reported the trafficking of cannabis herb and resins into Europe.

466. The largest-ever seizure of cocaine in Cabo Verde occurred in January 2019, when the Judicial Police seized over 9.5 tons of cocaine from a vessel that had departed from Panama. The authorities of Cabo Verde also seized over 2.2 tons of cocaine from a ship in August 2019, during a joint interdiction operation led by the national Coast Guard.

467. Another record seizure of cocaine occurred in March 2019 when authorities of Guinea-Bissau seized 789 kg of the drug as part of Operation Carapau, which was led by the Transnational Crime Unit and the Judicial Police of Guinea-Bissau. That seizure was the largest ever made by authorities in the country. Similarly, in July 2019, the authorities of Senegal carried out a record seizure of cocaine during a three-day operation that detected 1 ton of the drug hidden on ships in the port of Dakar.

468. For 2018, data provided by countries in the region indicate that trafficking in cocaine is proliferating. The Kenyan authorities reported seizing 2.2 tons of cocaine that year, more than 90 per cent of which was trafficked by air. Major seizures in 2018 were also reported by Morocco, Algeria and Angola, which seized 1.7 tons, 672 kg and nearly 500 kg, respectively. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria and South Africa all reported seizing quantities of cocaine ranging from a few kilograms to 155 kg.

469. The trafficking of tramadol continues to pose a challenge in the region, in particular among countries in North, West and Central Africa. Nigeria reported major seizures in late 2018, including more than 581 million high-dosage tramadol tablets seized in a two-day operation. In addition, the country reported seizing a total of some 22.5 tons of tramadol in 2018. Morocco reported the seizure of more than 45 million tablets of tramadol in 2018, while Senegal also reported seizures of the drug. Reported seizures suggest that trafficking of the synthetic opioid in the region remains a major problem among countries in the Sahel and the Maghreb.

470. According to the UNODC *World Drug Report 2019*, trafficking in heroin via Africa appears to have increased, with seizures rising from less than 0.5 tons in

2013 to almost 1.5 tons in 2017. In 2018, overall seizures of heroin in Africa have continued to rise, with Kenya alone reporting 1.5 tons seized that year. Trends derived from available data on heroin seizures suggest that trafficking in heroin via Africa, in particular in countries on the Indian Ocean coast, is continuing to grow.

471. Major seizures of heroin were reported by Egypt, Mauritius and the United Republic of Tanzania for 2018, exceeding the quantities seized in 2017. The 1.5 tons of heroin seized by Kenya in 2018 represents more than a tenfold increase from 2017, when the country reported the seizure of 112 kg. Smaller seizures of heroin in 2018 were also reported by Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mozambique and Seychelles.

472. While the illicit cultivation of cannabis occurs in many African countries, the trend of past years continued, as Morocco and Nigeria again reported the largest seizures of cannabis and cannabis resin in the region. Morocco reported the seizure in 2018 of nearly 72 tons of cannabis resin, as well as of 252 tons of majoun, a consumable product consisting mostly of cannabis but that can also include other drugs, along with poppy seeds and other foodstuff. In June 2019, Moroccan authorities reported the seizure of 12 tons of cannabis and 800 kg of cannabis resin. Another operation carried out two weeks later led to the seizure of 600 kg of cannabis found in sewage pipes in Taghbalt.

473. During 2018, at least 16 countries from all regions of Africa reported seizures of cannabis herb, resins and plants. Major seizures of at least several tons were reported by Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, the Niger, Senegal and Zambia. Nigeria reported the seizure in 2018 of more than 270 tons of cannabis herb, the largest amount since 2015. Algeria reported the seizure of nearly 32 tons of cannabis resin. An analysis of reports available from countries in the region indicates that most of the illicit cultivation of cannabis herb is destined for country-level or subregional markets, even though significant amounts of cannabis resins and herb destined for European markets are trafficked through North Africa and, most often, thereon through Spain.

474. With regard to the trafficking of other drugs, several countries reported seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants. In 2018, Nigeria and South Africa seized a few hundred kilograms each of methamphetamine, while Morocco reported the seizure of more than a million MDMA tablets. Some seizures of khat were reported by a few countries, while only South Africa reported any seizures of ketamine, a sedative not controlled internationally.

## 5. Prevention and treatment

475. The lack of information and prevalence data continues to be an impediment to determining the extent of drug use in Africa. It also hinders Governments and the international community as they seek to respond effectively by means of evidence-based drug use prevention and treatment programmes. Nonetheless, it can be seen from the information available that trends in drug use in the region do not appear to be improving, as some countries report drug use rates for some drugs that are higher than the global prevalence rate. Cannabis continues to be the main drug of abuse, and tramadol, an opioid analgesic not under international control, is also a major drug of abuse in some parts of Africa.

476. **The Board calls upon all States to provide regularly to the Board and other relevant international organizations data on drug use prevalence and any official information regarding their efforts to prevent the use of drugs and provide treatment services to drug users.**

477. The 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, produced by the Government of Nigeria with support from the European Union and UNODC and released in January 2019, is the first-ever comprehensive survey of drug use conducted in the country. It analyses data collected from 38,850 households and 9,344 high-risk drug users. The report found that, among persons aged 15–64 years, the past-year prevalence rate for non-medical drug use (not including tobacco and alcohol) was 14.4 per cent. The report also found that cannabis was the most commonly used drug, with an estimated 10.8 per cent of the population (approximately 10.6 million people) having used cannabis in the previous year. Opioids, heroin and pharmaceutical preparations (tramadol, codeine and morphine) are the next most abused substances, with a prevalence rate of 6.0 per cent (approximately 4.6 million people). In addition, polydrug use was very common, as nearly 95 per cent of high-risk users and almost half of other users reported having consumed more than one drug in the previous year.

478. In addition to providing detailed data on the drug use situation in Nigeria, the National Survey also outlines the challenges and the policy approaches needed to address the drug use problem in the country. In particular, the data reported in the National Survey will be used to develop a new national drug master plan for the period 2020–2024. Furthermore, the National Survey underscores the need for affordable and accessible scientific evidence-based treatment in Nigeria, noting the gender disparities in access to treatment and the need to address the problem of stigmatization of people who use drugs.

The National Survey also stresses that there is a need to ensure the availability of pain medications in the country, while also preventing diversions from licit trade and countering trafficking in opioids.

479. In Kenya, the National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drug Abuse and the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis released in June 2019 a survey entitled *Status of Drugs and Substance Abuse among Primary School Pupils in Kenya*. The survey was conducted among 3,307 randomly selected students between 10 and 14 years of age from 177 primary schools across the country. The survey found that among respondents, the average median age of onset of at least one substance of abuse was 11 years, while the lowest reported age of onset was 4 years. The survey also found that 20.2 per cent of primary school pupils had used at least one drug or substance of abuse (including alcohol or tobacco) in their lifetime and 1.2 per cent had used cannabis in their lifetime. It also found that students were more likely to abuse drugs if one or both parents had used drugs or some other substance. The report found that alcohol, tobacco and prescription drugs were the substances that were most available to students to abuse.

## C. Americas

### Central America and the Caribbean

The largest single seizure of cocaine ever recorded in Central America and the Caribbean took place in El Salvador, where authorities seized more than 13,779 kg of cocaine trafficked by sea. The seized cocaine had originated in Colombia and Ecuador, destined for cocaine markets in North America.

Although the amount and the quality of information regarding drug abuse patterns in Central America and the Caribbean have improved in recent years, a more systematic collection of drug abuse patterns and trends is needed.

#### 1. Major developments

480. Central America and the Caribbean continue to be exploited by local gangs and international organized criminal groups which use the subregion as a transit area and trans-shipment route for illicit drugs originating in

South America and destined for consumer markets in North America and Europe. As cocaine trafficking remains the most lucrative source of income for organized criminal groups in the subregion, the intensified competition in that trafficking has increased the level of violence in a subregion considered to be among the most violent in the world. According to the UNODC “Global study on homicide 2019: executive summary”, firearms are involved in homicides in the Americas far more often than in other parts of the world.

481. Most of the cocaine consumed in the United States and Canada is trafficked through Central America. The Caribbean coast of Central America is particularly vulnerable to drug trafficking because of its remoteness, limited infrastructure, the lack of government presence and weak law enforcement institutions.

482. Reported levels of consumption of opioids for pain relief and of psychotropic substances for the treatment of mental health and neurological conditions continue to be low in most countries in Central America, and some countries face a further decline in their already low levels of availability.

483. Illicit drug use, in particular of cannabis, appears to be growing in all countries in the subregion. According to the *CICAD Report on Drug Use in the Americas 2019*, the highest prevalence rate of cannabis use among the general population in 2018 was that reported by Jamaica, at 15.5 per cent, followed by Barbados, at almost 8 per cent, and the lowest prevalence rates were reported by the Dominican Republic and Panama, which both reported a past-year prevalence below 1 per cent. Key problems in Central America and the Caribbean continue to be the design and implementation of effective prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes throughout the subregion, the need to address the chronic lack of capacity for the collection of drug-related data and the lack of centralized agencies mandated to assess that information. Although the amount and the quality of information regarding drug abuse patterns in the subregion have improved, as seen by the number of national drug use surveys published in the past few years, more research on consumption patterns and trends is needed to tailor treatment initiatives to meet local needs.

#### 2. Regional cooperation

484. In January 2019, drug control officials from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras participated in a seminar held in Vienna as part of the INCB Learning project. INCB Learning is the Board’s global initiative to

strengthen the capacity of Governments in the regulatory control and monitoring of the licit trade in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals. The training seminar contributed to improved monitoring and reporting capacities of participating national authorities, in order to ensure that controlled substances are adequately available for medical purposes while at the same time preventing their diversion into illicit channels, abuse or trafficking.

485. In April 2019, UNODC and the Ministry of Public Security of Panama held the first Regional Conference against Drug Trafficking Networks, which took place in Panama City. The objective of the conference was to exchange best practices among law enforcement officials of countries in the subregion affected by production, trafficking and consumption of drugs.

486. In April 2019, UNODC held a workshop on international judicial cooperation for the detection of illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, with the participation of judges and prosecutors of participating countries.

487. In June 2019, CICAD published the reports of the seventh evaluation round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism for countries in Central America and the Caribbean. The reports assess the progress made by countries in the implementation of the objectives and priorities established in the CICAD Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs for the period 2016–2020.

### 3. National legislation, policy and action

488. In Nicaragua, the National Council against Organized Crime was restructured in 2018 to increase coordination between law enforcement entities and enhance the effectiveness of the measures taken against criminal organizations, including drug trafficking organizations. The policies, action plans and measures being taken by the Government and the efforts being made to control trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs are set out in the National Anti-Drug Strategy for the period 2018–2021.

489. In El Salvador, enforcement of drug control activities continued in accordance with the goals established in the national drug strategy for the period 2016–2021. In April 2019, 21 officials from ministries and law enforcement and drug control bodies of El Salvador participated in a seminar on control of drug trafficking and chemical precursors, which took place in San Salvador, hosted by the National Anti-Drug Commission. Also in San Salvador, in August 2019, the personnel of the Joint

Task Force on Airport Interdiction received training on the detection of suspicious passenger profiles linked to drug trafficking.

490. In Jamaica, the Cannabis Licensing Appeal Tribunal became operational in April 2019 following the publication of its rules and regulations in the Jamaica Gazette. The Appeal Tribunal was established to receive petitions from persons and entities that wish to appeal any decision by the Cannabis Licensing Authority of Jamaica to deny, revoke or suspend a licence or permit issued in accordance with the Dangerous Drugs Act. Regulations to establish a comprehensive licensing regime to regulate the import into and export from Jamaica of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes have been drafted and are currently under review by authorities and are consolidated in the Dangerous Drugs (Cannabis Import and Export Licensing) Regulations, 2019.

491. In Guatemala, the plenary of the Commission against Addictions and Illicit Drug Trafficking approved the National Policy on Addictions and Illicit Drug Trafficking for the period 2019–2030 at its second regular session of the year, in June 2019. The new policy covers four thematic areas: strengthening institutions, demand reduction, supply reduction, and development and human rights.

### 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

492. In Central America, the largest quantities of cocaine seizures were reported by Costa Rica, El Salvador and Panama. Seizures reported by countries of the Caribbean accounted for just 1 per cent of the total quantity of cocaine seized worldwide, and that total amount for the Caribbean consisted mostly of the great amount seized in the Dominican Republic. In Belize, in 2018, law enforcement authorities reported the seizure of more than 990 kg of cocaine from an aircraft carrying illicit drugs.

493. The largest seizure of cocaine ever recorded in Central America and the Caribbean took place in El Salvador in 2018, when more than 13,779 kg of cocaine was seized. The seized cocaine had originated in Colombia (90 per cent) and Ecuador (10 per cent) and been trafficked by sea, destined for cocaine markets in the United States. The second most seized substance in El Salvador in 2018 was cannabis herb, of which almost 1,253 kg was seized.

494. In 2018, the Government of Guatemala reported cocaine seizures totalling more than 16,823 kg, of which

the largest monthly seizure totals were those for November (3,214 kg) and December (5,338 kg).

495. In 2019, the security situation in Haiti further deteriorated as a result of the persistent political crisis, which led to a continued deterioration of the economic situation and an increase in criminal activity, including drug trafficking. Law enforcement agencies continue to suffer from a chronic shortage of the resources required to ensure the adequate functioning of those agencies. The national police conducted 37 operations against gangs in 2019, including 10 operations conducted with support from the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti. The number of reported homicides in Haiti in the first half of 2019 was double that of the previous year, with 523 homicide cases in the first half of 2019 compared with 274 in the same six-month period in 2018.

496. According to the UNODC *World Drug Report 2019*, outdoor cultivation of cannabis in Central America has been reported by Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama. Small quantities of heroin available in Central America and the Caribbean continue to arrive from Colombia, for local consumption in a relatively small market and for onward trafficking to markets in North America and Europe.

497. In recent years, criminal organizations that traffic narcotics have used various areas of Honduras and Guatemala as a transit area, which has contributed to the increase in the trafficking of drugs to North America. In the case of Honduras, these activities are concentrated in the Mosquitia rainforest, which is used for landing aircraft loaded with illegal cargo from Colombia and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). According to statistics of UNODC, Honduras has become the country with the highest levels of violence in the world, with the murder rate reported for 2012 reaching a peak of 92 homicides per 100,000 people in the country. A significant proportion of the homicides committed in Honduras are drug-related. Domestic violence associated with drug use has increased as a result of the development of domestic microtrafficking networks controlled by street gangs, known as *maras* or *pandillas*, which commit crimes and are thought to finance their activities largely through the trafficking of drugs. The two main such street gangs are Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13) and Calle 18. Violence, poverty and corruption are by far the main causes of social problems. Several legislative initiatives have been proposed over the past few years to reduce drug trafficking and improve the transparency and effectiveness of the judicial system and the security forces.

498. In the case of Guatemala, the hidden landing strips are mainly in the departments of Petén, Izabal, Retalhuleu,

Escuintla, Quiché and Alta Verapaz, most of which are provinces bordering Mexico or near the border. Those landing strips cause environmental destruction primarily because of the deforestation required to build them, with the greatest damage in the Department of Petén, which contains the largest tropical rainforest in Central America and is home to the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

499. Laboratories manufacturing fentanyl and its analogues have been found in the Dominican Republic in recent years, as reported in the UNODC *World Drug Report 2019*.

## 5. Prevention and treatment

500. According to the CICAD *Report on Drug Use in the Americas 2019*, among countries of the Caribbean, the highest rate of past-year cannabis use among the general population in 2018 was that reported by Jamaica at 15.5 per cent, followed by Barbados at almost 8 per cent. The lowest rates were reported by the Dominican Republic and Panama, which had the lowest past-year prevalence rate of those reported: below 1 per cent. In the Bahamas, Barbados and Jamaica, past-year use of cannabis was found to be higher among those aged 35–64 than among those aged 12–17. In Central America, Belize stands out with a rate of more than 15 per cent, and past-year use in Costa Rica is close to 10 per cent. The lowest levels of use in the subregion were those reported by Panama and Honduras, both below 5 per cent.

501. Misuse of psychotropic substances was found to be higher among women than among men in nearly every country in Central America and the Caribbean, according to the CICAD *Report on Drug Use in the Americas 2019*. In Costa Rica and Honduras, for example, the prevalence of non-prescription use of tranquilizers by female secondary school students is almost double that of their male counterparts.

502. In 2019, the Government of El Salvador published the results of its national report on the drug situation for 2018. That survey collected data from individuals aged 12–65 on patterns of abuse of controlled substances. Results show an increase in the prevalence of past-year use of cannabis and psychoactive substances.

503. Use of “ecstasy” in Central America remains lower than the global average, with an estimated prevalence of past-year use of 0.2 per cent, equivalent to roughly 100,000 users in Central America in 2017. According to the CICAD *Report on Drug Use in the Americas 2019*, past-year use of “ecstasy” in Belize among those aged 12–65 was reported

to be 0.5 per cent and in Costa Rica to be 0.2 per cent, among the highest in Central America. Guatemala and El Salvador are the only countries of Central America that reported amphetamine use among secondary school students. Those two countries had a lifetime prevalence of 0.8 per cent and 0.7 per cent, respectively. The only two countries of the Caribbean to report the prevalence of past-year use of “ecstasy” among the general population were Barbados, at 0.3 per cent, and the Dominican Republic, at 0.2 per cent.

504. According to the UNODC *World Drug Report 2019*, in 2017, cannabis was the drug with the highest prevalence of past-year use in both the Caribbean (at 3.6 per cent) and Central America (at 2.9 per cent). After cannabis, the drug with the next highest prevalence rate in Central America was cocaine (0.66 per cent), followed by amphetamines and prescription stimulants (0.21 per cent) and “ecstasy” (0.17 per cent). The overall prevalence of past-year use of amphetamines in countries in Central America continued to be low in 2017, at about 0.2 per cent of the population aged 15–64. In the Caribbean, the drug of greatest use is cannabis, followed by amphetamines and prescription stimulants (0.87 per cent), cocaine (0.62 per cent) and “ecstasy” (0.23 per cent).

505. Over the past decade, a total of 14 countries and territories in Latin America and the Caribbean have reported 178 different new psychoactive substances belonging to diverse chemical groups. In 2017 alone, 61 different new psychoactive substances were reported to UNODC by nine countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, reflecting the diversity of the new psychoactive substances market. Hallucinogenic drugs make up the largest category in terms of the number of substances reported, followed by stimulants.

## North America

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The opioids crisis continues to destroy lives, families and communities in North America.

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Measures to decriminalize or legalize cannabis are proliferating in North America, and cannabis initiation and consumption are increasing.

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### 1. Major developments

506. The opioids crisis in North America continues to be a matter of concern, despite the slight drop in the overall

number of drug overdose deaths (based on preliminary data) reported for the United States for the year 2018. While deaths linked to synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, continued to rise in 2018, deaths linked to semi-synthetic opioids, such as oxycodone, declined. Collective efforts to address the contamination and mixing of illicit drugs with synthetic opioids were stepped up in 2019, including through widespread community outreach and the distribution of overdose-reversing drugs. Stopping opioid abuse and seizing illicitly manufactured fentanyls are important public health and safety objectives in all countries in this region.

507. The increases in cocaine manufacture and surges in methamphetamine manufacture and trafficking have had negative effects in countries in North America, including an apparent increase in the use of methamphetamine in Canada.

508. The devastating effects on communities of poly-drug use and inadequate treatment options continue to be felt throughout the United States.

509. Cannabis legalization and decriminalization continue to spread in North America; and the effects of increased cannabis use on the health of the population – especially youth – are being actively studied and addressed by national authorities.

### 2. Regional cooperation

510. The three countries in North America – Canada, Mexico and the United States – have expanded their collective efforts to address the complex threats of trafficking in and the abuse of drugs, especially opioids. Those three countries are trying to reduce the illicit supply of heroin, methamphetamine and fentanyls through joint investigative efforts and the destruction of clandestine laboratories. Shared priorities among those countries include the close monitoring of cannabis trafficking following the introduction of legalization measures.

511. Supply reduction efforts and the sharing of good practices in the prevention and treatment of drug abuse are discussed by officials from all countries in the region in the annual meetings of the North American Dialogue on Drug Policy. This forum promotes enhanced regional cooperation on the opioid crisis and helps facilitate coordinated responses to the increasing number of deaths related to the abuse of opioids. Mexico and the United States also came together to strengthen their collaboration at the second meeting of the working group on transnational criminal organizations, held in Cartagena,

Colombia, in June 2019. Those two countries work with Colombia, the third member of the working group, on the development of joint strategies to dismantle Colombian drug trafficking organizations and Mexican drug cartels.

512. Regional security and strategic cooperation efforts have been boosted through effective bilateral law enforcement initiatives, involving Mexico and the United States, and public campaigns for secure borders. The United States noted in its National Drug Control Strategy that Mexico was increasing its opium poppy eradication efforts. Bilateral drug control and security cooperation between the two countries was also affected by political statements and rhetoric about the use of the south-western border of the United States as a corridor for drug smuggling, such as the presidential proclamation on declaring a national emergency concerning the southern border of the United States, signed by the United States President on 15 February 2019, and indications by the United States that tariffs would be imposed on Mexican goods if the rates of drug trafficking did not decrease. Subsequently, the United States Government began construction of enhanced border security facilities and barriers to block land routes used for smuggling drugs from Mexico into the United States.

### 3. National legislation, policy and action

513. In January 2019, the United States Office of National Drug Control Policy released the National Drug Control Strategy, the top priority of which is the opioid crisis. The Strategy calls for government efforts to focus on addressing the increased availability of and trafficking in synthetic drugs. The emerging crisis of cocaine availability and use in the United States, as well as illicit heroin and methamphetamine manufacture in Mexico, are described as major challenges that United States agencies should deal with by expanding their efforts in detecting and monitoring air and sea routes used for drug trafficking.

514. Mexico released its National Development Plan 2019–2024, which had been approved by its Chamber of Deputies in June 2019 and will be used to prepare legislation in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. In the section on reformulating the fight against drugs, the Plan includes a proposal to decriminalize prohibited drugs and shift priorities through drug policy reform based on expanding treatment for drug addiction. According to the Plan, the State will renounce its claim to combat drug addiction by banning addictive substances and instead will dedicate its resources to the treatment of drug-dependent

persons through programmes offering clinical follow-up and the provision of prescriptions, as part of personalized detoxification treatment under medical supervision. In line with this new approach focusing on treatment, the national drug policy will be based on public health, prevention and reduction of drug-related harm, as well as deterrence of illicit drug production, trafficking and distribution, and will be carried out according to the national public security strategy.

515. In a statement made in March 2019 at the sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the representative of Mexico called for the focus to be on not only criminal justice matters, but also social issues, including strengthening the culture of prevention, public health and the rights of victims and vulnerable groups. The launch of the country's new addiction strategy, "Together for peace", provided a plan focused on protecting children and adolescents while avoiding the stigmatization, criminalization and discrimination of substance users, including by viewing the issue through a gender and a human rights lens. The strategy is based on four pillars: education, well-being, culture and communication.

516. In Mexico, the Senate held public hearings from August to November 2019 on the design of plans to legalize and regulate the non-medical use of cannabis. According to a website created to provide information about the hearings, the purpose is to approach cannabis regulation in a transparent manner and along lines similar to the changes in cannabis policy and legislation in countries such as Canada and Uruguay.

517. In Canada, after the Cannabis Act came into force in 2018, Health Canada, as part of its Substance Use and Addictions Program, initiated projects to educate the public and raise awareness about cannabis. The initiatives included campaigns to raise awareness about the health effects of cannabis use during pregnancy and social media messages informing Canadians between the ages of 13 and 24 about the risks of drug-impaired driving. Bill C-93 was passed by the Parliament of Canada in June 2019, allowing Canadians who had been previously convicted of simple cannabis possession to apply for a pardon and to reduce barriers to their reintegration by making available to them job opportunities, educational programmes and housing.

518. In June 2019, the Government of Canada announced amendments to the cannabis regulations to regulate the production and sale of edible cannabis products, cannabis extracts and topical applications. The amendments, which entered into force in October 2019, represent an attempt

to displace the country's illicit market for cannabis products, while establishing regulatory measures to address health risks and promote safeguards. The regulations on cannabis production call for packaging to be child-resistant and plain, in order to make the packages less appealing to youth. In addition, each package of edible cannabis must not contain more than 10 mg of THC.

519. In the United States, as from 1 January 2020, the State of Illinois will allow the non-medical sale and use of cannabis for adults over the age of 21, with designated possession limits. The Illinois General Assembly passed the Cannabis Regulation and Taxation Act, which was signed into law on 25 June 2019 by the Governor of Illinois. In the State of New York, lawmakers agreed to further decriminalize the possession of cannabis, treating the possession of up to 2 ounces (56.7 grams) of cannabis as a civil violation instead of a crime. In July 2019, the State of Hawaii passed legislation to decriminalize the possession of up to 3 grams of cannabis. In all three states, there will be retroactive expungement of criminal records for past eligible cannabis convictions, with Illinois including social equity and community development components in its programme.

520. In the United States, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, signed into law in December 2018, amends the Controlled Substances Act to remove from Schedule I hemp, defined as cannabis with a *delta*-9-THC concentration of not more than 0.3 per cent. Under federal law, CBD continues to be controlled under Schedule I. The removal of hemp from Schedule I is a reclassification of cannabis and will place hemp agricultural products under regulation of the Department of Agriculture.

521. Two cities in the United States have decriminalized the use and possession of mushrooms containing psilocybin: Oakland, California, and Denver, Colorado. The hallucinogenic compound is controlled under Schedule I of the 1971 Convention. The ordinance in Denver was supported by 50.5 per cent of voters; it calls for city officials to deprioritize criminal penalties for the personal use and possession of psilocybin mushrooms by persons over the age of 21. In Oakland, a vote for decriminalization of the substance was taken by the city council. At the national level, psilocybin is a substance controlled under Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act. Psilocybin also remains controlled under Schedule I of both the California Uniform Controlled Substances Act and the Uniform Controlled Substances Act of 2013 of Colorado. Since criminal law in the United States is a federal and state responsibility and not a municipal responsibility, the practical effect of those cities' actions will be limited to how this substance is treated by municipal

police officials. Possession and use of psilocybin will remain a criminal offence in both jurisdictions.

522. As part of national efforts to combat the opioid crisis, the United States Department of Justice reached an agreement in 2019 with a consumer goods company, according to which the company agreed to pay \$1.4 billion to resolve potential criminal and civil liability related to the marketing of Suboxone, a drug used for the treatment of opioid addiction, which had resulted in false claims to the Government. The conduct by a subsidiary company was alleged to include the prescription of opioids to more patients than allowed by law, at high doses and in a careless manner. The State of Oklahoma also reached a historic settlement with a pharmaceutical company for its role in aggressively marketing OxyContin and fuelling the opioid crisis. There are numerous lawsuits pending in the United States that involve manufacturers of prescription opioids, as attempts are being made to impose legal penalties on those responsible for the large number of deaths (nearly 218,000) from overdoses related to prescription opioids in that country in the period 1999–2017. In August 2019, a judge in the State of Oklahoma ordered a large pharmaceutical company to pay \$572 million for its role in fuelling the opioid crisis.

523. In May 2019, the Government of Canada took a proactive approach to addressing the proliferation of chemicals that share a similar chemical structure with a controlled chemical through amendments to its Precursor Control Regulations. Three precursors of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues, including their derivatives and analogues and salts of derivatives and analogues, were placed under national control. At the same time, the scope of control was extended in a similar manner for several precursors already listed in the relevant schedules of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act of Canada.

#### 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

524. Online drug trafficking through anonymous networks is fuelling the drug abuse and overdose crises in North America. Cryptocurrencies have been identified as a major challenge to agencies involved in combating anonymity, preventing the use of virtual currency for money-laundering and prosecuting drug trafficking. In the United States, illegal online drug sales are being countered through multi-agency and government-wide efforts. The Department of Justice, for example, created the Joint Criminal Opioid and Darknet Enforcement team, which, with the cooperation of multiple federal agencies and local law enforcement partners, has shut down 50 darknet

accounts and led to 61 arrests as part of Operation SaboTor. In March 2019, there were 30 ongoing investigations in Canada that involved online drug trafficking. Coordinated and undercover law enforcement efforts have led to the infiltration of darknet networks and the arrest of vendors.

525. The availability of and demand for cocaine have increased in Canada and the United States. According to the *2018 National Drug Threat Assessment*, prepared by the Drug Enforcement Administration of the United States, the increase in illicit coca bush cultivation in Colombia has led to a re-emerging cocaine threat. In June 2019, United States Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations seized nearly 20 tons of cocaine, with a street value of about \$1.3 billion, on board a shipping vessel in Philadelphia. It was the largest cocaine seizure in the history of United States Customs and Border Protection.

526. Heroin continues to be readily available throughout the United States, and the number of organized criminal groups in Canada involved in the illicit market for heroin has increased substantially in the past year. According to the United States Office of National Drug Policy, Mexico continues to be the primary supplier of heroin to the United States. In 2019, there were multiple large-scale operations in the United States to combat heroin trafficking. In the first quarter of 2019, Mexican authorities reported 16 cases involving the detection of fentanyl, including cases involving the stopping of shipments of fentanyl in tablet form sent to the United States via courier companies.

527. Substantial intelligence about the drug trafficking activities carried out by the Sinaloa cartel – an organized crime syndicate based in Mexico – was released as evidence in 2019 during the trial of one of its principal operators. A kingpin of major drug trafficking operations, responsible for smuggling massive amounts of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and cannabis into Canada and the United States since 1984, was found guilty. Key evidence released during the trial was the result of multiple investigations and close partnership involving the Governments of Mexico and the United States.

528. Law enforcement operations throughout the United States have been targeting networks for the illicit supply and distribution of synthetic opioids. For the past year, Operation Synthetic Opioid Surge of the Department of Justice has provided a turning point in efforts to counter synthetic opioids, targeting local areas with a high rate of fatal overdoses. At the beginning of 2019, United States Customs and Border Protection officers

seized nearly \$4.6 million worth of fentanyl and methamphetamine in the State of Arizona. The seizure included about 115 kg of fentanyl, making it the largest seizure of fentanyl in the history of United States Customs and Border Protection.

529. Canadian authorities have been instrumental in extraditing suspects and procuring evidence during United States cross-border investigations of cases involving trafficking in fentanyl. Canada reported that in the period 2017–2018, there were 16,180 drug seizures at its border, including 438 seizures of opioids. That was supported by the expansion of authority in 2017 that allowed Canadian border officers to inspect mail of any weight that was suspected of containing illegal drugs, particularly fentanyls. Prior to that, special permission was required for the inspection of mail weighing less than 30 grams. At the global level, many countries still do not authorize the inspection of international mail of any weight, allowing multiple shipments of small envelopes containing pure fentanyl or other drugs to either slip through border control or be disposed of without opening or further investigation.

530. In the United States, the number of fentanyl trafficking offenders has increased by more than 4,700 per cent since 2014. According to the United States Sentencing Commission, the average sentence for fentanyl trafficking offenders was 74 months in 2018, compared with 66 months in 2016. Throughout the region, questions have been raised about how to determine the most appropriate sentences in fentanyl trafficking cases involving death.

531. In the United States, differences in the price of cannabis in various states appear to be heightening the risks of interstate trafficking. In California, the Governor announced the redeployment of National Guard troops in 2019, in part to enhance law enforcement efforts to counter illegal and unlicensed cannabis farms and shops. According to the Governor, there are major concerns about the increase in non-regulated cannabis and the cartels that are not participating in the regulated cannabis market and are growing cannabis plants illegally on public lands. The use of commercial aircraft for trafficking in cannabis may also be increasing, possibly as a result of the legalization of cannabis in certain states and the rise in the interstate transport of cannabis by consumers. In Canada, there are also considerable differences in the price of cannabis among the provinces, and there are reports indicating that users could pay substantially more for cannabis on the licit market than on the illicit market. Statistics Canada has been collecting anonymous submissions from different parts of the country about the price users pay for dried cannabis, as well as estimates about the prevalence of cannabis use.

532. The illicit manufacture of and trafficking in methamphetamine and synthetic drugs are increasing in Canada and the United States, as organized criminal groups are involved in trafficking in a variety of drugs and engaged in money-laundering proceeds derived from drug trafficking. According to information received by the Board from the United States, methamphetamine, both as a solid (crystal) and as a liquid, continues to be smuggled into the United States, where it is then crystallized in conversion laboratories. From October 2018 to June 2019, over 21 tons of methamphetamine were seized by United States Customs and Border Protection. The number of new psychoactive substances continues to grow and experimentation with unregulated substances poses a significant challenge for national authorities, with Canada reporting that methamphetamine trafficking and manufacture are central to many of its investigations of organized crime and polydrug trafficking. Efforts are being strengthened throughout North America to regulate and prohibit the importation, possession and sale of devices and equipment known to be used in the illicit manufacture of controlled substances, such as tableting machines.

533. In Mexico, the National Centre for Planning, Analysis and Information for Combating Crime (CENAPI) will ensure that drug control policy and drug abuse prevention strategies and programmes, including the drug-profiling programme, are based on scientific evidence. The objective of the profiling programme is to be able to recognize the chemical characteristics of fentanyls, heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine, facilitating the identification of the composition of samples, including the concentration, cutting agents and adulterants, thereby determining substances not under international control, production modalities and new control models.

534. A detailed analysis of 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 2019 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

## 5. Prevention and treatment

535. The rise in methamphetamine use throughout North America has become a major public health concern. In some parts of the region, methamphetamine addiction is an emerging threat that poses new prevention and treatment challenges, such as methamphetamine abuse co-occurring with the abuse of opioids or cocaine. The Government of Canada, for example, has noted that problematic use of methamphetamine in some provinces and in underserved communities is an emerging threat

that requires early detection and intervention, including the development of new models of care. In May 2019, under the Canadian Integrated Response to Organized Crime, a national social media campaign was started to inform Canadians about the role that outlaw motorcycle gangs play in drug trafficking and the illicit activities of organized crime. According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, such gangs have extensive illicit distribution networks that appear to be connected with over half of all organized criminal groups in Canada.

536. The United States has indicated in its National Drug Control Strategy that there is a need to expand treatment capacity in the country and to encourage people who require treatment for drug addiction to seek care. In 2017, of the 20.7 million Americans in need of treatment and recovery services, only 4 million received any kind of treatment and only 2.5 million received treatment at a specialized facility. Moreover, the number of patients receiving medication-assisted treatment for opioid addiction at health centres funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration increased by 142 per cent in the period 2016–2018, and the number of patients receiving buprenorphine, a substance commonly used in medication-assisted treatment, has increased by 28 per cent since 2017.

537. The United States has been a leader in providing support for international partners in programmes for the prevention of drug abuse and the treatment of drug-dependent persons. The Board encourages the United States to undertake programmes at the national level that will close its treatment gap, including by providing opioid substitution treatment options to all members of its population who are in need of and can benefit from such options.

538. As part of efforts in the United States to stem public health problems related to the opioid crisis, the National Institutes of Health is supporting research on quality addiction treatment for opioid use disorder in criminal justice settings. The needs of treatment and related services in a wide range of criminal justice settings, including the need to increase the availability of medication-assisted treatment, will be addressed by initiatives such as the Justice Community Opioid Innovation Network. Public health and safety interventions have also been initiated in response to the increased number of overdose deaths involving cocaine, attributable primarily to the co-involvement of synthetic opioids. The United States Department of Health and Human Services has introduced initiatives during the past year to help Americans affected by the opioid crisis. For example, initiatives such as the Integrated Care for Kids Model and

the Maternal Opioid Misuse Model of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation have been designed to improve care delivery for vulnerable beneficiaries, particularly those affected by the opioid crisis. The initiatives also seek to improve the quality of care and reduce expenditures for beneficiaries.

539. Canada and the United States are actively implementing projects to ensure the safe supply of prescription opioids, while preventing overdoses by encouraging disposal of all unused prescription medicines. According to the Government of Canada, about 11 lives were lost each day due to opioid overdoses in 2017, and there will be over 4,000 opioid-related deaths in Canada in 2019. The national budget for 2019 and additional funding will provide more than 100 million Canadian dollars to support access to safe supplies of prescription opioids, increase access to the overdose-reversing drug naloxone, mitigate the effects of the illicit supply of drugs and address the growing use of methamphetamines. The approval by the United States Food and Drug Administration of new prescription opioids, such as Dsuvia, which is 10 times more potent than fentanyl, has met with calls for strong evaluation of the risks of their diversion and abuse.

540. The National Center for Health Statistics of the United States, in its fact sheet of February 2019, states that deaths from drug overdose are an increasing public health burden in the United States, with the age-adjusted rate of death from drug overdose in 2017 9.6 per cent higher than in 2016, and that the rate of death from drug overdose involving synthetic opioids other than methadone increased on average by 71 per cent each year in the period 2013–2017. In 2017, there were 70,237 drug overdose deaths.

541. In 2019, the Correctional Service of Canada opened an overdose prevention site in a federal prison in the Province of Alberta, where inmates can safely consume their own self-supplied substances, purportedly without access to a needle-syringe programme.

542. In Mexico, the National Commission against Addictions has indicated that the national priority is protecting children and adolescents from drug use, as well as training families and teachers on drug abuse prevention. The Commission's 2019 report on the situation with regard to drug use in Mexico focuses on demand reduction, as prevalence of the use of any drug in the past year was reported to be 2.9 per cent and lifetime prevalence was reported to be 10.3 per cent. According to that report, in 2018, there were 92,479 cases of treatment for illicit drug users, including for 11,840 women and 32,615 users of amphetamine-type stimulants.

543. In 2019, a report was published by the National Institute of Psychiatry of Mexico which examines the prevalence of heroin consumption in treatment centres in the border cities of Tijuana, San Luis Río Colorado and Ciudad Juárez. The results of the study show that over 56 per cent of respondents self-reported that they injected only heroin, more than 32 per cent used heroin with crystalline methamphetamine, and 5.4 per cent used heroin with cocaine. Most respondents had not used and were unfamiliar with fentanyl. This is the first study to determine how heroin use in Mexican border cities close to the United States is closely linked to the risk of fatal and non-fatal overdoses. It also highlighted the rates of HIV and hepatitis C among the heroin users.

544. The Government of Canada announced in 2019 substantial funding to increase understanding of the impact of the opioid crisis and substance-related harm on indigenous communities, which have been disproportionately affected. The goals of the new projects are centred on filling gaps in data, determining how prevention and treatment needs are being addressed and assessing the effects of the opioid crisis on First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, based on culturally appropriate evidence and approaches.

545. Throughout North America, cannabis is becoming more widely available and the prevalence of cannabis abuse is increasing. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, an estimated 3 million people in the United States tried cannabis for the first time in 2017. In August 2019, the Surgeon General of the United States issued an advisory urging youth and pregnant women not to consume cannabis. According to the Surgeon General, “no amount” of cannabis during pregnancy or adolescence is known to be safe. The advisory includes data from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health showing that cannabis continues to be the most widely used drug, and its frequent use by youth and young adults is apparently associated with risks for opioid use, heavy alcohol use and major depressive episodes. The Surgeon General's advisory also states that while CBD is not intoxicating and does not lead to addiction, its long-term effects are largely unknown and most CBD products are untested and of uncertain purity.

546. Statistics Canada reported in the National Cannabis Survey that 18 per cent of Canadians 15 years and older reported having used cannabis in the past three months. The number of first-time users of cannabis in 2019 was nearly double the estimated number of first-time users in 2018, when non-medical cannabis was not yet legal. An estimated 47 per cent of cannabis users – 2.5 million Canadians – obtained cannabis from legal

sources in the first three months of 2019, compared with 23 per cent in the same period in 2018.

547. In the context of cannabis legalization, additional research and studies are being conducted to better understand the public health implications of cannabis consumption. The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research have formed a partnership to support and fund research on and the evaluation of cannabis policies.

548. **The Board wishes to reiterate that article 4 (c) of the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol clearly limits to medical and scientific purposes the production, manufacture, export, import, distribution of, trade in and use and possession of controlled narcotic drugs and that legalization measures or regulations that permit the non-medical use of any controlled substance, including cannabis, are in contravention of the legal obligations incumbent upon States parties to that Convention. The Board calls upon all States to respect their international legal obligations in the elaboration of their national drug control policies.**

## South America

Despite the negligible 1.2 per cent decline in illicit coca bush cultivation from 171,000 ha in 2017 to 169,000 ha in 2018, the potential manufacture of cocaine hydrochloride in Colombia increased by 5.9 per cent, from 1,058 tons in 2017 to 1,120 tons in 2018.

### 1. Major developments

549. South America is responsible for the total global illicit production of coca leaf, cocaine base paste and cocaine hydrochloride. The region also illicitly produces cannabis for use within the countries of the region and for trafficking to destinations outside the region, and, to a much lesser extent, is the site of illicit cultivation of opium poppy. The problems linked to the illicit production of, trafficking in and use of drugs have continued to negatively affect the quality of life of the population in the region by generating insecurity and violence. These drug-related problems can undermine governance, cause institutional weakness, promote corruption and money-laundering and generate diverse forms of social exclusion in some countries in the region.

550. According to *Latin American Economic Outlook 2018*, which analyses economic and social development

issues, 33 per cent of world homicides occur in Latin America and the Caribbean, making it one of the most violent regions in the world. According to the UNODC *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, firearms are involved in homicides in the Americas far more often than in other parts of the world. In Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), the homicide rate exceeds the regional average of 22 per 100,000.

551. One of the main objectives of CICAD is to develop strategies to strengthen implementation of the commitments made at the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, on the world drug problem, held in 2016. Regional policymakers, while maintaining a global vision, advocate that the strategies and goals of the countries of South America for combating the drug problem should be based on the local realities and be focused, among other things, on strengthening public health and human security and implementing measures to fight corruption.

552. The total area under illicit coca bush cultivation in South America has steadily increased from 120,600 ha in 2013 to an all-time record 245,000 ha in 2017. The estimated global illicit manufacture of cocaine also reached an all-time record of 1,976 tons in 2017, mainly driven by the increases in cocaine manufacture in Colombia.

553. In 2018, the area under illicit coca bush cultivation in the Plurinational State of Bolivia decreased by 6 per cent, to 23,100 ha. In Colombia, it decreased slightly, by 1.2 per cent, to a total of 169,000 ha. Owing to the lack of data on illicit coca bush cultivation in Peru in 2018, the total area under illicit coca bush cultivation in South America in 2018 could not be estimated at the time of finalization of the annual report of the Board for 2019 (1 November 2019).

554. The *CICAD Report on Drug Use in the Americas 2019* provides an overview of drug use in the Western Hemisphere based on data submitted by 33 States members of OAS. The report underlines the early age of onset of drug use, in particular cannabis, among young people. In 2019, CICAD also issued a guide on standardized indicators for national drug information networks in Latin America that provides a model set of indicators for countries that want to standardize how they organize, collect and communicate information related to drugs and medicines for their national drug information networks.

555. Improving the capacities in epidemiological research and information systems has continued to be a challenge in the region. The lack of up-to-date data on the prevalence of drug abuse for some countries makes

regional and global analysis of the magnitude of the drug abuse problem a difficult task. In that context, regional experts on demand reduction expressed support for the development and enhancement of early warning systems in the States members of CICAD and for the development of a regional early warning system for the Americas, which has been initiated by OAS.

## 2. Regional cooperation

556. CICAD continues to be the primary conduit of the strong regional cooperation in South America. The long-standing cooperation between CICAD and EMCDDA has enabled countries in the Americas and Europe to effectively utilize available resources, improve data collection and analysis, develop and promote methods for data comparison and enhance the dissemination of information. Recently, CICAD held high-level consultations with the Presidency of the Council of Europe's Pompidou Group on several issues, including the proposed launch of a joint activity on successful prevention models.

557. In the framework of the XI Summit of the Police Community of the Americas on the theme "The road to institutionalization", an initial group of five countries (Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Ecuador and Panama) signed, in Buenos Aires in August 2018, the first agreement of the Police Community of the Americas on police cooperation against organized crime, aimed at strengthening capabilities for international cooperation.

## 3. National legislation, policy and action

558. The Board notes the efforts of the countries of South America to address the growing threat of microtrafficking in the region. For example, to improve the quality of life of its citizens, the Government of Argentina implemented under its "Safe neighbourhood" programme activities designed to identify criminal organizations involved in microtrafficking and to reduce the number of homicides. The authorities of Chile continued to implement the "Study without drugs" programme, aimed at reducing the availability of drugs in the areas around schools. In Colombia, experts were considering alternative strategies to counter microtrafficking of drugs in the country, including interventions in and around schools, the use of undercover agents and the demolition of buildings being used as drug warehouses. In July 2019, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela approved the national anti-drug strategy for the period

2019–2025, focusing on the general public, in particular children and adolescents. One of the key goals of that strategy is the development of programmes that address the risk of microtrafficking in public and school settings and thus contribute to the prevention of drug abuse and promote international cooperation.

559. The countries of South America do not currently have any specific regional legal instrument, such as an instrument of OAS, that would allow countries of the region to act together in response to all potentially dangerous new psychoactive substances. Although some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have made progress in improving their national mechanisms for monitoring new psychoactive substances, there are significant differences between the monitoring mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean and those developed in the United States and Canada.

560. To respond to the emergence of new psychoactive substances, the Government of Argentina adopted decree 560/2019, which introduces generic scheduling to complement the current system of individual substance listing.

561. In November 2018, the Plurinational State of Bolivia became the eighth country of Latin America and the Caribbean to participate in the CRIMJUST project implemented in the framework of the European Union's Cocaine Route Programme, which focuses on enhancing cooperation in criminal investigations and criminal justice in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and West Africa. In 2019, the Plurinational State of Bolivia inaugurated a port control unit in La Paz which will help the country to counter drug trafficking.

562. In 2019, as part of a recent restructuring at the ministerial level, the Government of Brazil established SENAPRED, which is linked to the newly created Ministry of Citizenship. Under the new institutional structure, the National Secretariat for Drug Policies of Brazil is responsible for managing drug policies related to supply reduction and countering the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in drugs, while SENAPRED is responsible for the management of public policies on drugs related to care, prevention and social reintegration.

563. In 2019, the Government of Brazil proposed to the Congress a new law establishing enhanced measures against corruption and organized and violent crime, which is expected to contribute to countering drug trafficking. The Government was also considering the establishment of a specialized agency to maximize the recovery of illicit proceeds through the sale of seized assets.

564. The report for 2018 of the Observatory on Drug Trafficking in Chile, among other things, drew attention to the upsurge in cannabis of Colombian origin, known as “creepy”, which was replacing cannabis of Paraguayan origin, as corroborated by the increasing number of seizures of that strain of cannabis. The report also pointed out the increased seizures of MDMA (“ecstasy”), which recently have accounted for 80 per cent of all seizures of synthetic drugs in Chile, compared with the scarce seizures of the drug in 2010.

565. In December 2018, the Government of Colombia approved a comprehensive drug policy called “Future route”. With active international cooperation, “Future route” will focus on major aspects of the drug problem in the country, including illicit crop cultivation, drug supply and drug use, organized crime and money-laundering. The policy will be jointly implemented by more than 15 relevant governmental entities, including those forming part of the National Council on Narcotic Drugs.

566. In May 2019, the Government of Colombia adopted law 1955, which promulgated the National Development Plan for the period 2018–2022, entitled “Pact for Colombia, pact for equity”. An integral part of the National Development Plan is the document entitled “Bases of the National Development Plan 2018–2022: Pact for Colombia, pact for equity”. A key objective of the Pact is the implementation of a comprehensive drug control policy.

567. In May 2019, the Ministry of Health of Ecuador presented the National Agreement 2030 for the prevention of addiction and use of drugs. Agreement 2030 is aimed at developing comprehensive prevention and treatment interventions in the framework of balanced drug control strategies. Activities carried out under Agreement 2030 will focus on the national information system; the socioeconomic phenomenon of drugs; intervention strategies and the treatment of drug use; and the coordinated implementation of prevention and control strategies in the community.

568. On 27 December 2017, the Government of Paraguay enacted Law No. 6007 to regulate the legal framework governing the production and use of cannabis and its derivatives for medical and scientific purposes. The law establishes the National Programme for the Study of and Medical and Scientific Research on the Medicinal Use of the Cannabis Plant and its Derivatives and promotes medical and scientific research on the medical and therapeutic use of cannabis for the treatment of human diseases and conditions. Decree No. 9303 of 6 August 2018 established the requirements for registration, in the national register of users, of products derived from

cannabis, restricting it to patients in treatment, including those participating in a research programme.

569. In Peru, the medicinal and therapeutic use of cannabis and its derivatives is regulated through law No. 30681, which provides for the informed use, research, production, import and marketing of cannabis and its derivatives, exclusively for medicinal and therapeutic purposes. In February 2019, the Government of Peru published Supreme Decree No. 005-2019-SA, which ensures access to cannabis for more than 7,000 people who require the substance to treat their specific health problems.

#### 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

570. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, coca bush cultivation rose from 20,200 ha in 2015 to 24,500 ha in 2017. In 2018, the total area under illicit coca bush cultivation in the country decreased to 23,100 ha, 6 per cent less than in 2017. A total of 11,200 ha of coca bush were eradicated in 2018, 54 per cent more than in 2017, when 7,200 ha were eradicated. Over the past 10 years, an average of about 4,400 illicit cocaine laboratories per year were dismantled in the Plurinational State of Bolivia; in 2018, a total of 1,004 illicit cocaine laboratories were dismantled, about 2,200 laboratories fewer than in 2017. Almost all dismantled clandestine laboratories were located in the departments of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. While the number of dismantled illicit cocaine laboratories significantly decreased in 2018, compared with 2017, the number of dismantled illicit cocaine crystallization laboratories increased by 33 per cent, and the number of laboratories used for the recycling of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of cocaine increased by 45 per cent.

571. The area under illicit coca bush cultivation in Colombia declined from 99,000 ha in 2007 to 48,000 ha in 2013. Since 2013, the area of cultivation has been growing, reaching a peak of 171,000 ha in 2017, with an average year-on-year increase of 38 per cent over that four-year period. In 2018, the total area under illicit coca bush cultivation in Colombia decreased to 169,000 ha, a 1.2 per cent decrease. However, the potential illicit manufacture of cocaine hydrochloride – as estimated according to a new UNODC methodology for estimating that potential illicit manufacture that has been in use since 2017 – was found to have increased in 2018, by 5.9 per cent: from an estimated 1,058 tons of cocaine hydrochloride in 2017 to 1,120 tons in 2018. That increase in the potential illicit manufacture can be attributed in part to reported higher yields of coca leaves per hectare.

572. The minor decrease in illicit coca bush cultivation in Colombia in 2018 could be attributed in part to the gradual increase in eradication of illicit coca bush in the country, reaching 60,000 ha in 2018, up from the low level of 2016 (17,600 ha). That effort included the increased participation of farming families in the National Comprehensive Plan for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, the aim of which is to replace the coca bush crops with a profitable legal crop, supported by a voluntary eradication process. The number of families participating in that substitution programme increased from about 54,000 families in 2017 to 99,100 families in 2018.

573. Over the period 2010–2012, an average of 138,000 ha of illicit coca bush cultivation per year were eradicated in Colombia, manually or by aerial spraying. In that period, aerial spraying of glyphosate on coca crops accounted for about three quarters of all eradication.

574. In the period 2013–2017, the total area eradicated per year decreased, to an average of about 51,000 ha per year. That significant drop in eradicated area could be attributed in part to a decision of the National Council on Narcotic Drugs in May 2015, to suspend, for constitutional and sanitary reasons, the aerial spraying of glyphosate from aircraft. Since 2017, Colombia has implemented eradication programmes involving the terrestrial spraying of coca bush using glyphosate, at lower concentrations. In 2018 and 2019, in line with the quinquennial plan for the period 2018–2023 and the Government's "white paper" for the eradication of illicit crops, the Government's strategy to address illicit coca bush cultivation continued to be based on the suspension of the aerial spraying of coca bush crops, increased goals for manual eradication, the implementation of the national illicit crop substitution plan and the promotion of comprehensive action targeting the different links of the drug trafficking chain.

575. A number of other factors, in particular economic and security factors, also appear to have played a role in the increased coca bush cultivation and declining area of eradication in Colombia over the past few years. Those factors include the growing unemployment in some parts of Colombia, owing to the decreased exports of agricultural products from Colombia to the market of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, increased cultivation of coca bush by people who, following the collapse of the price of gold, stopped illegal gold mining, and the devaluation of the Colombian currency. The increased involvement of Mexican cartels and the growing involvement of former members of paramilitary organizations in organized crime might have also contributed to the increased coca bush cultivation and drug trafficking.

576. In 2018, about 60,000 ha of coca bush cultivation were eradicated in Colombia, representing roughly a 15 per cent increase compared with the area eradicated in 2017. In 2019, in pursuit of its goal to reduce the area under illicit coca bush cultivation to a maximum of 90,000 ha by 2023, the Government of Colombia planned to eradicate 100,000 ha of illicit crop cultivation through a combination of forced eradication and crop substitution.

577. In Peru, the area of illicit coca bush cultivation declined each year from 2011 to 2015, from 62,500 ha in 2011 to 40,300 ha in 2015. In 2017, the total area of illicit coca bush cultivation increased for the second year in a row, reaching 49,900 ha, an area 14 per cent larger than in 2016 (43,900 ha). The Board is concerned that the recent negative trend of increasing coca bush cultivation might put at risk the successful model of integral and sustainable alternative development in the country.

578. In recent years, organized criminal groups trafficked large amounts of illicit drugs from Colombia, through the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, to Europe and the United States. The organized criminal groups control this trafficking, in particular the trafficking of cocaine through Central America to the United States, through the control of sea ports and using illegal flights of light aircraft. There are indications that in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela the criminal groups have succeeded in infiltrating government security forces, forming an informal network known as the "Cartel of the Suns" to facilitate the passage of illicit drugs into and out the country.

579. Trafficking in drugs, in particular cocaine hydrochloride, by sea from ports in Chile to Europe has further increased, putting Chile, together with Brazil and Colombia, among the three key countries of departure for cocaine seized in Valencia and Algeciras, Spain, an important entry point of cocaine shipments to Europe.

580. According to the 2018 report of the National Anti-Drug Secretariat of Paraguay, the country continues to be a significant illicit producer of cannabis, as the area of illicit cannabis cultivation in Paraguay is estimated to be 6,000 ha. Owing to the permeability of its borders in some areas, the territory of Paraguay continued to be used to traffic cocaine from Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia and Peru to destinations in Argentina, Brazil and Europe.

581. Law enforcement authorities of Paraguay continued to eradicate illicit cannabis crops and counter cross-border cocaine and cannabis trafficking, in cooperation with police authorities of Brazil. The Government

of Paraguay also made efforts to replicate its arrangements with its Brazilian counterparts with the Governments of Argentina and Bolivia (Plurinational State of) through mutual cooperation to eradicate cannabis under cultivation and to interdict cannabis and cocaine trafficking, and through the exchange of information.

582. In 2018, among the countries that reported seizures of cannabis herb exceeding 200 tons were Brazil (268.1 tons), Colombia (264.3 tons) and Argentina (256.2 tons). Significant amounts of the drug were also seized in Peru (22 tons), Chile (16.8 tons), the Plurinational State of Bolivia (8.6 tons), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (7.1 tons) and Uruguay (2.5 tons). Most of these countries also reported seizures of cannabis plant. For example, the Plurinational State of Bolivia seized over 231 tons of cannabis plant and Peru seized more than 1.7 million plants. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the illicit cultivation of cannabis increased, resulting in the drug becoming easily available at a low cost.

583. In 2018, seizures of significant amounts of cocaine hydrochloride were reported by Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (18.1 tons), Chile (3.7 tons), Colombia (414.5 tons), Peru (19.5 tons), Uruguay (0.6 tons) and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (35.5 tons). From Colombia, the drug continues to be smuggled primarily by sea, with traffickers making use of “go-fast” boats, submersible and semi-submersible vessels, unmanned undersea vehicles and buoys with satellite-location devices on them.

584. In addition to cocaine hydrochloride, traffickers also smuggle coca base from Colombia for further processing outside the country, as corroborated by the seizures of the substance as it entered international waters, as well as seizures of the substance effected in other countries in the region. For example, sizeable amounts of coca base and coca paste have been seized in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. In 2018, a total of 33 illicit medium-sized cocaine laboratories were dismantled in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, close to the country’s border with Colombia.

585. In addition to seizures of plant-based drugs, a number of countries reported seizures of synthetic drugs. For example, in 2018, Chilean authorities seized more than 840,000 doses of synthetic drugs, including amphetamine, methamphetamine and “ecstasy”. This was about 500,000 doses of synthetic drugs more than what was seized in 2017 (an increase of almost 150 per cent). Increased demand for synthetic drugs was also reported by Uruguay.

## 5. Prevention and treatment

586. There have continued to be changes in the legal and regulatory status of cannabis throughout the Americas. According to OAS, decriminalization of cannabis for non-medical and medical purposes might have contributed to increased access to the drug for adults. The information available from those countries that have produced recent epidemiological data, including Argentina and Chile, indicate that most have experienced an increase in the prevalence of cannabis use. According to the *CICAD Report on Drug Use in the Americas 2019*, while past-year use of cannabis herb among the general population in Argentina (2017) and Uruguay (2014) was under 10 per cent, in Chile (2016) it was 14.5 per cent. The lowest prevalence rates reported in the region were those of Ecuador (2014) and Paraguay (2003), which had past-year prevalence rates of use of the drug below 1 per cent. The first survey on drug use among university students in Chile, published in May 2019, indicates that over 70 per cent of the university students in the country had been offered cannabis in the past 12 months. In some countries, cannabis use appears as early as the eighth grade. Experts of OAS advocate giving greater priority to prevention programmes and interventions that delay the age of onset of drug use.

587. About half the countries in the Americas were shown to have increases in cocaine use among the general population. The use of cocaine base paste, which had previously been confined to cocaine-manufacturing countries, has spread to countries farther south in the region. According to the *UNODC World Drug Report 2019*, the provision of treatment for which cocaine is the primary drug of abuse continues to be widely seen in Latin America.

588. According to UNODC, the annual prevalence rate of non-medical use of opioids in South America in 2017 was estimated to be 0.2 per cent. In Chile, the past-year prevalence of non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids increased fourfold, from 0.3 per cent in 2012 to 1.2 per cent in 2016.

589. While drug use has historically been regarded as a phenomenon of male use, according to the *CICAD Report on Drug Use in the Americas 2019*, recent data show that females in some countries are now using certain drugs either at the same rate, or at higher rates, than males. In every population group in nearly every country in the Americas, misuse of tranquilizer pharmaceuticals is higher among females.

## D. Asia

### East and South-East Asia

The expansion of illicit manufacture, trafficking and use of synthetic drugs, in particular methamphetamine, continued to be of major concern for East and South-East Asia.

#### 1. Major developments

590. The expansion of illicit manufacture, trafficking and use of synthetic drugs, in particular methamphetamine, continued to be of great concern in most countries of East and South-East Asia. Effective border management and control over precursor chemicals have become particularly important for countering this phenomenon, given that the chemical industry has a substantial presence in the region and the increasingly improved infrastructure has further enhanced connectivity among countries.

591. In a region that has historically adopted drug control policies that relied heavily on deterrence through severe penal sanctions and compulsory treatment, some Governments are reviewing their drug policies, adopting proportionate sanctions for minor drug-related offences and a health-based approach to addressing drug use.

592. In 2019, the Republic of Korea and Thailand legalized the cultivation and use of cannabis for medical purposes.

593. Most countries continue to lack comprehensive drug use prevalence data and evidence-based drug treatment protocols. Greater attention should be given and more resources devoted to demand reduction, treatment and social reintegration in order to improve quality of life, help reduce the burden on the health-care system and remove the stigmatization of drug use.

#### 2. Regional cooperation

594. Various meetings to enhance regional cooperation took place in 2019. The 42nd and 43rd meetings of the Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Asia and the Pacific, took place in October 2018 and October 2019, respectively. In April 2019, ministers and high-level officials of the ASEAN region gathered in Bangkok for a meeting entitled “Synchronizing trade and security plans in support of ASEAN 2025”. Providing a platform for

decision-makers to discuss challenges stemming from the closer regional integration, the meeting paved the way for a common ASEAN border management strategy, to be presented in Bangkok before the end of 2019.

595. Signatories to the Mekong Memorandum of Understanding on drug control (Cambodia, China, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam and UNODC) agreed to a draft subregional action plan to guide activities to be conducted under the Memorandum of Understanding in the period 2019–2021. The Mekong Memorandum of Understanding is an agreement between the signatory countries to work together and provide a platform to address the threat of illicit production, trafficking and use of drugs in the Mekong region. According to UNODC, the 11th version of the subregional action plan was expected to be endorsed during the ministerial meeting of the Mekong Memorandum of Understanding, to take place on 15 November 2019.

#### 3. National legislation, policy and action

596. A number of legislative and policy changes took place in 2018 and 2019, relating to, among other things, legislative changes regarding the use of cannabis for medical purposes, the application of the death penalty for drug-related crimes, extrajudicial responses to suspected drug-related acts, the national scheduling of substances not under international control and partnerships promoting alternative development.

597. On 19 February 2019, Thailand became the first country in South-East Asia to legalize the use of cannabis for medical purposes. Under the Narcotics Act (No. 7) B.E. 2562, State enterprises, scientific institutions and faculties of pharmacy in public and private universities that have obtained a licence from the licensing authority can cultivate, produce, manufacture, import, export and possess cannabis for medical purposes. The Food and Drug Administration is the national agency mandated to control the cultivation of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes. Patients with certain serious debilitating diseases or indications who cannot be treated satisfactorily using an approved medical product can obtain cannabis through the country’s special access programme by first consulting their doctor and then applying to the Food and Drug Administration. The Narcotics Act also legalized, in some administrative regions, the licensed medical use of kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*), a plant-based psychoactive substance not under international control that had been banned in the country since 1943, although

reportedly it had long been used by rural populations for its stimulant and analgesic properties.

598. The Republic of Korea, at the end of 2018, became the first country in East Asia to legalize the use of cannabis for medical purposes. Since 12 March 2019, patients have been able to import cannabis products after receiving authorization from the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety. To obtain authorization, individuals are required to submit to the Ministry their medical records and a note from a physician stating that there is a lack of alternative treatment.

599. On 15 March 2018, the Government of Malaysia amended section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952 to remove the mandatory death penalty for those convicted of drug trafficking and replaced it with a discretionary power of the court to commute death sentences to life imprisonment and not less than 15 strokes of the cane if certain conditions are met. One such condition is that the court is satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused assisted the enforcement agencies of Malaysia in disrupting further drug trafficking in or outside the country. The other conditions allowing the commutation of death sentences are the following: if there was no evidence that at the time of arrest the individual was buying or selling a substance categorized as a dangerous drug, if there was no involvement of an agent provocateur (e.g., an undercover agent), and if the accused individual's involvement is restricted to transporting, carrying, sending or delivering a dangerous drug.

600. The Philippines officially withdrew from the International Criminal Court on 17 March 2019, after the Court had decided to conduct a preliminary inquiry into accusations that the President of the Philippines and other officials of the country had committed crimes within the Court's jurisdiction in carrying out the country's drug control policies.

601. Following reports of human rights violations over the previous three years in the Philippines, the Human Rights Council adopted its resolution 41/2, in which it took note of the allegations of the killing of thousands of people allegedly involved in drug-related activities and/or offences. In its resolution, the Council called on the Government of the Philippines to cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and requested the High Commissioner to prepare a comprehensive report on the situation of human rights in the country.

602. **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.**

603. The Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act of Singapore, aimed at strengthening drug control and rehabilitation, came into effect on 1 April 2019. The amendment criminalizes behaviour that facilitates or promotes drug use, such as introducing a person to a drug trafficker or providing drug-related information to someone who intends to carry out those activities. The amendment also criminalizes the act of exposing children to drugs or allowing them to consume drugs. Further, the use of drug detection methods, in particular hair analysis and saliva screening, was expanded through the amendment. In addition, the Government increased the maximum detention period for a drug user in a drug rehabilitation centre from three to four years and the maximum duration of post-release supervision from two to five years. **The Board discourages the use of compulsory detention for rehabilitation of people affected by drug use and calls on Governments in the region to implement voluntary, evidence-based treatment services with due respect for patients' rights.**

604. Effective 1 May 2019, the Central Narcotics Bureau of Singapore rescheduled five new psychoactive substances<sup>77</sup> from the Fifth Schedule of the Misuse of Drugs Act to the First Schedule of the Act. The substance lisdexamfetamine (l-lysine-d-amphetamine) was also added to the First Schedule. The rescheduling of these new psychoactive substances means that trafficking, manufacture, import, export, possession or consumption of these substances will constitute an offence and will result in a minimum of five years' imprisonment and five strokes of the cane. In addition, the Central Narcotics Bureau listed two new psychoactive substances<sup>78</sup> in the Fifth Schedule, which will allow them to be seized so that circulation can be restricted while further research and consultations are conducted.

605. To further strengthen its drug control system, the Government of China decided to schedule as a class-wide group all fentanyl-related substances on the national

<sup>77</sup>Adamantyl-CHMINACA, 3,4-dichloromethylphenidate (3,4-DCMP) and its dichloro positional isomers in the phenyl ring, 5-fluoro-CUMYL-PICA and its phenylpropyl isomers and their respective fluoro positional isomers in the pentyl group, 5-fluoro-SDB-005 and its fluoro positional isomers in the pentyl group, and SDB-005.

<sup>78</sup>5-Fluoro-CUMYL-PeGACLONE and its phenylpropyl isomers and their respective fluoro positional isomers in the pentyl group and CUMYL-PeGACLONE and its phenylpropyl isomers.

control list, effective as of 1 May 2019. The National Narcotics Control Commission of China clarified the legal definition of “fentanyl-related” and emphasized that the definition would be scientifically determined on the basis of the chemical structure of the substance in question. The Commission stated that if, at a later stage, any of the affected substances were found to have legitimate pharmaceutical, industrial, scientific, research or other legal use, they would be treated accordingly.

606. Over the course of 2018, the Government of Thailand has continued to promote and implement its alternative development programme, both within the country and through various international partnerships, by providing assistance in community development, agricultural knowledge, techniques and marketing strategies. Working closely with the Government of Myanmar, Thailand has been expanding such aid and activities to further drug-affected areas in Myanmar. In addition, in January 2019, the drug authorities of Thailand and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic agreed to promote a pilot project in Borikhamxay Province of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

#### 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

607. According to UNODC, the amount of methamphetamine seized in the region increased eightfold between 2007 and 2017 and reached a record high level in 2018. Data received indicated that Thailand alone accounted for more than half of the methamphetamine seized in the region in 2018.

608. Preliminary data for 2019, in particular the data for methamphetamine tablets, indicated a geographical shift in the manufacture and trafficking from China to other countries in the region. Targeted law enforcement in China seems to have pushed organized criminals to move their illicit methamphetamine manufacture to neighbouring countries including Myanmar, contributing to the slight reduction in methamphetamine seizures in China but also to increases in Myanmar and its neighbouring countries.

609. With the continuing growth of illicit methamphetamine manufacture in Myanmar, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic has become an important transit country for methamphetamine destined for other countries in the Mekong region. In 2018, more than 21 million methamphetamine tablets and 1.8 tons of crystalline methamphetamine were seized in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, compared with an annual average

of less than 100 kg of crystalline methamphetamine between 2013 and 2017. In comparison, authorities in Indonesia seized over 8 tons of crystalline methamphetamine in 2018, by far the largest seizure ever reported in that country.

610. While the wholesale and street prices of illicit methamphetamine in Thailand fell in 2018 to their lowest levels in the past decade, UNODC estimated the illicit methamphetamine market in East and South-East Asia to be worth up to approximately \$45 billion annually. Japan and the Republic of Korea accounted for almost one fifth of that estimated value, mainly because of the significantly higher wholesale and retail prices in those countries.

611. The illicit manufacture, trafficking and use of heroin, which is reported as the second most frequently trafficked drug in South-East Asia, continued to pose challenges for most countries in the region.

612. Most illicit manufacture of heroin in the region takes place in northern Myanmar. The area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in that country in 2018 was estimated at 37,300 ha, down from its recent peak of approximately 60,000 ha in 2014. Compared with 2017, there has been a reduction in illicit cultivation in almost all regions of the country, with considerable decreases in Shan and Kachin States (the two main producer states).

613. However, heroin seizures have moved in the opposite direction: total seizures of heroin in Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam increased in 2018, with Viet Nam being a major destination. Viet Nam accounted for more than one third of all heroin seized in South-East Asia from 2013 to 2018. Malaysia also reported an increasing amount of heroin being trafficked through its territory with the final destination of Australia.

614. In their latest national report, authorities of China expressed concern at the continuous increase in cocaine seizures in 2018 and the considerable rise of cannabis being trafficked into the country by post. Similarly, up to 170 cases of attempted smuggling of drugs through the postal system were detected in Indonesia in 2018. Trafficking by sea has been identified as an increasingly popular modus operandi among large-scale drug traffickers.

615. Substantial quantities of precursor chemicals have been diverted from the region’s sizeable chemical industry and trafficked for the manufacture of methamphetamine, as the region has an increasingly lucrative illicit market for synthetic drugs. Limited forensic data suggest that ephedrine and pseudoephedrine remained the main precursor chemicals used for the illicit manufacture of

methamphetamine, although there is also growing use of P-2-P. 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 can be found in the report of the Board for 2019 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

616. Countries of East and South-East Asia continued to account for most of the ketamine seized worldwide. The latest data from UNODC indicated that more than 90 per cent of the ketamine seized worldwide between 2013 and 2017 had been seized in Asia, and most of that had been seized in East and South-East Asia.

617. With respect to ketamine, which is not under international control, the latest data indicate a displacement of some ketamine manufacture from China to other countries in the region. While ketamine seizures declined in China, including Hong Kong, China, after 2015, seizures in Myanmar and Thailand have increased significantly since 2017.

## 5. Prevention and treatment

618. The region continued to lack systematic and quantitative information on drug use. Although data are limited, some regional studies suggest that cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug in the region. The Philippines reported the highest prevalence of past-year cannabis use in 2016, a rate of 1.64 per cent for respondents aged 15–64, and Japan reported that the prevalence of past-year cannabis use increased to 1.4 per cent in 2017, with an estimated total of 1.33 million cannabis users in the country.

619. Qualitative information provided to UNODC indicated that methamphetamine was the main drug of concern for treatment admissions, and other recent data pointed to high rates of annual prevalence of use of the substance (between 0.5 and 1.1 per cent).

620. Data from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017, as cited in the UNODC *World Drug Report 2019*, show that the region has a much bigger health loss (in terms of years of healthy life lost) compared with other world regions, mainly as a result of the number of people who inject drugs (28 per cent of the global total) and alarming rates of blood-borne illnesses among people who inject drugs.

621. Authorities of China estimated there were 2.5 million drug users in the country in 2018, slightly less than

the year before. Methamphetamine remained the primary drug of use (1.35 million, or 56 per cent of the total), followed by heroin (an estimated 890,000, or 37 per cent) and ketamine (an estimated 63,000, or 2.6 per cent). The number of cannabis users in 2018 was reported to have reached 24,000, an increase of 25 per cent over the previous year.

622. The total number of reported drug users in Hong Kong, China, dropped to 2,033 in the first quarter of 2019, slightly less than in the previous year. Heroin remained the primary drug of use (1,056 users), followed by methamphetamine (435 users).

623. Authorities of Singapore remained concerned at the increase in the number of drug users in 2018 (around 3,500 users), a considerable proportion of which were new drug users under the age of 30. Methamphetamine remained the primary drug of use (75 per cent of drug users).

624. According to the official report of Cambodia, there were over 20,000 drug users in the country in 2018 that were seeking or receiving some form of treatment through a private or public health system or drug centre. Authorities of Malaysia reported that in 2018 an estimated 25,000 drug users were receiving treatment or in rehabilitation with the National Anti-Drugs Agency, slightly fewer than the previous year, mainly because there was a smaller number of new users. The total number of crystalline methamphetamine users, however, increased to over 16,000 users in 2018, and users of amphetamine-type stimulants more than doubled, to over 1,000 users. In Indonesia, over 7,500 users of methamphetamine were receiving treatment in 2018, compared with roughly 2,000 users of cannabis.

## South Asia

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Seizures of methamphetamine tablets are increasing at an alarming rate in the region, in particular in Bangladesh.

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New legislation in Bangladesh extended the death penalty to the possession of 200 grams of methamphetamine. Sri Lanka expressed the intention to reinstate the death penalty for drug-related offences.

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### 1. Major developments

625. Drug trafficking is widespread throughout South Asia, particularly in the border areas of the subregion. Trafficking in heroin, cannabis, methamphetamine and

pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotics and psychotropic substances pose major challenges in South Asia. The trends observed show that synthetic drugs are now replacing the natural and semi-synthetic drugs that have been abused for decades. The rapid advance of Internet availability and information and communications technology infrastructure has fostered Internet-driven drug trafficking, illustrated by recently reported seizures of drugs sent through postal services.

626. The proximity of South Asia to three major drug-producing and drug-trafficking countries (Afghanistan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar) continued to pose a challenge for drug control in the subregion. Furthermore, the coastal States of South Asia are vulnerable to maritime drug trafficking as a result of their exposure to trafficking routes across the India Ocean.

## 2. Regional cooperation

627. In response to the trafficking of opiates from Afghanistan, heads of law enforcement agencies of South Asia, from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, met in Chandigarh, India, in October 2018. The key themes of the meeting included how to use existing bilateral and regional cooperation mechanisms between countries to better control drug trafficking.

628. A meeting of the Paris Pact initiative's expert working group on detecting and blocking financial flows linked to illicit traffic in opiates originating in Afghanistan was held in New Delhi on 27 and 28 June 2019. Representatives of financial intelligence services, counter-narcotics agencies and customs authorities of 15 countries participated in the meeting, as well as six international organizations and UNODC, and deliberated on new trends and challenges related to illicit financial flows and trafficking of opiates. Participants highlighted the need to unite their efforts in developing information exchange and best practices on methods for identifying shadow financial transactions.

## 3. National legislation, policy and action

629. In Bangladesh, the Narcotics Control Act 2018, which is an amendment to the Narcotics Control Act 1990, came into force in December 2018. The new Act repeals the existing law relating to drug control, drug supply and demand reduction, the prevention of abuse and the smuggling of drugs, treatment and rehabilitation for drug users and related matters. Under the Act of 2018, the

application of the death penalty or life imprisonment in Bangladesh has been expanded to include the production, possession, distribution and trafficking of methamphetamine or its principal ingredient amphetamine, which has been moved to the category of class A under the Act.

630. At a meeting held in Sri Lanka in March 2019, on drug trafficking and abuse prevention programmes, the President of Sri Lanka announced that a process for reinstating the death penalty was under way. In his speech, the President commended the current, strengthened law and regulations for combating illegal drugs and announced the decision to impose the death penalty for drug smuggling, which, if carried out, would be the first time the death penalty has been imposed since 1976. On 26 June 2019, the President signed death warrants for four people who have been convicted of drug-related offences. On 29 October 2019, prior to the finalization of the present report, it was reported that the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka had further extended, until 9 December 2019, the interim order staying the implementation of the death penalty for prisoners sentenced to death for drug offences. The Board continues to encourage all States that retain the death penalty for drug-related offences to consider abolishing the death sentence for those offences.

631. In line with the international drug control conventions and the existing national legislation and policies, India adopted the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction for the period 2018–2023 to address drug and substance abuse. The National Action Plan employs a multi-pronged strategy involving the education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families to address the issue and focus on preventive education, awareness-raising, counselling, treatment and the rehabilitation of drug-dependent users, in addition to training and capacity-building for service providers through collaborative efforts between the Government and non-governmental organizations.

## 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

632. Illicit cultivation of cannabis continued to be a challenge for law enforcement agencies in South Asia, in particular in India. An analysis of data from 2010 to 2017 shows that India is among those countries worldwide with the greatest extent of illicit cannabis cultivation and amount of production. Indian drug enforcement authorities eradicated 1,980 ha of illicit cannabis cultivation in 2018, which was substantially less than the 3,446 ha of eradication in 2017. The estimated area of illicit cannabis cultivation in Sri Lanka in 2018 was 500 ha, similar to

the amount in the previous year. Bhutan reported that 100,000 cannabis plants taken from 12 cultivation sites were destroyed in 2017.

633. Total cannabis herb seizures in South Asia declined to 336 tons in 2018, compared with 434 tons in 2017. In 2018, the largest total quantity of cannabis herb seized by a country in South Asia was that of India (266.5 tons or 79 per cent of the subregion's total seizures), followed by Bangladesh (60.3 tons or 18 per cent). Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka accounted for the remaining 3 per cent of cannabis herb seizures (9.1 tons). Cannabis resin seizures in South Asia increased in 2018 to 5.2 tons from 3.2 tons in 2017. India and Nepal confiscated almost 100 per cent (5.2 tons) of the total cannabis resin seized in the region.

634. India is the only country in the subregion that has consistently reported eradication of illicit opium poppy cultivation. India has increased its illicit opium poppy eradication over four consecutive years beginning in 2015 (1,400 ha in 2015, 2,635 ha in 2016, 3,076 ha in 2017 and 3,508 ha in 2018). In addition, the country seized a considerable quantity of poppy straw in 2018 (16 tons). That amount was 70 per cent greater than the amount of poppy straw seized in 2017 (9 tons).

635. The amount of opium seized in India increased to 4.1 tons in 2018, up from 2.6 tons in 2017. Opium seizures followed an upward trend starting in 2015 (1.7 tons in 2015, 2.3 tons in 2016, 2.6 tons in 2017 and 4.1 tons in 2018). Overall, the increasing trend in both the amount of illicit opium and poppy straw seized and the area eradicated underline the severity of the problem in the country.

636. South Asia, in particular Sri Lanka, has experienced an increase in seizures of heroin due to the growing use of the southern route by drug traffickers. Most of the heroin that is smuggled through the so-called "southern route" to reach South Asia (from Afghanistan to Pakistan and then to South Asia) is of Afghan origin and has the final destination of North America. In Sri Lanka, heroin seizures continued to increase in 2018, reaching 732 kg, compared with 315 kg in 2017. However, heroin seizures in the region decreased to 2.4 tons in 2018 from 2.9 tons in 2017. India seized the largest amount (1.2 tons), followed by Sri Lanka (0.7 tons) and Bangladesh (0.45 tons) accounting for 99 per cent of the total seizures in the subregion.

637. South Asia reported record low cocaine seizures of 59.5 kg in 2018, which is less than in the past four years (309 kg of seizures in 2017, 1.6 tons in 2016, 124.7 kg in

2015 and 327.9 kg in 2014). The amount of seizures of this drug fluctuated from year to year, as shown in the reported data of all countries in the subregion.

638. Codeine-based preparations, particularly Phensedyl, continued to be seized in the region. In Bangladesh, Phensedyl seizures declined to 715,529 ampoules in 2018, compared with seizures of 720,843 ampoules in 2017. India also reported, through the monthly drug reports of the Narcotics Control Bureau, that the country's authorities seized more than 51,821 bottles of Phensedyl in 2018. Drug traffickers now tend to smuggle pharmaceutical drugs rather than illicitly manufactured drugs such as hashish and heroin because of the more lenient penalties imposed for the smuggling of controlled pharmaceutical drugs.

639. South Asia is being targeted by transnational organized criminal groups in Myanmar that manufacture and traffic methamphetamine in both crystalline and tablet form into the subregion. Methamphetamine is the most prevalent substance of abuse among the amphetamine-type stimulants in South Asia. South Asia accounted for 1 per cent of the total seizures of methamphetamine at the global level.

640. In Bangladesh, methamphetamine seizures continued to increase, as 53 million tablets were seized in 2018, compared with 40 million tablets in 2017, an increase mainly due to a nationwide anti-drug operation undertaken by the Government. Methamphetamine was smuggled into Bangladesh from East and South-East Asia, predominantly from Myanmar. Sri Lanka seized 147.83 kg of methamphetamine in the first quarter of 2019. The Department of Narcotics Control of Bangladesh raided a clandestine drug laboratory and confiscated, for the first time, crystalline methamphetamine and MDMA, in February 2019.

641. In India, seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants peaked again in 2018, at 931 kg. The highest total annual seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants in India was in 2016, when there was a record 1.7 tons of seizures, before falling sharply to 95 kg in 2017. Seizures of methaqualone in the country decreased to 99 kg in 2018, compared with 124 kg in 2017. The highest single seizure of methaqualone, on 25 June 2018, was of 30 kg, which was destined for the United States. Buprenorphine also continued to be seized in India in both injectable and tablet forms.

642. In Bangladesh, the quantity of buprenorphine seized in 2018 (128,708 ampoules) was 18 per cent higher than in 2017 (109,063 ampoules). Total seizures of buprenorphine in Nepal also increased significantly in

2018, to 58,963 tablets, up from 31,567 tablets in 2017. Nepal seized 66,430 tablets of diazepam in 2018, which was more than the quantity seized in 2017 (49,304 tablets). Bhutan seized 3,947 tablets of nitrazepam in 2018.

643. The diversion of controlled precursors, in particular ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, from licit to illicit channels has continued in India. According to the Narcotics Control Bureau of India, 1.8 tons of pseudoephedrine were confiscated in Noida, India, in a single seizure conducted on 11 May 2019. This was the largest seizure on record in the country. There continued to be reports of seizures of pharmaceutical preparations containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine trafficked from India to Myanmar for the purpose of precursor extraction.

644. There was an exceptionally large total quantity of acetic anhydride seizures (8,998 litres) in India in 2018. That amount was substantially higher than the total seizures of acetic anhydride in the four previous years (23 litres in 2017, 2,464 litres in 2016, 4 litres in 2015 and 93 litres in 2014). Of the total seizures of acetic anhydride in 2018, 8,937 litres were confiscated in a single seizure effected in Noida and New Delhi on 20 October 2018. The chemical was destined for a consignee in Afghanistan. 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 2019 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

645. Globally, most of the tramadol, which is not an internationally controlled substance, that was seized from 2013 to 2017 was reported to have originated in India. Available data indicate that the tramadol being used for non-medical purposes in Africa is illicitly manufactured in South Asia. Further, India was the source of 87 per cent of the tramadol seized in Ghana in 2017. Available data suggest that in recent years India has emerged as the centre of manufacturing of tramadol destined for clandestine markets. However, in April 2018 India placed tramadol among the nationally controlled substances under its Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985. Control under the Act gives more powers to law enforcement authorities and, in particular, enables authorities to enter the premises of tramadol laboratories and prosecute those who are engaging in the unauthorized manufacture of tramadol.

646. Bangladesh is also closely monitoring substances that are not under control internationally such as ketamine, nalbuphine and tramadol, among which ketamine is under control at the national level. In Bhutan, Spasmo

Proxylon Plus, which contains tramadol, is the most common trafficked non-controlled substance. In 2018, 68,685 capsules of Spasmo Proxylon Plus were seized in Bhutan, a significant decline from the seizure of 130,316 capsules in 2017.

## 5. Prevention and treatment

647. According to the UNODC *World Drug Report 2019*, 1.8 per cent of the adult population of South Asia, or 19 million people, are past-year users of opioids, thus comprising 35 per cent of the estimated number of past-year opioid users worldwide. Drug abuse prevalence studies have been lacking in the region for the past few years. However, India and Sri Lanka have conducted surveys to assess the prevalence of drug abuse in their respective countries. **The Board commends such initiatives and encourages countries to allocate adequate resources to drug abuse prevention and treatment and to conduct prevalence studies to inform the adoption of evidence-based public health policies.**

648. A national survey on the extent and pattern of substance use in India was conducted between December 2017 and October 2018. According to the resulting report, *Magnitude of Substance Use in India 2019*, cannabis and opioids are the most frequently abused substances in the country, after alcohol, with rates of past-year use of 2.8 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively among the population aged 10–75. Heroin was reported to be the most commonly used opioid in India, with a 1.1 per cent prevalence rate, followed by pharmaceutical opioids, with a prevalence rate close to 1 per cent among the population aged 10–75. The survey also indicated that existing treatment programmes in India, which are heavily focused on inpatient treatment, are inadequate given the large number of people affected by substance abuse. The report indicated the need to enhance treatment services in outpatient clinics, which need resources to meet requirements in the areas of human resources, infrastructure and supply of medicine.

649. In Sri Lanka, according to the report *National Prevalence Survey on Drug Use 2019*, cannabis was the most commonly abused drug in 2017/18, with a prevalence rate of 1.9 per cent (301,898 people) followed by heroin, for which the prevalence rate was 1.2 per cent among the population aged 14 and older (92,540 people). The misuse of pharmaceutical tablets has increased. Based on the statistics on treatment admissions provided by the Government, the number of drug-addicted people seeking treatment in 2018 was greater than in the previous three years; however, only 7 per cent of drug users in

Sri Lanka have been admitted to treatment and rehabilitation centres. Psychotropic substances such as diazepam and other substances that are not under control (tramadol, pregabalin and gabapentin) are abused to a lesser extent in the country.

650. According to the *Annual Drug Report* of Bangladesh for 2017, drug abuse is becoming a national concern in the country. Methamphetamine tablets (“yaba”) are now abused to a greater extent in Bangladesh. People seeking treatment for abuse of methamphetamine made up 35.5 per cent of all patients seeking treatment for drug abuse in 2017, an increase of 12 per cent from the previous year. According to the data from treatment services, the number of patients seeking treatment for Phensedyl addiction is decreasing, as those affected by drug use disorders are shifting to abuse of “yaba” because it can be more easily obtained. Drug-using populations are also consuming a combination of different pharmaceutical drugs (for example, buprenorphine and diazepam).

## West Asia

In 2018, Afghanistan continued to be the country where the vast majority of the world’s illicit opium poppy cultivation and opium production took place.

The Middle East and South-West Asia are the subregions with the highest annual prevalence of opiate use (opium, morphine and heroin) globally, at 1.6 per cent of the population.

### 1. Major developments

651. Afghanistan remained the country of origin of nearly all opiates seized in Europe, Central Asia and Africa.<sup>79</sup> It was the country responsible for the vast majority of the world’s illicit opium poppy cultivation and opium production in 2018. The country also continued to be one of the major sources of cannabis resin worldwide. Furthermore, Afghanistan continued to experience an increase in trafficking of synthetic drugs on its territory. While recognizing the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to address those challenges through its National Drugs Control Strategy and the National Drug Action Plan, the Board reiterates the need to prioritize measures to address the illicit drug economy in the

<sup>79</sup>The subregion of Central Asia as referred to in this report comprises Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

country, which should be part of the overall effort to build peace, establish security and achieve sustainable development in the country. Moreover, the global community, in the context of global and shared responsibility, needs to be part of this process through comprehensive, multifaceted and concerted local, national, regional and international assistance efforts.

652. The Balkan route, which passes through the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey and the Balkan countries on the way to destination markets in Western and Central Europe, remained the main route for the trafficking of opiates originating in Afghanistan. In recent years, several branches of the Balkan route have gained prominence, including the branches transiting the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq and the countries of the Southern Caucasus.

653. The manufacture and trafficking of counterfeit “captagon”<sup>80</sup> continued to seriously affect the countries of the Middle East, which not only are destination markets for those drugs but are also increasingly becoming a source of counterfeit “captagon”. The subregion also continues to witness trafficking in, and abuse of, tramadol, a synthetic opioid not under international control. Political instability and unresolved conflicts, poverty and the lack of economic opportunities in some parts of the subregion have contributed to increased trafficking in tramadol and “captagon”.

654. The emergence of a growing number of new psychoactive substances continued to be reported by almost every country of Central Asia. Proximity to several countries with developed markets for synthetic drugs, such as China, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and the Russian Federation, has increased the potential market for new psychoactive substances in the Central Asian subregion.

### 2. Regional cooperation

655. Through a decision of the Council of Heads of State of SCO of 10 June 2018, the Organization approved its Anti-Drug Strategy for the period 2018–2023 and the programme of action to implement the Anti-Drug Strategy, as well as the SCO Concept to Prevent the Abuse of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The

<sup>80</sup>“Captagon” was originally the official trade name of a pharmaceutical preparation containing fenethylamine, a synthetic stimulant. As encountered in seizures across West Asia today and as referred to in the present report, “captagon” is a counterfeit drug compressed into tablets that are similar only in appearance to the original trademarked Captagon. The active ingredient in counterfeit “captagon” is amphetamine, which is typically cut with multiple adulterants, such as caffeine and other substances.

Strategy is aimed at stepping up multilateral cooperation to prevent and combat drug-related threats affecting SCO member States.

656. At an expert group meeting of the Afghanistan-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan (AKT) Initiative held in Bishkek on 28 and 29 November 2018, representatives of law enforcement agencies and Ministries of Foreign Affairs of those three countries reviewed the current situation on countering narcotics in their respective countries and discussed the role of their drug liaison officers in planning and conducting joint counter-narcotics operations. Participating experts adopted a draft memorandum of understanding on the placement of drug liaison officers and the standard operating procedures for their activities, which is to be signed at the next ministerial meeting of the countries of the AKT Initiative.

657. At the thirteenth senior officials' meeting of the Triangular Initiative, held in Islamabad on 12 and 13 December 2018, counter-narcotics authorities of Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan discussed means of strengthening cooperation to combat trafficking in Afghan opiates. At the meeting, the three parties agreed to strengthen their border liaison offices and to plan and conduct more joint patrolling and intelligence-led interdiction operations. They also expressed interest in utilizing one another's counter-narcotics training academies with a view to sharing knowledge and strengthening coordination.

658. With a view to addressing the channels of entry and illegal distribution of new psychoactive substances and other synthetic drugs, opioids and cannabis, a joint multilateral counter-narcotics operation, Operation Kanal-Centre, was conducted by the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, namely Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan, from 26 February to 1 March 2019. The operation was hosted by CARICC. Representatives of competent national authorities of China, France, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Mongolia, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, INTERPOL, OSCE, SCO and UNODC, also took part in the operation as observers. The operation resulted in seizures of more than 11.4 tons of various drugs, including more than 8.8 tons of opium, more than 1.8 tons of cannabis resin, more than 220 kg of heroin, almost 127 kg of cannabis and more than 205 kg of synthetic drugs; the arrest of 579 individuals; and the dismantling of one illegal laboratory manufacturing synthetic drugs.

659. On 2 and 3 May 2019, the 11th Review Meeting of the Memorandum of Understanding on Subregional Drug Control Cooperation was held in Tashkent. High-level officials, including the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan, the Chief Executive Officer of the Aga Khan Development Network and the Secretary-General of SCO, as well as high-level international partners and donors such as UNODC, the United States, the European Union and OSCE, attended the event. The parties to the Memorandum of Understanding agreed on common strategic priorities and targets in order for the region to address emerging drug-related threats and related criminal behaviour, including illicit financial flows and the financing of terrorism, trafficking in precursors and new psychoactive substances, the darknet, health and development, as set out in a ministerial declaration reiterating the parties' commitment to strengthening multilateral cooperation within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding.

### 3. National regulation, policy and action

660. In December 2018, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of Afghanistan launched the first call centre for farmers as part of its alternative development activities under the National Drug Action Plan. The service, which provides free advice and information to farmers, is intended to establish contacts between local farmers and agricultural experts of the Ministry. The Government of Afghanistan continued to implement measures to mainstream the economic empowerment of women in the alternative livelihood sector. Ten small and medium-sized enterprises led by women participated in a jobs fair and exhibition held to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March 2019 in Kabul, at which over 80 companies and organizations exhibited alternative development products.

661. Following a presidential decree which came into effect in April 2019, the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of Afghanistan was dissolved. Several joint committees were established to complete the restructuring process. The resources, responsibilities and activities of the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics were transferred to the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock and the Ministry of Public Health.

662. To promptly respond to the worsening situation with the illicit drug market, in December 2018 Kazakhstan adopted a law amending some legislative acts related to

controlling trade in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their analogues and precursors. The law provides for the elaboration of mechanisms instituting State control over trade in new psychoactive substances and scheduling their analogues, and it empowers the Government to approve (a) the list of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors subject to control in Kazakhstan; and (b) the aggregate table establishing threshold quantities of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and their analogues and precursors for classifying the gravity of offences involving those substances.

663. Kazakhstan reported that there was an increasing use of the Internet, instant messaging services and e-wallets to trade illicitly in new psychoactive substances. In 2018, the law enforcement agencies of Kazakhstan detected 4,700 websites retailing illicit drugs (compared with 430 websites in 2017) that were blocked by the Ministry of Information and Communications upon notification by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Over 2,540 graffiti inscriptions advertising websites that distribute illicit substances were removed throughout the country.

664. In February 2019, the federal Cabinet of Pakistan approved the National Anti-Narcotics Policy of 2019, which had been formulated by the Ministry of Narcotics Control in consultation with federal and provincial stakeholders. The policy was designed to strengthen the efforts of Pakistan in the area of anti-drug trafficking operations. The policy provides for stronger enforcement measures, increased international cooperation and more effective drug demand reduction strategies.

665. In January 2019, the first drug treatment and rehabilitation centre in the State of Palestine was opened, in Bethlehem, as a result of the joint efforts of the Ministry of Health of the State of Palestine and UNODC to develop a comprehensive system for drug dependence treatment and care in the State of Palestine. The centre will benefit from the UNODC-developed Treatnet package, which provides comprehensive expert guidance and advice in the areas of drug use prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

666. Operation “Black poppy”, an annual anti-drug law enforcement operation, was conducted in Uzbekistan from 1 May to 30 June and from 1 August to 30 September 2018. As a result, 904 cases of illicit cultivation were detected (compared with 895 cases in 2017), and 2,644 square meters of illicit drug cultivation were destroyed (compared with 3,306 square metres in 2017). That illicit cultivation that was eradicated included 385 cases of illicit cultivation of opium poppy (compared with 277 cases in 2017) on a

total area of 1,381 square meters (compared with 1,757 square metres in 2017) and 519 cases of cannabis cultivation (compared with 618 cases in 2017) on a total area of 1,263 square meters (compared with 1,503 square metres in 2017).

667. On 22 October 2018, Uzbekistan adopted amendments to its drug-related legislation, which stipulated criminal and administrative sanctions for illicit trade in analogues of narcotic drugs and the illegal sale of medicines outside pharmacies. Furthermore, amendments were introduced to improve procedures for the import, export and transit through the territory of Uzbekistan of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors through the scheduling of synthetic cannabinoids, tramadol, nalbuphine preparations, zopiclone and baclofen, all of which have been associated with many cases of abuse.

#### 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

668. Afghanistan was the country of origin of nearly all opiates seized in Europe, Central Asia and Africa in the period 2013–2017. Afghanistan accounted for 100 per cent of all mentions of “country of origin” for opiates seized in Central Asia, 96 per cent of mentions of country of origin for opiates seized in Europe and 84 per cent of mentions for opiates seized in Africa in that period.

669. UNODC confirmed that Afghanistan remained the country responsible for the vast majority of the world’s illicit opium poppy cultivation and opium production in 2018. The area under cultivation in Afghanistan amounted to 263,000 ha in 2018, the equivalent of 76 per cent of the estimated total area devoted to illicit opium poppy cultivation worldwide (346,000 ha). As a result of the very high levels of production in previous years, opium prices in Afghanistan dropped in the period 2016–2018. Opium production on such a massive scale continues to pose substantial challenges for Afghanistan, the neighbouring countries through which the drugs transit and the countries that serve as destination markets. Impacts include the further deterioration of the drug-related and security situation in Afghanistan and the potential for increased consumption and associated negative developments in transit and consuming countries.

670. The Balkan route, running through the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey and the Balkan countries towards destination markets in Western and Central Europe, continued to be the main path for the trafficking of opiates originating in Afghanistan. In recent years, a new branch

of the Balkan route involving the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq has gained importance.

671. In addition, seizures in Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation suggest that heroin and other opiate products may be entering the Russian Federation through a variant of the Balkan route that runs along the border between Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. From Afghanistan, that sub-branch of the Balkan route transits the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Southern Caucasus, notably Azerbaijan, from where it goes northwards into the Russian Federation, or, transiting Georgia, it crosses the Black Sea to Ukraine and the European Union. That route has also been reported by the authorities of the Russian Federation, who noted that part of the opiates originating in Afghanistan were being trafficked into its territory through the Islamic Republic of Iran and Azerbaijan, by means of a possible extension of the Balkan route.

672. This extension of the Balkan route running through the Southern Caucasus was initially detected following three large seizures of heroin (totalling 1.7 tons) made by the countries of the Southern Caucasus in 2014. Heroin seizures in the Southern Caucasus decreased sharply the following year, in 2015 (83 kg seized), but there were later surges in heroin seizures in 2016 (1.2 tons seized, mainly by Azerbaijan) and in 2018 (1.26 tons seized by Azerbaijan).

673. The so-called “southern route” continued to be used for the trafficking of opiates to Europe by means of shipments from Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan by air or sea, either directly or transiting through Gulf countries and East Africa. Most of the morphine and heroin seized in 2018 in the Islamic Republic of Iran entered the country from Pakistan. Seizures of opium and heroin in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2018 saw an increase compared with 2017 levels, as 643.6 tons of opium was seized in 2018 compared with 630.5 tons seized in 2017, and 25.4 tons of heroin seized in 2018 compared with 23.7 tons seized in 2017.

674. In addition, opiates and other illicit substances continue to be trafficked from Afghanistan to India and other countries in South Asia, destined for markets in Europe and, to a lesser extent, North America. Air routes were increasingly being used to smuggle heroin and other illicit substances from Afghanistan. Although the substances were mainly bound for New Delhi, there have been several attempts to traffic Afghan opiates to Dubai, United Arab Emirates and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In the period from November 2018 to June 2019, the airport interdiction unit at Hamid Karzai International Airport seized 150 kg of heroin, 17 kg of methamphetamine and 16 kg

of cannabis resin, along with substantial amounts of cash, and the unit arrested 154 suspected traffickers. During the same period, a similar unit at Kandahar International Airport seized 93 kg of heroin and 1 kg of methamphetamine and arrested 150 suspected traffickers.

675. According to UNODC, as in years past, the vast majority of opiates seized worldwide were seized in the countries of the Middle East and Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. In 2017, that group of countries accounted for 79 per cent of global opiates seized as expressed in common heroin equivalents, in particular opium (97 per cent of global opium seizures) and morphine (99 per cent of global morphine seizures). Moreover, the quantities of morphine and heroin seized in those countries continued to increase in the period 2016–2017 as a consequence of a combination of the marked increases in Afghan opiate production during that period and the ongoing law enforcement operations in those countries.

676. In 2017, the largest quantities of opiates (as expressed in heroin equivalent) continued to be seized in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which accounted for 39 per cent of the global total, followed by Afghanistan (26 per cent), Pakistan (14 per cent) and Turkey (7 per cent).

677. States of Central Asia located along the so-called “northern route” continued to be used for opiates trafficked from Afghanistan to the Russian Federation and elsewhere in Europe. The main modes of transportation used in trafficking heroin from Central Asia into the Russian Federation remain road, rail and air traffic. According to UNODC, seizures in the region indicate that opiates are primarily trafficked from Afghanistan into Tajikistan and, to a lesser extent, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and then on to Kazakhstan. The largest quantities of opiates seized in the region were being trafficked by land routes from Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan, then to Kazakhstan and into the Russian Federation. Heroin is also occasionally trafficked into the Russian Federation by air from States of Central Asia, but this mode of transportation is less common than is trafficking overland.

678. Seizure data for the period 2014–2018 suggest that opiate trafficking along the northern route has been steadily declining. In 2018, heroin seizures amounted to 58.61 kg in Kazakhstan, 73.57 kg in Kyrgyzstan, 282.18 kg in Tajikistan and 20.60 kg in Uzbekistan. Tajikistan accounted for most of the opiates seized in Central Asia. According to law enforcement agencies in Central Asia, opiate trafficking from the region to the Russian Federation continued to decrease, which Central Asian authorities attribute to successful law enforcement operations. At the

same time, further studies are needed to analyse data on average purity, prices and daily consumption of heroin, estimated number of opiate users and trafficking methods, in order to accurately determine the extent of opiate flows through the northern route.

679. Opium seizures in the countries of Central Asia remained stable at approximately 2.2 tons per year over the period 2014–2018, which may indicate that there is a continuing demand for opium. In 2018, Kazakhstan seized 6.96 kg of opium, Kyrgyzstan seized 5.42 kg, Tajikistan seized 1,606.79 kg, and Uzbekistan seized 254.70 kg. Although not fully indicative of actual prevalence of use, the number of registered opium users in the countries of Central Asia decreased by 33 per cent from 2014 to 2018. According to information provided by the Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan, the 33 per cent growth in opium seizures in Tajikistan in 2018 was related to the increase in cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan.

680. There are no indications or reports that opium is being processed into heroin in Central Asia. Opium poppy cultivation and opium production in Central Asia continue to be minimal, since, according to Central Asian national law enforcement agencies, over 99 per cent of the opiates in the subregion originate in Afghanistan, and there are no production facilities located in the subregion. Therefore, all opiates transiting Central Asia are thought to be either processed in Afghanistan or remain in the form of opium and are later processed elsewhere.

681. Afghanistan continues to be one of the major sources of cannabis resin worldwide. Afghanistan was reported as being the source of 20 per cent of all cannabis resin reported seized worldwide in the period 2013–2017, in particular for seizures reported in Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus and Europe. Other countries reported as source countries were Lebanon (6 per cent) and Pakistan (6 per cent). Cannabis resin from Lebanon is mainly destined for markets in the Middle East and to a lesser extent markets in Western and Central Europe.

682. The Islamic Republic of Iran reported Afghanistan as the main source of cannabis resin found on its market. According to UNODC, in 2017, about 90 per cent of cannabis resin entered the Islamic Republic of Iran via Pakistan and 10 per cent entered directly from Afghanistan. Most of the cannabis resin was trafficked by land and some was trafficked by sea from Pakistan. In 2017, about 55 per cent of the cannabis resin smuggled out of the Islamic Republic of Iran was destined for countries on the Arabian Peninsula and 25 per cent was destined for Turkey and the Southern Caucasus.

683. The quantity of cannabis seized in Afghanistan decreased by 90 per cent from 2016 to 2017. Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan also reported a decrease in cannabis seizures, of 6 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively. Similar trends were also observed in countries of the Middle East, which taken as a whole reported a 53 per cent reduction in cannabis seizures.

684. According to UNODC, the law enforcement agencies of countries of Central Asia reported seizures of more than 20 tons of cannabis and more than 2 tons of cannabis resin in 2018. Since information on seizures of cannabis and cannabis resin of Afghan origin is limited, it is difficult to estimate the exact scale of trafficking of these substances via the northern route. The share of cannabis resin seizures that were made in Tajikistan in 2018 was 54 per cent of total cannabis resin seizures in Central Asia, which may indicate a large demand in countries along the northern route for cannabis-based drugs originating in Afghanistan. In 2018, as in the previous year, the share of cannabis and cannabis resin seizures in the total volume of seized drugs was highest in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, while in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan the bulk of seized drugs were opiates.

685. There continued to be small-scale illicit cannabis cultivation and large areas of wild cannabis growth in Central Asia. Cannabis is mainly illicitly produced for domestic consumption, with a smaller portion trafficked to markets in Europe and the Russian Federation.

686. Seizures of cannabis in the countries of the Southern Caucasus continued to increase over the period 2014–2018, while seizures of cannabis resin in that same period continued to decline. Those statistical trends are based mostly on the statistics on drug seizures reported by Azerbaijan.

687. An increase in trafficking of cocaine by air (including by use of “mules” and parcels) was reported in Lebanon. The most important cocaine seizures at the airports were those reported by Lebanese authorities in August 2018, when authorities at the Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport seized more than 60 kg of cocaine that had been hidden inside personal care items imported from Brazil. More recently, in June 2019, Lebanese Customs seized 10.5 kg of cocaine at the Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport on a flight that had departed from Brazil.

688. Afghanistan continued to witness an increase in trafficking of synthetic drugs on its territory. The amount of methamphetamine seized continued to increase, with 657 kg seized in the first six months of 2019 compared

with 61 kg seized during the same period of 2018 (representing an almost tenfold increase). In 2018, a total of 182 kg of methamphetamine were seized in Afghanistan, while in 2017 total seizures for that substance amounted to 121 kg. Afghanistan also seized 35,763 MDMA tablets in the first six months of 2019, compared with 24,587 tablets in the entire year of 2018, and 2,322 tablets in 2017.

689. Continuing the trend reported in the previous year, the Islamic Republic of Iran witnessed an increase of approximately 25 per cent in methamphetamine seizures in 2018, a total of 2.9 tons, compared with 2.3 tons in 2017. In 2018, law enforcement authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran dismantled 133 laboratories for manufacturing amphetamine-type stimulants in the country.

690. Manufacture and trafficking of counterfeit “captagon” continued to seriously affect drug control efforts in the Middle East, especially given the continued political instability in many parts of the subregion. There are indications of the existence of clandestine laboratories manufacturing counterfeit “captagon” in the subregion, in particular in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, for domestic consumption as well as for illicit markets in Saudi Arabia and several other Gulf States. Some of those “captagon” tablets were also smuggled into Turkey or smuggled from the Syrian Arab Republic to Lebanon for onward trafficking to various countries in the Middle East. Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Jordan have also been identified by other countries in the subregion as possible countries of origin of amphetamine shipments.

691. While there are only limited official data available on trafficking of counterfeit “captagon”, certain notable seizures covered by the media may provide an indication of the extent of trafficking in the subregion. In June–July 2019, authorities of Greece seized three containers containing substantial amounts of “captagon” (5.25 tons, in the form of 33 million tablets) worth an estimated \$660 million, which was believed to have been shipped from the Syrian Arab Republic. Earlier, in December 2018, authorities of Greece detained a Syrian-flagged freight ship in the Mediterranean carrying about 3 million “captagon” tablets, believed to be destined for Libya. In two separate attempts to smuggle “captagon” from the territory of Lebanon, Lebanese authorities seized 142 kg of “captagon” from a refrigerated truck in April 2019 in an operation coordinated with the authorities of Saudi Arabia, and seized 10 kg at the Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport in May 2019. Approximately 250,000 “captagon” tablets were seized at the Istanbul Atatürk Airport in March 2019, from a passenger on a flight bound for Saudi Arabia. In May 2019, Dubai Customs of the United Arab Emirates seized 5.7 million

“captagon” tablets that were hidden in a foodstuff container, bringing the total amount seized by Dubai Customs to about 11 million “captagon” tablets in the first five months of 2019. There have also been several reports of seizures of substantial amounts of “captagon” tablets by the authorities of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic.

692. Central Asian countries continued to experience trafficking in psychotropic substances on their territories even though the amount of trafficking continued to be at lower levels than for other types of drugs. In particular, Kazakhstan seized 9.7 kg of psychotropic substances, including 2.6 kg of MDMA, compared with the 12.2 kg of psychotropic substances it seized in 2017, which had included 2 kg of MDMA. Kyrgyzstan seized 21 kg of psychotropic substances in 2018, which included small amounts of methamphetamine and MDMA, compared with almost no officially reported seizures of such substances in 2017. Tajikistan seized 1.8 kg of psychotropic substances in 2018, compared with 7.6 kg in 2017. Countries in the region also continue to face the problem of a lack of comprehensive data collection and forensic analysis with respect to such substances.

693. Large quantities of precursors are needed for opium processing in Afghanistan, and those precursors cannot easily be trafficked across the multiple mountainous borders and so must be transported on established roads and by railway. In 2018, the most widely seized precursor in Central Asia was hydrochloric acid, followed by acetic anhydride and potassium permanganate. The largest total quantity of hydrochloric acid and sulphuric acid seized in 2018 was that seized in Kyrgyzstan, where authorities seized a total of 3.2 tons of those precursors.

694. According to information provided by CARICC, in the period 2014–2018, only Tajikistan and Uzbekistan reported seizures of acetic anhydride (Uzbekistan in 2017 and Tajikistan in 2018). Tajikistan reported five seizures of precursors totalling 284 kg, including three seizures of acetic anhydride that totalled 266.5 kg. Afghanistan was suspected of being the country of destination for one of these seizures. According to CARICC, there is no evidence that any other seized substance was bound for Afghanistan. Uzbekistan seized 20 litres of acetic anhydride in 2017. Uzbekistan also reported seizures of 0.8 kg of potassium permanganate in 2018.

695. The position of Azerbaijan and Georgia along the opiate trafficking route means that their territories are also attractive as a route for trafficking in precursors, in particular acetic anhydride, which is used to manufacture heroin. Law enforcement authorities of Georgia seized

5 tons and 9.8 tons of acetic anhydride, respectively, in two operations conducted in February and April 2018 at the port of Poti, Georgia, on the Black Sea; they were the largest seizures of precursors in the country's history. The chemicals were destined for Afghanistan. According to UNODC, Azerbaijan reported only on seizures of potassium permanganate: 20.8 kg seized in 2017 and 5.5 kg seized in 2018. In 2017, less than 50 grams of ephedrine was seized in the entire Southern Caucasus, and all of it was seized in Georgia.

696. In 2018, law enforcement authorities of Afghanistan dismantled 33 heroin-manufacturing laboratories, compared with the dismantlement of 50 heroin-manufacturing laboratories and 3 methamphetamine-manufacturing laboratories in 2017. One methamphetamine-manufacturing laboratory was dismantled in the first six months of 2019.

697. There continues to be limited information available on trafficking and abuse of new psychoactive substances in most countries of West Asia due to the lack of monitoring and analysis capacities in those countries. The Board reiterates that although the countries of West Asia continue to adopt the necessary legislation and take the necessary steps to improve their law enforcement and forensic capabilities in order to counter new psychoactive substances, there is a strong need for a comprehensive regional approach to address the challenge.

698. The emergence of a growing number of new psychoactive substances continued to be reported by almost every country in Central Asia, which may suggest that the region is linked to international trafficking of both amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances beyond the subregion. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kyrgyzstan reported an increase in total seizures of new psychoactive substances from 338 grams in 2017 to 18,928 grams in 2018. Uzbekistan reported a decrease in new psychoactive substance seizures, from 362 grams in 2017 to 166 grams in 2018.

699. There is limited information available on trafficking in new psychoactive substances in the Southern Caucasus. Although Azerbaijan reported an increase in seizures of psychotropic substances in 2018 (1,545.4 kg of powdered substances and 1,615 tablets) compared with 2017 (0.4 kg of powdered substances and 1,918 tablets), no information was reported on seizures of new psychoactive substances in the country. Georgia reported on the emergence of and increase in trafficking in new psychoactive substances, as it seized 6.5 kg of new psychoactive substances in 2018, while in 2017 it seized 1.5 kg. Police in Armenia reported on the seizure of 27 grams of new psychoactive substances in 2018, compared with 1.1 kg in 2017.

700. Countries in the Middle East continued to be affected by trafficking in and abuse of tramadol, a synthetic opioid not under international control. During the reporting period, there were several media reports on seizures of tramadol in the subregion, including in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, the State of Palestine and the United Arab Emirates. The countries of the subregion need to effectively prevent illicit manufacture and trafficking of tramadol while ensuring sufficient supply of this substance for medical needs. The countries of the subregion would benefit from more effective international law enforcement and criminal justice cooperation.

## 5. Prevention and treatment

701. The Board notes with concern that in some countries of the region access to treatment for drug dependence is possible only upon registration as a drug user, that registration as a drug user brings with it various limitations on that individual's career prospects, ability to travel and enjoyment of other rights, and that the prospect of having such limitations imposed is often a disincentive to seeking treatment. In many cases, registration as a drug user also results in serious social stigmatization that impedes recovery and social reintegration.

702. In addition, most countries in West Asia have difficulties finding the resources for conducting comprehensive and regular drug abuse studies and surveys, which hinders efforts to fully grasp the true extent of drug use and dependency in the subregion. Countries still lack the test and reference samples needed to carry out effective drug testing and analysis.

703. UNODC estimated that the Middle East and South-West Asia were the subregions with the highest past-year prevalence of opiate use (opium, morphine and heroin), at 1.6 per cent of the population in each subregion. South-West Asia was the subregion with the highest prevalence of HIV among people who inject drugs, 2.3 times the global average, and South-West Asia also had a higher than average proportion of injecting drug users.

704. Over the past decade, there has been a decline in the number of registered opiate users in Central Asia, which may be a result, at least in part, of the overall reduction in trafficking of those substances along the northern route. In 2018, there were 43,511 registered drug users in Central Asia, excluding Turkmenistan, for which no data were available. Of that total, 51 per cent were opiate users, of whom 86 per cent were heroin users and 14 per cent were opium users. Injecting drug users accounted for 56 per cent of registered drug users. Data

disaggregated by gender showed that 5 per cent of all drug users registered in 2018 were female drug users. UNODC estimated that the full scope of opiate use in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus was likely much larger than what was suggested by the number of registered users, as the prevalence of use of opiates in those subregions combined was estimated to be 0.9 per cent.

705. In Azerbaijan, there were 30,131 registered drug users in treatment centres in 2017. Injecting remained the most frequently used method of administering opiates (70 per cent of users). Of those who registered as drug users in 2017, about 2 per cent were women.

706. Countries of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus continued to witness an overall decline in injecting drug use, an increase in the prevalence of cannabinoid abuse, and an increase in abuse of psychoactive medicines as part of polydrug use. It should be noted that alcohol addiction remained more prevalent than illicit drug addiction. The most used types of stimulants in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, in order of greatest prevalence, are amphetamine, methamphetamine and “ecstasy”.

707. According to UNODC, the proportion of the population aged 15–64 who inject drugs remains relatively high in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, with rates that are 3.4 times the global average (i.e., more than triple). UNAIDS found that in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, people who inject drugs accounted for more than one third (39 per cent) of new HIV infections in 2017. Other research found that in Central Asia, approximately one in five people held in prison have injected drugs at least once while incarcerated.

708. Opioid consumption patterns in the countries of South-West Asia remain diverse. UNODC found that in Afghanistan, nearly 70 per cent of opioid users reported using opium and there was also significant abuse of heroin and pharmaceutical opioids. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, nearly 90 per cent of opioid users reported using opium or the condensed extract of smoked opium ashes. In Pakistan, according to the most recently available data, for 2012, excluding polydrug use among opioid users, of the estimated 2.7 million opioid users, 1.6 million also reported the non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids, whereas over 1 million people were estimated to be regular opiate users, of whom the majority were heroin users (860,000) while one third were opium users (320,000). While the use of opiates (heroin and opium) was much higher among men than among women in Pakistan, almost equal percentages of men and women in that country reported the non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids.

## E. Europe

Record amounts of high-purity cocaine seized, together with the increasing prevalence of cocaine use among adults, suggest that cocaine use is on the rise in Europe.

The discussion of different approaches to regulating cannabis has figured prominently in the policy debate on drug control across Europe.

### 1. Major developments

709. A recent surge in the availability of high-purity cocaine across Europe, now also including Eastern European countries that had been targeted to a lesser extent in the past, appears to have made the drug an affordable commodity and the preferred stimulant for many drug users in the region. Record seizures of cocaine in several European countries in 2018 and 2019 may also indicate an increasing trend in cocaine trafficking, with European overseas territories increasingly being used as transit points, according to EMCDDA.

710. An increasing number of European countries were in the process of exploring regulatory approaches to the cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes during the reporting period, or had already set up cannabis agencies and instituted medical cannabis programmes by 2019. In a few countries, there were indications of steps being taken towards legalization of the non-medical use of cannabis at the national level. However, the majority of European countries allow cannabis to be used only for medical and scientific purposes, in keeping with their obligations under the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, while many continue not to permit medical uses of the substance at all. An EMCDDA paper entitled “Developments in the European cannabis market”, published in 2019, presents the diverse range of cannabis-based products available in Europe and highlights the complexity of regulatory frameworks necessary to manage their appropriate distribution.

711. The Russian Federation, in July 2019, passed legislation authorizing the cultivation on its territory of opium poppy plants (*Papaver somniferum*) for the purpose of extracting alkaloids. More specifically, the new law allows for the cultivation of varieties of opium poppy rich in morphine, thebaine and codeine and the processing of poppy straw for the purpose of manufacturing pharmaceutical or veterinary preparations containing these opiates.

## 2. Regional cooperation

712. A number of well-established regional cooperation frameworks and intergovernmental organizations of varied composition and geographical scope, such as the European Union, EMCDDA, the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe, OSCE, Europol, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), and others have continued to act as the primary vehicles for regional cooperation in Europe. In addition, a multitude of multilateral law enforcement operations involving several European countries were undertaken, many of which resulted in considerable drug seizures.

713. In an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of European precursor control legislation, the European Commission conducted an in-depth review of the implementation and functioning of four legislative documents, which reflect the exclusive competence of the European Union to regulate the trade in chemicals in all of its member States. The last phase of the process, which started in 2017, involved a public consultation that concluded in November 2018. The results of the evaluation and any necessary amendments to existing European Union regulations were expected to be published in the last quarter of 2019.

714. In November 2018, the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe adopted its new work programme for the period 2019–2022. Its three thematic priorities are centred on good governance; international drug policy development for 2019 and beyond, with particular focus on contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; and new psychoactive substances. A new element under the good governance pillar is aimed at reducing drug-related stigmas in order to remove some of the barriers to drug users' access to health care and social services.

715. In December 2018, new formal cooperation agreements were signed between EMCDDA and two European agencies, the European Chemicals Agency and the European Food Safety Authority, in the context of the European Union early warning system to respond to new psychoactive substances. Existing agreements between EMCDDA and Europol, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the European Medicines Agency were updated at the same time.

716. In July 2019, the Thirteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Europe, was held in Lisbon, bringing together some 70 participants from 24 Member States and 7 organizations. The recommendations addressed a range of issues. In one of the recommendations, it was recommended that Governments

should consider the use of artificial intelligence in analysis, profiling, cross-checking information and other investigative efforts with a view to adapting to the changing criminal environment.

## 3. National legislation, policy and action

717. On 3 July 2019, the Russian Federation passed a federal law permitting on its territory the cultivation of the opium poppy plant (*Papaver somniferum*) for the production of poppy straw. More specifically, the law allows for the cultivation of varieties of opium poppy rich in morphine, thebaine and codeine and the processing of poppy straw for the purpose of manufacturing pharmaceutical or veterinary preparations containing those opiates. According to government authorities, the rationale for this step was to satisfy domestic demand for life-saving medications containing opiates. In addition, the law provides a legal basis for the cultivation of opium poppy to produce poppy seeds for culinary purposes.

718. Belgium paved the way for the creation of a national cannabis agency by providing a legal basis for the establishment of a cannabis office within its Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products. A bill passed in April 2019 requires further executing regulations in order for the cannabis office to become operational and start overseeing the cultivation of cannabis for medicinal purposes. Similarly, Croatia (in April 2019) and Malta (in April 2018) permitted cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes. In Portugal, where cultivation of cannabis for medicinal purposes had been authorized since 1994, legislation was passed in July 2018 and additional implementing regulations were adopted in January 2019 regarding the prescription, use and dispensation of cannabis for medical use through pharmacies, thereby achieving control of the full production chain from cultivation to distribution. **The Board wishes to remind all States that have established medical cannabis programmes or that are considering doing so of the control measures set forth in articles 28 and 23 of the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol.**

719. Short of permitting the cultivation of cannabis for medicinal purposes, many European countries for the first time allowed the use of cannabis-based medicinal products or were in the process of creating the necessary legal framework to do so during the reporting period. Following the approval of its National Agency for Medicines and Health Products Safety in July 2019, France was in the process of devising the regulatory framework for an experiment on the use of cannabis-based medicinal products to

treat certain medical conditions under strictly defined conditions. The experiment was expected to be launched in 2020. With effect from 1 November 2018, the United Kingdom introduced legislative changes providing a definition of the type of products falling within the category of “cannabis-based products for medicinal use” and permitting their prescription by registered specialist doctors based on clinical need, not limiting prescriptions to any particular medical condition. Raw cannabis (whether plant or resin) was unaffected by the change and remained a class B drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act of 1971.

720. In the course of 2019, the Netherlands has taken steps to introduce a pilot programme for the production and commercial distribution of cannabis for non-medical purposes, referred to as the “closed cannabis supply chain experiment”. Under the programme, the cultivation and wholesale supply of cannabis to so-called “coffee shops” was expected to be legalized in up to 10 municipalities for a trial period of four years, followed by an evaluation of the “experiment” and its effects on public health, public order, safety and crime. As of August 2019, 10 municipalities (not including the 4 largest ones: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) had been selected from among some two dozen that had expressed an interest in participating in the programme. As of 1 November 2019, the legislation necessary to enable the official “preparation phase” of the experiment to be launched in 2020, commencing with a public tender to select a limited number of local producers, had been partially approved in January 2019. Municipalities not selected to participate in the trial will continue to enforce the applicable national laws, which generally prohibit the cultivation, distribution and use of cannabis, with the option of tolerating (i.e., not enforcing the prohibition of) the sale and purchase of small amounts for personal use in “coffee shops” under certain conditions.

721. In late 2018, Luxembourg announced its intention to legalize the cultivation, distribution, possession and use of cannabis for recreational purposes within five years. An interministerial task force was reported to be in the process of drafting a corresponding legislative proposal. The use of (imported) cannabis for medical purposes, prescribed by specially trained medical professionals and distributed exclusively through hospital pharmacies, was permitted in August 2018 for a trial period of two years.

722. **The Board wishes to remind all parties to the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol that article 4 (c) of that Convention limits exclusively to medical and scientific purposes the production, manufacture, export, import and distribution of, trade in and**

**use and possession of drugs and that any measures allowing for the non-medical use of cannabis are in violation of the legal obligations incumbent upon parties to the Convention.**

723. A number of countries in the region amended their national laws to subject new psychoactive substances and other substances of concern to national control in 2018 and 2019. Those countries included Germany (new substance groups were added and existing ones were amended or enlarged in its generic schedules under the New Psychoactive Substances Act, which entered into force in 2016), the Russian Federation (47 new psychoactive substances scheduled at the national level), Serbia (15 substances scheduled, including tramadol), Spain (6 new psychoactive substances scheduled) and Sweden (36 new psychoactive substances scheduled, 15 as narcotic drugs and 21 as goods endangering health). Malta brought its laws in line with European Parliament and Council of the European Union directive 2017/2103, which defines new psychoactive substances as substances in pure form or in a preparation that are not covered by the 1961 Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol or by the 1971 Convention but may pose health or social risks similar to those posed by the substances covered by those Conventions. The United Kingdom also classified pregabalin and gabapentin as class C drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act of 1971 with effect from 1 April 2019.

724. Since February 2019, Croatia has applied a generic approach to controlling new psychoactive substances at the national level, targeting groups of substances and chemical compounds rather than individual substances. Poland also introduced generic definitions for four groups of new psychoactive substances that now fall under the act counteracting drug addiction and State sanitary inspection as a result of a comprehensive amendment passed in August 2018. The groups include derivatives of fentanyl, cathinone and 2-phenylethylamine, as well as synthetic cannabinoids. The amendment also redefined new psychoactive substances, putting them on a par with narcotic drugs and psychoactive substances and thereby attaching criminal sanctions to their use and possession; previously, sanctions had been administrative in nature for that category of substances.

725. In 2018, the United Kingdom conducted a mandated review of its Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, covering the first 30 months since the Act had entered into force, with a view to assessing whether its aims were being achieved. The results of the review were published in November 2018. The review found that open retail sale of new psychoactive substances had been largely eliminated in the wake of the entry into force of the Act and

that there had been a significant drop in their use in the general population, particularly among youth, with an associated reduction in health-related harms. At the same time, the Act was found not to have had any significant impact on the emergence of new psychoactive substances or on their online sale, neither through the clear web nor through the darknet, and it appeared that street dealers had replaced retail shops as the main source of supply for users.

726. The Russian Federation placed seven precursors under national control in 2018, including the internationally controlled fentanyl precursor *N*-phenethyl-4-piperidone (NPP) and six precursors not under international control. 4-Anilino-*N*-phenethylpiperidine (ANPP), another internationally controlled precursor of fentanyl, was moved from catalogue I to catalogue IV of the relevant national schedules in 2018. In February 2019, the requirements regarding thresholds for precursors of fentanyl under catalogue I of the relevant national schedules were removed and five more substances were added to that catalogue.

727. In addition to amending its existing legislation on psychotropic substances and precursors (in July 2018 and April 2019), Serbia adopted in 2019 a comprehensive set of by-laws concerning procedures related to precursor control, including by-laws on licensing, import and export authorizations, and statements concerning the end user of a traded precursor.

728. Since 1 January 2019, French customs authorities have been entitled to request and be provided with data stored and processed by hosting and Internet service providers, as well as telecommunication operators, in order to ascertain whether, according to the Customs Code of that country, a drug offence may have been committed.

729. Spain finalized its first plan of action for the period 2018–2020 under the national strategy on addictions covering the period 2017–2024. Social reintegration features prominently as one of the areas to be strengthened in the context of the comprehensive care approach adopted in the national strategy. In January 2019, Croatia published a comprehensive report on the implementation of activities undertaken under its National Strategy on Combating Drug Abuse for the period 2012–2017 and the two three-year action plans covering that period. The report contains detailed statistics and findings on the drug abuse situation in the country during that period.

730. In the United Kingdom, a prison drug strategy was published in April 2019; it builds on the *2017 Drug Strategy*, published by the Home Office. According to the

prison drug strategy, the number of incidents where drugs were found in prisons increased by 23 per cent in the period 2017/18 compared with the previous 12-month period. The prison drug strategy mirrors the three objectives of the 2017 drug strategy: restricting supply, reducing demand and building recovery. The prison drug strategy is not time-bound, it focuses on improving capacity in five areas, it comes with a catalogue of continually updated good practice guidance for prison governors and staff and it requires prisons at the national and subnational levels to implement their own tailored drug strategies by September 2019.

731. The Russian Federation passed new legislation on palliative care in March 2019. The law is to provide improved access for terminally ill patients to pain relief medications, in particular preparations containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, alongside other support services.

732. In March 2019, Greece became the most recent European country to provide a legal framework for “drug consumption rooms” or supervised drug use areas to operate on its territory. To access such areas, which are to be authorized by the Ministry of Health, and to make use of the care and services provided in those areas, inclusion in the government-maintained register of recipients of such services will be a prerequisite. “Drug consumption rooms” are already operating, on a trial or permanent basis, in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland, while a legal basis for their operation exists in Ireland (since 2017), and governmental initiatives seeking to introduce supervised drug injection facilities are under way in several other European countries, including Finland and Iceland.

733. In line with its earlier observations on the operation of “drug consumption rooms” in different countries, the Board wishes to reiterate that the ultimate objective of such measures is to reduce the adverse consequences of drug abuse without condoning or encouraging drug trafficking. Accordingly, any such facility must provide, or refer recipients of its services to, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration services.

#### 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

734. Drug trafficking trends and patterns generally remained stable in Europe, with minor changes observed in relation to individual substances. Cannabis (including both herb and resin) remained the most frequently seized

drug and the substance seized in the highest quantities in 2017 in the member States of the European Union. However, the figures for cannabis herb almost doubled in 2017 compared with the figures for 2016 (210 tons were seized in 2017 compared with nearly 124 tons in 2016 in about the same number of seizures as in 2017), while the figures for cannabis resin remained relatively stable, both in terms of the number of seizures and the quantities seized (466 tons were seized in 2017 compared with some 424 tons in 2016). Italy alone accounted for some 43 per cent of the total amount of cannabis herb seized in the European Union in 2017 (more than 90 tons); it was followed by Spain (about 34.5 tons). At the same time, Spain accounted for almost 72 per cent of the total amount of cannabis resin seized in the European Union member States (almost 335 tons); that country was followed by France, where a significantly smaller amount of that drug was seized (some 67 tons).

735. Cannabis was also the most frequently encountered drug in both drug possession and supply offences reported in the European Union in 2017, with 75 per cent of an estimated total of 1.2 million cases involving the use or possession of cannabis and 57 per cent of an estimated 230,000 cases involving the supply of cannabis.

736. The amount of heroin seized in Europe has also been stable for a number of years. Illicit heroin manufacturing sites discovered in recent years in Bulgaria, Czechia, the Netherlands and Spain, in combination with higher amounts of opium and morphine seized, indicate that some manufacturing of heroin from morphine may be taking place closer to European consumer markets. Of all the European Union member States, the Netherlands seized the highest quantity of heroin in 2017 (1.1 tons), representing about a fifth of all heroin seized within the European Union that year; that country was followed by the United Kingdom (844 kg) and Bulgaria (698 kg).

737. Opioids other than heroin (including prescription opioids such as methadone, buprenorphine, tramadol, fentanyl derivatives, codeine, dihydrocodeine and oxycodone, as well as opium and morphine) were seized in markedly increased quantities in 2017, although those seizures accounted for a small share of the total quantity of seized opioids. Seized amounts of tramadol and fentanyl derivatives increased in 2017 for the second year in a row.

738. Record seizures of cocaine were reported in 2018 and 2019 in several countries, including Belgium (a total of 53 tons seized in 2018, up from nearly 45 tons in 2017), France (individual seizures of about a ton and a half in 2018, as well as in 2019) and Germany (4.5 tons in a single seizure in 2019, representing the largest single seizure of cocaine ever made in the country). Since at least 2011,

the same four countries – Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Spain – have seized the highest amounts of cocaine in the European Union. In 2017, the total amount of cocaine seized in the European Union was more than 140.4 tons, the highest amount ever recorded (almost double the amount seized in the previous year (70.8 tons)).

739. Cocaine trafficking has recently been linked to the activities of numerous organized criminal groups from Colombia, Morocco, Spain and the Balkan countries, most of which are operating out of major European ports. An EMCDDA trendspotter study entitled “Recent changes in Europe’s cocaine market”, published in 2018, found that European overseas territories such as French Guiana and the French West Indies (Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint Martin and Saint-Barthélemy) are increasingly being used as transit areas between producing countries in South America and the European mainland. In addition, according to the study, traffickers are making increased use of online drug markets to manage low-volume cocaine sales and are supplying the drug directly to consumers.

740. Europe continues to be a major source of the world’s supply of amphetamine-type stimulants, including amphetamine, methamphetamine and MDMA, and a significant share of the manufacture of such stimulants takes place in Belgium and the Netherlands.

741. Greek authorities effected the largest seizure of “captagon” (amphetamine) pills ever recorded in Europe in June–July 2019 in the port of Piraeus: some 33 million “captagon” pills – more than five tons of tablets. According to government sources, the shipment, concealed in three containers carrying medium-density fibreboard, originated in the port of Latakia, in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the suspected destination was China.

742. Within the European Union, 55 new psychoactive substances emerged and were reported through the early warning system of the European Union in the course of 2018; that represents an average of about one new substance per week. According to EMCDDA, the emergence of new psychoactive substances appeared to have slowed down in the European Union since the period 2013–2014. However, a considerable number of substances identified in earlier years have remained. New synthetic opioids (including fentanyl derivatives) continued to play a limited role in the European drug market, while the number, type and availability of benzodiazepines not under international control appeared to have increased in the past few years.

743. Seizures of precursors and pre-precursors (including both scheduled and non-scheduled substances that can be easily converted to internationally controlled precursors,

usually through a simple chemical synthesis step), especially those used in the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants such as methamphetamine or MDMA (“ecstasy”), continued to be effected in large quantities in European countries during the reporting period. A fully equipped illicit drug laboratory, including several tons of precursor chemicals used in the large-scale manufacture of crystalline methamphetamine, was discovered in Belgium, and a “floating” illicit methamphetamine laboratory was discovered in the Netherlands (an unprecedented occurrence in that country) on board a large cargo ship, where more than 300 litres of methamphetamine oil and drug-manufacturing equipment were seized.

744. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in seizures of acetic anhydride (a key substance frequently used in the illicit manufacture of heroin) in Europe in the past two years, along with an increase in the detection of sites using that precursor for illicit heroin manufacture.

745. 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 2019 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

## 5. Prevention and treatment

746. Overall, the situation with respect to the prevalence of drug abuse within the European Union remained largely unchanged in 2018 compared with the previous year. Based on 2017 data, EMCDDA estimated that about 29 per cent of the adult population, or some 96 million adults, had used illicit drugs at least once during their lives, while five years earlier about a quarter of the adult population in the European Union (over 80 million adults) was estimated to have used such drugs at least once. Data on the prevalence of drug use are generally available and of high quality in many parts of Europe.

747. In 2018, cannabis continued to be the most commonly used illicit drug in European Union member States, its prevalence having remained five times higher than that of other drugs for at least the past four years, with a number of countries having reported increased use of cannabis among youth.

748. Among stimulants, cocaine continued to be the most commonly used illicit drug, albeit more prevalent in countries in Southern and Western Europe, while, based on 2017 data, EMCDDA reported growing evidence of a

potential increase in the injection of stimulants, including cocaine, amphetamines and synthetic cathinones. The findings of the largest European wastewater analysis project focusing on stimulants and covering some 70 cities and towns in 2018 showed that patterns of use varied significantly in the region by type of drug, timing and location of use. For example, cocaine and MDMA (“ecstasy”) use appeared higher in large cities than in smaller urban areas, and the highest levels of those drugs and amphetamine (so-called “party drugs”) were detected in the wastewater during the weekend; furthermore, the highest levels of MDMA and cocaine appeared in the wastewater of cities in countries in Western Europe (MDMA in cities in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands and cocaine in cities in Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom), while the highest levels of amphetamine were concentrated in the wastewater of cities in countries in Northern and Eastern Europe.

749. In 2017, Europe was the region with the second highest prevalence of opiate use in the world (0.59 per cent, second to Asia with 0.72 per cent). Heroin has also remained the most commonly used opioid in European Union member States, although the abuse of other synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, methadone and buprenorphine appears to be on the rise. In Estonia, fentanyl has overtaken heroin as the primary opioid reported as the basis for seeking specialized treatment; and in Finland, the majority of opioid users sought treatment primarily for the use of buprenorphine. In fact, 22 per cent of all persons seeking treatment for opioid-related health issues in the European Union now cite as their primary drug opioids other than heroin (including codeine, morphine, tramadol and oxycodone, in addition to the above-named substances).

750. In June 2019, OECD published a report entitled “Addressing problematic opioid use in OECD countries”. The report found that the average number of opioid-related deaths among the 25 OECD members for which data were available had increased by 20 per cent in the period 2011–2016. Although that average includes data for the United States, where the opioid crisis has hit the hardest in recent years, the report also found a pronounced rise in opioid-related deaths in many areas in Europe, including (in decreasing order, from the most to the least pronounced rise) Sweden, the United Kingdom (England and Wales), Lithuania, Norway and Ireland. The data include deaths associated with the abuse of heroin and other opioids, as well as the abuse of prescription opioids. Overall, deaths associated with fentanyl and its analogues were likely to have been underestimated according to the EMCDDA report entitled “Drug-related deaths and mortality in Europe”. With regard to general drug-induced

mortality, Estonia and Sweden reported the highest death rates in Europe in 2017 (130 and 92 deaths per million inhabitants aged 15–64, respectively).

751. According to official statistics released in July 2019, the United Kingdom (Scotland) recorded an increase of 27 per cent in drug-related deaths in 2018 compared with the year before, the highest number of drug-related deaths since the recording of such deaths began (i.e., since 1996) and more than double the number recorded in 2008. Of the 1,187 drug-related deaths registered in 2018 in Scotland, most (i.e., about two thirds) were among the age group 35–44 (37 per cent) and the age group 45–54 (29 per cent), and 72 per cent of the deceased were male. In 86 per cent of all drug-related deaths, one or more opiates or opioids (including heroin/morphine and methadone) were involved. Benzodiazepines were implicated in, or potentially contributed to, 67 per cent of the cases recorded, indicating a high proportion of polydrug use. In Scotland, the drug-death rate (relative to the number of people aged 15–64) was found to be higher than that reported for all European Union member States and (per head of population) appeared to be almost three times that of the United Kingdom as a whole.

752. In absolute terms, Europe is also the region with the second highest prevalence of “ecstasy” use, with an estimated 4 million users (second to Asia, with an estimated 11.5 million users, and followed by the Americas, with an estimated 3.5 million).

753. Several countries have undertaken comprehensive efforts to further improve their datasets and provide a detailed picture of the drug use situation during the reporting period. In Poland, the National Bureau for Drug Prevention conducted or commissioned more than a dozen studies in the course of 2018 and 2019 to examine different aspects of drug use patterns among various population groups in the country. Apart from collecting national samples for prevalence studies involving different target groups, including substance abuse among youth, needle-and-syringe clients, in schools and in prison settings, numerous data collection efforts were dedicated to better understanding the specific threat posed by new psychoactive substances. In the same period, Belgium conducted Health Interview Survey 2018, studying the general condition of health of its population and identifying main health issues, including drug use, as well as factors and behaviours that might be determinant in this regard. The results were published in October 2019.

754. A variety of drug abuse prevention efforts were initiated or ongoing in many European countries in 2018 and

2019. In Serbia, for example, the Ministerial Commission for the Prevention of Drug Use launched a six-month awareness-raising campaign that ended in February 2019 and saw the participation in interactive forums of over 31,000 students, more than 5,400 teachers and some 1,500 parents, as well as health professionals, social workers, judges, prosecutors, police officers and other relevant stakeholders, to increase understanding of the harmful effects of drug use on young people. The forums followed a methodology developed by the Ministerial Commission, comprised of seven ministers whose work programme also is aimed at strengthening young people’s self-confidence, resilience and their capacity to resist in the face of drug-using peers, and identifying meaningful alternatives to drug use. In Italy, among the numerous prevention activities undertaken during the reporting period, two areas of focus were the prevention of road accidents caused by driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol and a more responsible use of the Internet by minors to limit exposure to dangerous psychoactive substances.

## F. Oceania

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Drug trafficking through the Pacific islands en route to Australia and New Zealand is of increasing concern and poses a security and public health challenge to the countries of the region.

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### 1. Major developments

755. Drug trafficking through the Pacific islands en route to Australia and New Zealand is of increasing concern. The low level of adherence to the three international drug control treaties coupled with the unique geography of the region renders the Pacific islands vulnerable to drug trafficking and drug-related organized crime. In addition to large seizures seen in the Pacific islands of drugs that were destined for Australia and to a lesser extent New Zealand, domestic seizures of smaller quantities and observations in the region appear to indicate growing levels of drug abuse in some Pacific island States.

756. There were increasing concerns about trafficking in drugs such as methamphetamine in the Pacific islands, as noted by the Regional Policy Consultations of the Pacific Islands Forum, which identified trafficking as an emerging issue to be covered by the Forum in 2019. The Regional Security Declaration (the “Boe Declaration”) endorsed by Forum Leaders at the Forty-Ninth Pacific

Island Forum held in Nauru from 3 to 6 September 2018 recognized an increasingly complex regional security environment driven by multifaceted security challenges. In the Forum communiqué, Forum Leaders welcomed the decision by the Government of Australia to work with regional security agencies to establish the Pacific Fusion Centre to strengthen information-sharing and maritime domain awareness to inform responses to threats such as drug trafficking and transnational crimes. The Pacific Fusion Centre was to build on existing security architecture, including the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre.

757. The Board reiterates its concern that many of the non-parties to the three international drug control conventions are located in Oceania.<sup>81</sup> The Board remains engaged with the countries of the region to support their steps towards treaty adherence and implementation and welcomed the accession of Palau to the 1988 Convention. The Board urges those States that are not yet party to all three drug control conventions to take steps towards accession as a matter of priority. In addition, the Board calls on countries and international and regional organizations that provide support to the non-parties in the region to aid the efforts of the non-parties to accede to the treaties as a matter of priority.

## 2. Regional cooperation

758. The Transnational, Serious and Organized Crime Pacific Taskforce was launched by the law enforcement agencies of Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Tonga in February 2019. The goals of the Taskforce are to (a) enhance the sharing of information between participants through the established Pacific Transnational Crime Network, the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre and transnational crime units; (b) investigate and disrupt transnational serious and organized crime entities operating from, through or impacting the participant countries; (c) target organized crime entities or syndicates utilizing small craft to move illicit drugs and facilitate other organized criminal activity; (d) demonstrate the commitment of participants to effective multinational cooperation and effectiveness in combating transnational organized crime; and (e) strengthen cooperation to conduct expanded investigations on transnational organized criminal groups.

<sup>81</sup>Seven of the 10 States yet to accede to the 1961 Convention are in Oceania: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Eight of the 13 States not party to the 1971 Convention are in Oceania: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Four of the 7 non-parties to the 1988 Convention are in Oceania: Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

759. The twenty-first annual conference of the Oceania Customs Organization took place in May 2019 in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, attended by 21 member customs administrations and representatives of international and regional organizations, including the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police. Topics discussed at the conference included trade facilitation, revenue mobilization, border security and digital capacity. The INCB secretariat participated in the conference to highlight challenges in addressing trafficking in synthetic drugs and related substances to and through the small island States of the region. In particular, the Board's secretariat provided information on the trafficking of fentanyl-related substances by means of international mail and express courier services, and demonstrated the use of the Board's IONICS system. In 2019, the Board signed a memorandum of understanding with the Oceania Customs Organization to facilitate cooperation in countering trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, new psychoactive substances and precursor chemicals.

760. The 2019 PICP conference, on "Preventing drug harm within our communities", was held in American Samoa in August 2019, at which a draft PICP strategic plan was presented. At a meeting of the PICP Executive Leadership Team held in Sydney in early 2019, the Pacific Transnational Crime Network gave a presentation on crime trends across the Pacific, focusing on illicit drugs, human trafficking and gang movements.

761. At the meeting of the Pacific Island Law Officers' Network held in the Cook Islands in October 2018, the PICP Secretariat gave a presentation on current activities and the Pacific Methamphetamine Action Plan. According to the PICP Secretariat, the Network had completed an analysis of legislation on methamphetamine in the Pacific island region. A Pacific Transnational Crime Network Team Leaders' Meeting held in Fiji in September 2018 included a workshop to identify actions to support the Pacific Methamphetamine Action Plan.

## 3. National legislation, policy and action

762. In August 2019, Palau acceded to the 1988 Convention, a development which was welcomed by the Board. In an executive order issued in April 2019, the President of Palau referred, inter alia, to the growing incidence of drug trafficking. The executive order stated that the policy of the Government was to strengthen border security, and it set out measures to secure ports of entry and prevent the entry of foreign nationals intending to commit any form of transnational crime.

763. In Tonga in June 2019, representatives of Government, churches and young people participated in a two-day meeting to discuss and review the draft first national illicit drugs policy. The five-year policy aims at building a safe, healthy and resilient Tonga through effective prevention and enhanced enforcement and by progressively reducing harm, and was approved by the Tongan Cabinet in October 2019. The policy had six strategic areas of focus: supply reduction and alternative development; demand and harm reduction; improved coordination and control; international and regional cooperation; improving data collection, analysis and information-sharing; and compliance with human rights. Also in 2019, the Tonga Police announced that a drug task force had been initiated.

764. In Samoa, participants doing training on the Universal Treatment Curriculum for Substance Use Disorders completed a training course on basic counselling skills for addiction professionals as a step towards their certification as alcohol and drug addiction counselors. The training was facilitated through the Colombo Plan in partnership with the Government of Samoa, with funding from the United States State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

765. The Misuse of Drugs (Medicinal Cannabis) Amendment Act 2018 came into effect in New Zealand in December 2018. As a result, people with terminal illnesses have an exemption and statutory defence for possessing and using cannabis, and CBD is no longer a controlled drug at the national level. Within a year of coming into effect, the Minister of Health must recommend regulations establishing standards for medicinal cannabis products, and those regulations will be a key element of the medical cannabis programme to be established. In 2019, the drug legislation of New Zealand was amended, inter alia, to reaffirm the existing discretion in prosecuting for possession and use, with the specification that when considering whether a prosecution is required in the public interest, in addition to any other relevant matters, consideration should be given to whether a health-centred or therapeutic approach would be more beneficial to the public interest, and to make it possible to issue temporary drug orders for emerging and potentially harmful substances of abuse.

766. In September 2019, the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory, a self-governing territory within the Australian federal system of government, adopted legislation which, once in force, will create exceptions to existing criminal offences for persons over the age of 18 for the following: possession of up to 50 grams of cannabis for non-medical purposes; and cultivation of

up to two cannabis plants (with a maximum of four plants per household). The Board remains engaged in dialogue with the Government of Australia with a view to ensuring the full implementation by Australia of its international legal obligations under the international drug control legal framework. The Government of New Zealand announced that on the occasion of the general election in 2020 a referendum would be held on the legalization and regulation of cannabis. The Board remains engaged in dialogue with the Government of New Zealand, including through its mission to the country held in September 2019. The Board recalls that the 1961 Convention as amended, to which Australia and New Zealand are parties, requires States parties to limit the use of narcotic drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes.

767. Noting plans in the region to permit the cultivation of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes, the Board reminds Governments of the need to respect the requirements of the 1961 Convention as amended and that controls must be in place to ensure that material is not diverted to the illicit market. The Board also notes that, according to the terms of the 1961 Convention as amended, the overproduction of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes should be avoided and currently, as reported to the Board, this supply is being met through existing licit sources.

768. In New Zealand, in December 2018, a report was released containing the findings of a government enquiry into mental health and addiction, with recommendations covering, inter alia, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, regulation, and responses to possession of drugs for personal use. In response, the Government announced a number of related initiatives in connection with its 2019 budget, focusing on mental health and addiction support. The initiatives announced included the expansion of access to primary mental health and addiction support, enhancement of specialist drug services, a new acute drug harm response discretionary fund, establishment of a drug early warning system, and addiction training focusing on communities experiencing harm from synthetic drugs.

769. In September 2019, the final report of the review of the Narcotic Drugs Act 1967 was submitted to the Parliament of Australia. The report contains 26 recommendations to improve the regulatory framework for the cultivation, production and manufacture of medicinal cannabis in Australia. The recommendations were accepted by the Government and would be implemented through a two-stage process commencing as of the end of 2019.

770. Efforts continued in Australia to address the illicit supply of methamphetamine. For example, in February 2019, a specialist multi-agency team was established in the State of South Australia, led by the South Australia Police and comprising members of agencies such as the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Border Force and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission. The Western Australia Police Force started use of its “meth enforcement vans”, which were equipped with forensic testing facilities, drug detection devices and specialist communications equipment, and were used to counter trafficking of methamphetamine on state highways.

771. In Australia, following a public consultation on prescription opioids in 2018, an Opioid Regulatory Advisory Group was established to provide independent, expert advice. As a result of the Group’s advice, for example, smaller pack sizes would be introduced for immediate-release prescription opioid products, specific warnings for health professionals and consumers would be required for all prescription opioids, and consumers were being encouraged to return unwanted opioids for destruction.

#### 4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

772. Large quantities of drugs, mainly cocaine and methamphetamine, continue to be seized in the island States of the region. For example, a record seizure of 500 kg of cocaine was made on a yacht in Honiara, Solomon Islands, in September 2018, as a result of a joint investigation with Australian authorities. A seizure of 6.7 kg of methamphetamine, 625.29 grams of cannabis and 107.29 grams of cannabis oil was made in Tonga in April 2019, detected in a shipment sent from the United States. Also in April 2019, approximately 3 kg of methamphetamine were seized in a drug operation in Tonga. A number of seizures of smaller quantities of methamphetamine were also reported in Tonga in the past year, indicating the possibility of abuse of methamphetamine in the country. Cooperation between law enforcement authorities in Fiji and New Zealand resulted in seizures of methamphetamine that was alleged to have been trafficked from the United States to New Zealand, as well as the seizure of 39 kg of cocaine in Fiji.

773. A varying trend is observed in the quantity of methamphetamine seized in Oceania: following an upward trend in seizure quantities over the period 2009–2014 and a subsequent decline over the period 2014–2016, there was an increase again in 2017. Australia and New Zealand accounted for 93 per cent and 7 per cent,

respectively, of the quantity of methamphetamine seized in the region in the period 2013–2017. A ninefold increase in the quantity of “ecstasy” seized in the period 2013–2017 was reported in Oceania, which accounted for one fifth of the quantity of “ecstasy” seized worldwide in that period.

774. The amount of amphetamine-type stimulants (excluding MDMA), predominantly methamphetamine, detected at the Australian border (2.95 tons) increased by 61 per cent from 2016/17 to 2017/18, and the amount of MDMA detected at the border increased by 59.6 per cent over that period, to 1.42 tons in 2017/18. Over the same period, total seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants (including MDMA) in Australia increased by 48 per cent to 11.2 tons.

775. A change in the pattern of methamphetamine trafficking into Australia has been seen in recent years. In 2015, China and Hong Kong, China, were the two main embarkation points for methamphetamine trafficked to Australia. By 2017, the United States had become the most important embarkation point, followed by Thailand and Malaysia. In 2017/18, the United States continued to be the primary embarkation point for amphetamine-type stimulants (excluding MDMA) detected at the Australian border. In January 2019, cooperation between the authorities of Australia and the United States led to the seizure in the United States of a record quantity of more than 1.7 tons of methamphetamine destined for Australia. In June 2019, in Australia, a record onshore seizure of almost 1.6 tons of methamphetamine, concealed in a consignment originating in Thailand, was announced.

776. In 2017, Canada and to a lesser extent the United States were reported for the first time as being main countries of departure for methamphetamine found in New Zealand, followed by Hong Kong, China; China; and Mexico. In New Zealand, over 2018 and 2019, police in Wellington targeted organized criminal groups involved in the distribution of methamphetamine.

777. The number of clandestine laboratories detected in Australia continued to decrease, with 432 detected clandestine laboratories in 2017/18, compared with 463 the previous year, and with methamphetamine being the main drug manufactured. The clandestine laboratories detected continued to be primarily user-based (i.e., manufacture for own use) and located in residential areas, but the proportion of such laboratories has decreased by a third since 2011/12, while the proportion of other small-scale laboratories has doubled, and the proportion that are medium-sized laboratories has more than doubled. While almost half of the detected laboratories (46.2 per

cent) were illicitly producing amphetamines, predominantly from the precursors ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, a record 22 clandestine laboratories manufacturing GHB/GBL were detected (compared with 11 the previous year), and 20 laboratories were illicitly manufacturing MDMA, the largest number in the past decade and more than double the number in the previous year (8 laboratories manufacturing MDMA detected). A fluctuating trend was seen in the detection of clandestine laboratories in New Zealand, rising from 45 detections in 2015 to 745 in 2016 but then falling to 79 detections in 2017.

778. Significant amounts of the methamphetamine precursors ephedrine and pseudoephedrine were seized in Australia and New Zealand in the period 2013–2017, while only small amounts of the amphetamine precursors 1-phenyl-2-propanone (P-2-P) and phenylacetic acid were seized in the region. The amount of precursors for the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants (excluding MDMA) detected at the Australian border more than doubled from the past year, reaching a record level of 4.9 tons in 2017/18. Over the same period, the amount of precursors of MDMA detected at the border decreased significantly, from 10 kg to 5 grams in 2017/18, consisting of a single seizure.

779. The quantity of heroin and morphine seized in the region continued to decrease in 2017, falling to the lowest level since 2009. More than 90 per cent of the total amount of heroin and morphine seized in Oceania was seized in Australia. The amount of heroin detected at the Australian border decreased by 5.7 per cent from the previous year, to 190.1 kg in 2017/18. Most of the heroin seized in Australia originated in South-East Asia, but an increase was observed in the proportion of seized heroin originating in South-West Asia.

780. Owing to a spike in seizures in Australia, the total quantity of cocaine seized in Oceania increased by 94 per cent from 2016 to 2017, and accounted for 0.3 per cent of the quantity of cocaine seized globally in 2017. Of the cocaine seized in Oceania over the period 2013–2017, 98 per cent was seized in Australia; during that period, seizures of cocaine in Australia quadrupled, from 1 ton to 4.1 tons. Seizures of cocaine at the Australian border were relatively stable over the past year, declining by 16.5 per cent, from a record 1.1 tons in 2016/17 to 0.9 tons in 2017/18; seizures of cocaine in the country decreased by 57.4 per cent, to 1.97 tons, nevertheless still the second highest seizure total on record. While Colombia remained the primary source of cocaine analysed, the proportion of cocaine originating in Peru increased, returning to a level similar to that of 2015. Over the period 2013–2017, the quantity of cocaine seized in New Zealand also

increased, from 0.2 kg to 108 kg. In August 2018, a record seizure of approximately 190 kg of cocaine, destined for Australia, was made at the New Zealand border following a joint investigation with Australian authorities.

781. Increases in cannabis seizures were reported in 2017 in Oceania, although those seizures accounted for less than 1 per cent of total worldwide seizures of cannabis herb and cannabis resin. A 10-year record amount (580.2 kg) of cannabis was detected at the Australian border in 2017/18 (compared with 102.5 kg in 2016/17), the greatest proportion of which was cannabis oil. The amount of cannabis seized within Australia increased for the third consecutive year, to 8.656 tons in 2017/18, from 7.55 tons in 2016/17.

782. The analysis of wastewater monitoring data in Australia indicated that the total seizures (by weight) of amphetamines, MDMA, heroin and cocaine in 2017/8 were the equivalent of 51.4 per cent, 175.0 per cent, 30.5 per cent and 47.9 per cent of the estimated consumption of those respective substances in the country for that period.

783. According to UNODC, countries in Oceania reported minimal seizures of fentanyl and its analogues. The number of detections of new psychoactive substances at the Australian border decreased by 29.0 per cent from 2016/17 to 2017/18 (687 detections). By weight, amphetamine-type substances accounted for 46.5 per cent of the new psychoactive substances analysed, followed by cathinone-type substances (38.1 per cent) and tryptamine-type substances (9.3 per cent).

## 5. Prevention and treatment

784. According to UNODC, the prevalence of past-year drug use among adults in Oceania (statistics for Australia and New Zealand only) is 11.0 per cent for cannabis, 3.28 per cent for opioids (including opiates and pharmaceutical opioids), 0.16 per cent for opiates, 2.2 per cent for cocaine, 1.34 per cent for amphetamines and pharmaceutical stimulants, and 2.17 per cent for “ecstasy”. In the Federated States of Micronesia, the prevalence of past-year abuse of cannabis is 17.2 per cent, and past-year abuse of amphetamines and pharmaceutical stimulants is 1.58 per cent. No comprehensive data on the level of drug abuse exist for the remainder of the region. The Board encourages the regional and international organizations that provide assistance to the Pacific island States to extend their support to the collection of data on the extent of the drug problem in order to facilitate the adoption of targeted and evidence-based drug policies.

785. The National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Programme of Australia, with coverage of 54 per cent of the country's population, shows that methamphetamine consumption continues to exceed consumption of all other illicit drug types and pharmaceuticals, and the population-weighted average consumption of methamphetamine increased from 2016 to 2018. Estimated MDMA consumption was low compared with other substances that were tested for, and the population-weighted average consumption decreased from 2016 to 2018. Oxycodone and fentanyl had elevated consumption levels at several test sites, and fentanyl consumption was increasing in several areas. Estimated heroin consumption decreased at the test sites from 2017 to 2018, while the estimated consumption of cocaine increased. Authorities report that both supply and demand indicators suggest an expanding cocaine market in the country. Among people who inject drugs, increasing use of methamphetamine has been reported, now surpassing heroin as the drug most frequently injected.

786. According to the 2017 Australian Secondary Students Alcohol and Drug Survey, 2 per cent of respondents, aged 12–17, reported having ever used methamphetamine, and 1 per cent reported past-month use of the substance. Lifetime prevalence of cannabis use increased from 16 per cent in 2014 to 17 per cent in 2017; and past-month use had increased from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. For “ecstasy”, reported lifetime use increased from 3 per cent in 2014 to 5 per cent in 2017, and reported past-month use increased over the same period, from 1 per cent to 2 per cent. For heroin abuse, both lifetime and past-month prevalence were reported to be 1 per cent. Cocaine abuse remained stable, with lifetime prevalence of 2.0 per cent and past-month use at 1.0 per cent. Past-month use of hallucinogens (specified in the survey as LSD or “magic mushrooms”) remained stable at 1.0 per cent, while lifetime use increased, from 3 per cent in 2014 to 4 per cent in 2017. The lifetime prevalence of synthetic cannabis decreased, from 2.3 per cent to 2.0 per cent.

787. The number of amphetamines-related treatment episodes in Australia increased by about 84 per cent between 2013/14 and 2017/18. Cocaine-related episodes increased by 160 per cent, while the number of heroin-related treatment episodes decreased by about

8 per cent, and morphine cases decreased by 40 per cent. Over the past decade, treatment episodes for amphetamines increased by over 300 per cent, and the number of heroin treatment episodes decreased by 22 per cent. In 2017/18, the most common principal drugs of concern leading clients to seek treatment were amphetamines, cannabis and heroin.

788. The proportion of police detainees in Australia testing positive for methamphetamine decreased from 51.3 per cent in 2016/17 to 45.6 per cent in 2017/18, which is still significantly higher than in 2008/09 (15.8 per cent). Cannabis remained a commonly used drug among detainees, but its prevalence steadily declined from 57 per cent in 2008/09 to 46 per cent in 2017/18. The proportion of detainees testing positive for MDMA also decreased, from 2 per cent in 2016/17 to 0.8 per cent in 2017/18. A decrease was also seen in the proportion of detainees testing positive for heroin, from 7.3 per cent in 2016/17 to 6.4 per cent in 2017/18. For cocaine, the proportion of detainees testing positive increased from 1.8 per cent in 2016/17 to 2.1 per cent in 2017/18.

789. The New Zealand Health Survey for 2017/18 found that among adults, the past-year prevalence of abuse of cannabis and amphetamines was 11.9 per cent and 0.8 per cent, respectively. Because of changes in the survey methodology, comparison with previous surveys was not possible.

790. The first findings of the New Zealand national wastewater testing programme, which covers about 80 per cent of the population and which tests for the presence of methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, MDMA and fentanyl, were released in April 2019. Preliminary results for the period from November 2018 to January 2019 show that methamphetamine is the most commonly detected illicit drug nationwide, with an estimated average total national consumption of 16 kg per week. According to UNODC, wastewater analysis indicated a 350 per cent increase in the quantity of MDMA consumed in 2017 in New Zealand, surpassing in December 2017 the level of consumption of methamphetamine. In the light of those findings and the increasing quantities of MDMA seized over the period 2015–2017, demand for MDMA and “ecstasy”-type substances appears to have been increasing rapidly in the country.