

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

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

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

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.