

# Chapter II.

## Functioning of the international drug control system

### A. Promoting the consistent application of the international drug control treaties

64. The international drug control legal framework consists of 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. Together, these three instruments have been recognized by the international community as constituting the cornerstone of the international drug control system.

65. These conventions establish the legal framework for the licit trade in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals. They require States parties to create administrative structures responsible for monitoring the production and manufacture of and trade in substances scheduled under the conventions and they establish obligations for States parties to report to the Board on, inter alia, their expected licit requirements, actual consumption, international trade and seizures.

66. The conventions are aimed at fostering the availability of controlled substances for medical, scientific or industrial use while preventing their diversion into illicit channels. They also limit the production, manufacture, export, import and distribution of, trade in and possession of drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes.

67. In addition, the conventions contain provisions related to the treatment of drug-related behaviours, including the obligation for States parties to make certain drug-related

behaviours punishable offences. Furthermore, they provide that criminal justice responses to suspected drug-related crime should be consistent with the principle of proportionality and, accordingly, that crimes of lesser gravity may be subject to lesser penalties and crimes committed by people who use drugs may be dealt with through alternative measures to conviction or punishment, including measures of treatment, education, aftercare, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

68. The conventions also provide a legal basis for international cooperation, extradition and mutual legal assistance and require States parties to develop strategies aimed at prevention, and frameworks for the treatment and rehabilitation of people affected by drug use and dependence.

#### 1. Status of adherence to the international drug control treaties

69. The international drug control conventions continue to number among the most widely ratified international instruments, enjoying near universal adherence.

70. As at 1 November 2023, the 1961 Convention as amended had been ratified or acceded to by 186 States. Only 10 States had yet to become parties, namely, the Cook Islands, Equatorial Guinea, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, South Sudan, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Chad has ratified the 1961 Convention in its unamended form.

71. The number of States parties to the 1971 Convention remained at 184 during the period under review. Thirteen States had not yet become parties to that Convention, namely, the Cook Islands, Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, Kiribati,

Liberia, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

72. The 1988 Convention remains the most widely ratified of the three international drug control conventions, having 192 parties (191 States and the European Union) after South Sudan deposited its accession on 20 October 2023. Equatorial Guinea, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Somalia and Tuvalu have yet to accede.

**73. The Board reiterates that universal ratification of the drug control conventions is imperative for strengthening the international drug control legal framework and for ensuring that traffickers do not target non-parties owing to actual or perceived weaknesses in the scope of control of scheduled substances.**

**74. Consequently, and in the spirit of common and shared responsibility, the Board encourages those States that have yet to accede to one or more of the international drug control conventions to do so without delay and to ensure their comprehensive implementation into national law. To that end, in the exercise of its mandate, INCB stands ready to assist in whatever manner is needed.**

## 2. Changes to the scheduling of substances under international control

### Narcotic drugs

75. On 15 March 2023, at its sixty-sixth session, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs decided, on the basis of the recommendations by WHO, to place etazene, etonitazepine, 2-methyl-AP-237 and protonitazene in Schedule I of the 1961 Convention as amended. The decision of the Commission became effective with respect to each party on the date of receipt of the official communication by the Secretary-General.

### Psychotropic substances

76. Also at its sixty-sixth session, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs decided, by its decisions 66/5, 66/6 and 66/7, to include ADB-BUTINACA, *alpha*-PiHP and 3-methylmethcathinone in Schedule II of the 1971 Convention, bringing the total number of substances controlled under the 1971 Convention to 170.

77. The scheduling decision became fully effective on 13 November 2023, namely, 180 days after the date of communication by the Secretary-General.

### Precursor chemicals

78. In June 2023, the Board notified the Secretary-General of two series of closely related precursors of, respectively, amphetamine and methamphetamine, and “ecstasy”-type substances, proposing that they be included in the tables of the 1988 Convention. The proposal was made in response to a significant increase in seizures of P-2-P methyl glycidic acid and its methyl ester (“BMK glycidate”), and of the ethyl ester of 3,4-MDP-2-P methyl glycidic acid (“PMK ethyl glycidate”), which are alternative precursors to, respectively, P-2-P and 3,4-MDP-2-P, two precursors already under international control. The proposal, to include a total of 16 substances (esters and acids), was also made in line with Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 65/3 of March 2022.

79. In addition, in July 2023, the Government of the United States of America proposed that two precursors of fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances, namely, 4-piperidone and 1-boc-4-piperidone, also be included in the tables of the 1988 Convention.

80. Pursuant to the procedure set out in article 12, paragraph 3, of the 1988 Convention, Governments were invited to submit their comments and supplementary information for each of the 18 chemicals listed in the proposals to assist the Board in establishing assessments and making scheduling recommendations to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its sixty-seventh session.

81. In November 2023, following the analysis of information received from Member States, INCB recommended the scheduling of all 18 substances in Table I of the 1988 Convention. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs was to vote on the proposals in March 2024.

## 3. Submission of information by Governments to the Board

### (a) Statistical reports for narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals

82. In accordance with its mandate, the Board publishes its annual report and the report on the implementation of

article 12 of the 1988 Convention. The Board also publishes technical reports that provide Governments with an analysis of statistical information on the manufacture, consumption, utilization and stocks of and trade in internationally controlled substances, together with an analysis of estimates and assessments of requirements for those substances.

83. The Board's reports and technical publications are produced on the basis of information that parties to the international drug control treaties are obligated to submit. In addition, pursuant to resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Governments voluntarily provide information in order to facilitate an accurate and comprehensive evaluation of the functioning of the international drug and precursor control system.

84. The data and other information received from Governments enable the Board to monitor licit activities involving narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals and to evaluate treaty compliance and the overall functioning of the international drug and precursor control system. On the basis of its analysis, the Board makes recommendations to improve the workings of the system with a view to ensuring the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical, scientific and industrial needs, while at the same time preventing their diversion from licit into illicit channels.

## Narcotic drugs

85. As at 1 November 2023, the Board had received annual statistical reports from 155 States (both parties and non-parties) and territories on the production, manufacture, consumption, utilization, stocks and seizures of narcotic drugs covering the calendar year 2022 (form C), or about 72 per cent of those requested. That number was slightly lower than the number of reports for 2021 received by 7 September 2022.

86. A total of 117 Governments, or 45 per cent of all Governments providing data, submitted their statistical forms on time, that is, by the deadline of 30 June 2023, which was fewer than in 2022 (121 Governments). As at 1 November 2023, 59 Governments (28 per cent) had not submitted their annual statistics for 2022. It is expected that several additional countries and territories will be submitting their data over the coming months. Of the countries and territories that have not submitted their reports, the majority are in Africa and the Americas (including the Caribbean), followed by Asia and Oceania; two European countries have not provided their annual statistical form. Some of those countries are in conflict and post-conflict

situations, which create additional obstacles to their drug control efforts, in addition to a general lack of human and financial resources.

87. Most countries that produce, manufacture, import, export or consume large amounts of narcotic drugs submitted annual statistics, although of differing quality. Accurate, complete and timely reporting is an important indicator of the effectiveness and efficiency of drug control systems, and the availability of good data is vital for the Board to accurately carry out the monitoring function accorded to it under the international drug control treaties. The quality of some data is a concern for the Board, in particular if they are data from major producing and manufacturing countries, as they indicate deficiencies in national mechanisms for regulating and monitoring internationally controlled substances. The Board urges Governments to continue to strengthen their national mechanisms to monitor the cultivation, production and manufacture of and trade in controlled substances. This may be achieved, in part, by improving and developing national data-collection systems, training staff of the competent national authorities and ensuring close cooperation with companies licensed to deal with internationally controlled substances.

88. As at 1 November 2023, the complete set of four quarterly statistics of imports and exports of narcotic drugs for 2022 (form A) had been received from 146 Governments (135 countries and 11 territories), or about 69 per cent of the 213 Governments requested. In addition, 26 Governments (about 12 per cent) had submitted at least one quarterly report. A total of 41 countries (about 19 per cent) had failed to submit any quarterly statistics for 2022.

## Psychotropic substances

89. The number of annual statistical reports on psychotropic substances submitted for 2022 (form P), in accordance with article 16 of the 1971 Convention, increased in comparison with the number submitted for the previous year. As at 1 November 2023, annual statistical reports for 2022 had been submitted by 154 countries and 13 territories. Of the 184 States parties to the 1971 Convention, 149 States parties, or 81 per cent, had submitted their annual statistical reports; and 100, or 67 per cent, of those 149 States parties had submitted their reports by the 30 June deadline. A small number of States parties continued to submit statistics through partner countries. Furthermore, the Board received annual statistics from four States that are not parties to the Convention but that submit national data on a voluntary basis. Additionally, for the first time, the Board obtained the annual statistics from San Marino, the statistical data of which had previously been included in those of Italy.

90. In addition, 113 Governments voluntarily submitted all four quarterly statistical reports for 2022 on imports and exports of substances listed in Schedule II of the 1971 Convention, as requested by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1981/7, and a further 31 Governments submitted at least one quarterly report for 2022. The Board notes with satisfaction the good rate of submission of the annual statistical reports on psychotropic substances for 2022 and the number of non-parties and territories that have submitted an annual report.

91. The Board notes with concern the high percentage of States parties that did not furnish form P. A total of 19 countries and territories in Africa failed to furnish form P for 2022. Likewise, 10 countries and territories in Oceania, 8 countries and territories in Asia, 8 countries in Central America and the Caribbean, 2 countries in Europe and 1 country in South America failed to furnish form P for 2022. Form P for 2022 was furnished by all countries in North America.

92. The Board takes note of the countries that have provided data regarding their use of psychotropic substances for the manufacture of preparations exempted from some measures of control pursuant to article 3 of the 1971 Convention: 12 countries reported using 37 substances for such purposes in 2022. **The Board recalls recommendation 13 of its annual report for 2019,<sup>113</sup> in which it called upon Governments to ensure that all aspects of article 3 of the 1971 Convention were correctly implemented if they wished to exempt a preparation from certain measures of control.**

93. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolutions 1985/15 and 1987/30, requested Governments to provide the Board with details on trade (data broken down by country of origin and destination) in substances listed in Schedules III and IV of the 1971 Convention in their annual statistical reports on psychotropic substances. As at 1 November 2022, complete details on such trade had been submitted by 152 Governments (91 per cent of all submissions of form P for 2022). A further 15 Governments submitted blank forms or forms containing incomplete trade data for 2022.

94. The Board notes with appreciation that a number of countries have already submitted consumption data for psychotropic substances on a voluntary basis, in accordance with Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 54/6.

95. For 2022, a total of 99 countries and territories submitted data on the consumption of some or all psychotropic substances. The Board appreciates the cooperation of the Governments concerned and calls upon all Governments

to report on the consumption of psychotropic substances on an annual basis, pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 54/6, as such data are essential for an improved evaluation of the availability of psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes.

96. The Board notes with appreciation that reports on seizures of psychotropic substances were furnished by the Governments of Algeria, India and Iran (Islamic Republic of). **The Board acknowledges the interdiction efforts of the Governments concerned and reiterates its call for all Governments to furnish directly to the Board any information on interdictions of attempted diversions of psychotropic substances and keep it apprised of any developments in their trafficking.**

## Precursor chemicals

97. In accordance with article 12 of the 1988 Convention, parties are obliged to furnish information on substances frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. That information, provided on form D, assists the Board in monitoring and identifying trends in trafficking in precursors and the illicit manufacture of drugs. It also enables the Board to provide Governments with recommendations concerning remedial action and policies, as necessary.

98. As at 1 November 2023, a total of 114 Governments, including about 60 per cent of the States parties to the 1988 Convention, had submitted form D for 2022. However, the Board's analysis of the global precursor situation continued to be affected by late submission, the submission of incomplete or entirely blank forms, and the inability of some Governments to gather information at the national level and consolidate it into a single submission. For example, of the States parties that provided data on form D for 2022, only 68 reported the mandatory information on seizures of substances listed in Table I or Table II of the 1988 Convention, and only 56 reported seizures of non-scheduled substances. The level of the provision of details on the methods of diversion and illicit manufacture remained an issue of concern, as in previous years.

99. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/20, Governments are also requested to provide information regarding their licit trade in substances listed in Table I and Table II of the 1988 Convention on a voluntary and confidential basis. As at 1 November 2023, 105 States parties had provided such information for 2022 to the Board, and 91 had furnished data on licit uses of and/or requirements for one or more of the substances listed in Tables I and II of the 1988 Convention.

<sup>113</sup>E/INCB/2019/1, para. 806.

100. Information shared through the Board's Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS) continued to complement the aggregated seizure data received annually from Governments through form D. Specifically, the real-time communication of information on individual chemical and equipment-related incidents has provided concrete leads for national authorities to initiate backtracking investigations and cooperation to identify those responsible for diversion and trafficking.

101. As at 1 November 2023, PICS had registered users from more than 300 agencies in 130 countries. They shared almost 500 new incidents during the reporting period.

102. The seizure data reported and a detailed analysis of the latest trends and developments in trafficking in precursor chemicals under international control, as well as their non-scheduled substitutes and alternatives, can be found in the report of the Board for 2023 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.<sup>114</sup>

## (b) Estimates for narcotic drugs, assessments for psychotropic substances and annual legitimate requirements for precursor chemicals

### Narcotic drugs

103. The estimates of annual legitimate requirements for narcotic drugs and the assessments of annual legitimate requirements for psychotropic substances are essential pillars of the international drug control system. They enable both exporting and importing countries to ensure that trade in those substances stays within the limits determined by the Governments of importing countries and that diversion of controlled substances from international trade is effectively prevented. For narcotic drugs, the estimates of annual legitimate requirements are mandatory under the 1961 Convention as amended, and the estimates furnished by Governments need to be confirmed by the Board before becoming the basis for calculating the limits on manufacture and import. As at 20 November 2023, the Governments of 177 countries and territories, or 82.7 per cent of those requested, had submitted estimates of requirements for narcotic drugs for 2024. To ensure that Governments may import narcotic drugs for medical and scientific purposes, estimates are established by the Board for countries that are unable to supply them. In 2023, a total of 39 countries, in all regions of the world, operated on the basis of estimates established for them by the Board.

104. Governments are obliged to comply with the limits on imports and exports of narcotic drugs provided for under articles 21 and 31 of the 1961 Convention as amended. Article 21 stipulates, *inter alia*, that the total of the quantities of each drug manufactured and imported by any country or territory in a given year is not to exceed the sum of the following: (a) the quantity consumed for medical and scientific purposes; (b) the quantity used, within the limits of the relevant estimates, for the manufacture of other drugs, preparations in schedule III and of substances not covered by the 1961 Convention; (c) the quantity exported; (d) the quantity added to the stock for the purpose of bringing that stock up to the level specified in the relevant estimate; and (e) the quantity acquired within the limit of the relevant estimate for special purposes. Article 31 requires all exporting countries to limit the export of narcotic drugs to any country or territory to quantities that fall within the limits of the total of the estimates of the importing country or territory, with the addition of the amounts intended for re-export.

105. The system of imports and exports continues to be implemented by Governments without major challenges. In 2023, a total of 15 countries were contacted regarding possible excess imports or excess exports identified with regard to international trade in narcotic drugs that had been effected during 2022. As at 1 November 2023, five of those countries had responded. The Board continues to pursue the matter with those countries that have not responded.

### Psychotropic substances

106. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolutions 1981/7 and 1991/44, Governments are requested to provide to the Board assessments of annual domestic medical and scientific requirements for psychotropic substances listed in Schedules II, III and IV of the 1971 Convention. The assessments received are communicated to all States and territories to assist the competent authorities of exporting countries when approving exports of psychotropic substances. As at 1 November 2023, the Governments of all countries and territories except South Sudan (for which assessments were established by the Board in 2011) had submitted at least one assessment of their annual medical requirements for psychotropic substances.

107. However, 60 Governments have not submitted a full revision of their legitimate requirements for psychotropic substances for three years or more. The assessments valid for those countries and territories may therefore no longer reflect their actual medical and scientific requirements for such substances.

<sup>114</sup>E/INCB/2023/4.

108. When assessments are lower than the actual legitimate requirements, the importation of psychotropic substances needed for medical or scientific purposes may be delayed. When assessments are significantly higher than legitimate needs, the risk of psychotropic substances being diverted into illicit channels may be increased.

109. As in previous years, the system of assessments of annual requirements for psychotropic substances continues to function well and is respected by most countries and territories. In 2022, the authorities of 18 countries issued import authorizations for substances for which they had not established any such assessments or for quantities that significantly exceeded their assessments. No country was identified as having exported psychotropic substances in quantities exceeding the relevant assessment.

**110. The Board recommends that Governments continue to strengthen the capacity of competent national authorities to adequately estimate their medical and scientific requirements for narcotic drugs and assessments for psychotropic substances, including through the use of globally available e-learning modules, and also recommends that Governments enhance domestic data-collection mechanisms so that they can present estimates and assessments that reflect the national requirements used for medical purposes. The Board further recommends that Governments review and update the assessments of their annual medical and scientific requirements for psychotropic substances at least once every three years.**

## Precursor chemicals

111. In the context of Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 49/3, Member States voluntarily provide estimates of their annual legitimate requirements for imports of certain precursor chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants. The provision of annual legitimate requirements is requested for ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, 3,4-MDP-2-P and P-2-P, as well as, to the extent possible, preparations containing those substances that could be easily used or recovered by readily applicable means. The estimates are aimed at informing exporting countries about the legitimate requirements of importing countries for those substances, thus preventing their over-supply and diversion into illicit channels and ensuring their availability for legitimate purposes.

112. As at 1 November 2023, 185 Governments had provided an estimate of their annual legitimate requirement for at least one of the above-mentioned precursor chemicals. During the reporting period, 105 Governments reconfirmed

or updated their annual legitimate requirements for at least one substance.

113. Governments provide estimates of their annual legitimate requirements for imports of precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants and their preparations to the Board mostly on form D and can update them at any time throughout the year by means of individual communications. The latest annual legitimate requirements, as submitted by countries and territories, are regularly updated and published on a dedicated page of the Board's website. Annual legitimate requirements are also available to registered users through the PEN Online system.

114. Further details related to annual legitimate requirements can be found in the report of the Board for 2023 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention. In addition, the publication entitled *Guide on Estimating Requirements for Substances under International Control*, developed by INCB and WHO for use by competent national authorities, and the document entitled "Issues that Governments may consider when determining annual legitimate requirements for imports of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine" are available on the Board's website.

## 4. Efforts to prevent diversion from international trade

115. The system of control measures laid down in the 1961 Convention as amended provides for the monitoring of international trade in narcotic drugs to prevent the diversion of such drugs into illicit channels. As a result of the almost universal implementation of the control measures stipulated in the 1971 Convention and the relevant Economic and Social Council resolutions, there has been only one identified case involving the diversion of psychotropic substances from international trade into illicit channels in recent years. In addition, the 1988 Convention requires parties to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals from international trade to the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The Board has developed various systems to monitor compliance with that aspect of the 1988 Convention and to facilitate cooperation between Governments to that end.

### Requirement for import and export authorizations

116. The universal application of the requirement for import and export authorizations laid down in the 1961 Convention as amended and the 1971 Convention is key to preventing the diversion of drugs into the illicit market.

Such authorizations are required for transactions involving any of the substances controlled under the 1961 Convention as amended or listed in Schedules I and II of the 1971 Convention.

117. Competent national authorities are required by those conventions to issue import authorizations for transactions involving the importation of such substances into their country. The competent national authorities of exporting countries must verify the authenticity of such import authorizations before issuing the export authorizations required to allow shipments containing the substances to leave their countries. Information on the use of electronic import and export authorizations for trade in internationally controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances is provided in paragraphs 308–314 of the present report.

118. The 1971 Convention does not require import and export authorizations for trade in the psychotropic substances listed in its Schedules III and IV. However, in view of the widespread diversion of those substances from licit international trade during the 1970s and 1980s, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolutions 1985/15, 1987/30 and 1993/38, requested Governments to extend the system of import and export authorizations to cover those psychotropic substances as well.

119. Most countries and territories have already introduced an import and export authorization requirement for psychotropic substances listed in Schedules III and IV of the 1971 Convention, in accordance with the above-mentioned Economic and Social Council resolutions. As at 1 November 2023, specific information had been made available to the Board by 205 countries and territories, showing that all major importing and exporting countries and territories now require import and export authorizations for all psychotropic substances listed in Schedules III and IV of the 1971 Convention. Upon request, the Board will make available, to all Governments, a table showing the import authorization requirements for substances listed in Schedules III and IV pursuant to the relevant Economic and Social Council resolutions. That table is also published in the secure area of the Board's website, which is accessible only to specifically authorized government officials, so that the competent national authorities of exporting countries may be informed as soon as possible of changes in import authorization requirements in importing countries.

120. **The Board reiterates its call to the Governments of the few remaining States in which national legislation and/or regulations do not yet require import and export authorizations for all psychotropic substances, regardless of whether they are States parties to the 1971 Convention, to extend such controls to all substances**

**listed in Schedules III and IV of the 1971 Convention as soon as possible and to inform the Board in that regard.**

## Discrepancies in international trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

121. Discrepancies in government reports on international trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are regularly investigated with the competent authorities of the relevant countries to ensure that no diversion from licit international trade has taken place. Those investigations may reveal shortcomings in the implementation of control measures, including the failure of companies to comply with national drug control provisions.

122. Since June 2023, investigations regarding discrepancies for 2022 related to international trade in narcotic drugs have been initiated with 54 countries. As at 1 November 2023, replies had been received from 27 countries. The responses indicated that the discrepancies had been caused by clerical and technical errors in preparing the reports, reporting on exports or imports of preparations in Schedule III of the 1961 Convention as amended without indicating it on the form, or inadvertent reporting of transit countries as trading partners. In some cases, countries confirmed the quantities reported by them, resulting in the initiation of follow-up investigations with their trading partners. The Board encourages the countries that have not yet replied to investigate the discrepancies as a matter of urgency and to inform it of their findings.

123. Similarly, with regard to the international trade in psychotropic substances, investigations relating to data quality concerns for 2021 data were initiated with 111 Governments, out of which 53 Governments have responded. As at 1 November 2023, discrepancies involving 106 countries and territories were identified with regard to 2022 annual statistical data.

## Pre-export notifications for precursor chemicals

124. The submission of pre-export notifications by exporting authorities to importing countries and territories has proved to be the most effective tool to quickly verify the legitimacy of individual transactions and identify suspicious shipments. Article 12, paragraph 10 (a), of the 1988 Convention allows the Governments of importing countries to make it mandatory for exporting countries to inform them of any planned export of internationally controlled precursors to their territory. Since the publishing of the annual report of the Board for 2022, the Government of

Burkina Faso has officially requested to be pre-notified of any planned export of substances included in Tables I and II of the 1988 Convention to its territory, thus increasing the number of Governments that have invoked that provision to 118. The Governments of Belarus and the United States amended their initial requests to now include all substances in Table I and Table II of the 1988 Convention, respectively. **The Board encourages all importing Governments that have not formally requested pre-export notifications to invoke article 12, paragraph 10 (a), of the 1988 Convention.**

125. PEN Online, the secure web-based tool established by the Board, facilitates real-time communication between importing and exporting Governments with regard to international trade in precursors. As at 1 November 2023, the Government of one more country, Antigua and Barbuda, had registered with PEN Online, bringing the total number of registered countries and territories to 169. INCB calls upon the Governments that have not yet registered with the PEN Online system to nominate at least one focal point for that purpose as soon as possible and calls upon Governments to use PEN Online actively and systematically. The Board stands ready to assist Governments in that regard.

126. To assist Governments in exchanging information on the international movement of non-scheduled chemicals, the Board launched PEN Online Light, a system similar to PEN Online, in October 2022. Although the sharing of information about planned exports of precursor chemicals not under international control through the PEN Online Light system is voluntary, **the Board encourages Governments to use that system for the export of such substances from their territory. More information on the functioning of PEN Online and PEN Online Light can be found in the report of the Board for 2023 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.**

### Article 13 of the 1988 Convention: materials and equipment used in illicit drug manufacture

127. Article 13 of the 1988 Convention provides a basis for Governments to cooperate in preventing equipment for the illicit production or manufacture of drugs from reaching illicit laboratories. However, the potential of the article has not yet been explored to the extent possible. Indeed, law enforcement operations aimed at dismantling illicit drug manufacturing laboratories mostly focus on seizing the final product, illicit drugs, paying little attention to the information that seized equipment can provide to investigations. In order to increase specialized knowledge and promote

the sharing of operational investigative experience, PICS, the INCB platform dedicated to sharing information on seizures of precursor chemicals, also contains information on seized equipment. The Board's resources and tools to help raise awareness, support Governments in increasing the implementation of article 13 and guide international policy efforts and cooperation to that end are available on a dedicated page of the INCB website. **The Board encourages Governments that have not yet implemented article 13 of the 1988 Convention to examine ways to do so. Governments are also encouraged to make full use of the Board's available tools and resources related to illicit manufacturing equipment, including PICS.**

128. During the reporting period, the Board continued to cooperate with WCO to identify currently applicable Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System codes ("HS codes") and establish unique HS codes for the most relevant items of equipment included in the International Monitoring List of Equipment used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.<sup>115</sup> The unique HS codes will allow more effective monitoring of trade in those items and thus contribute to preventing their diversion into illicit channels.

## B. Ensuring the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes

129. In line with its mandate to ensure the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, the Board carries out various activities related to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. This includes monitoring action taken by Governments, international organizations and other bodies to support the availability and rational use of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and providing, through its secretariat, technical support and guidance to Governments in their implementation of the provisions of the international drug control treaties.

130. The data available to INCB confirm the persistent disparities between regions in the consumption of opioid analgesics for the treatment of pain. Almost all such consumption is concentrated in Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Consumption levels in other regions are

<sup>115</sup>The list includes certain items of equipment that are of international relevance and for which substantial evidence exists of their use in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, new psychoactive substances and precursors. It is available on the Board's secure website.

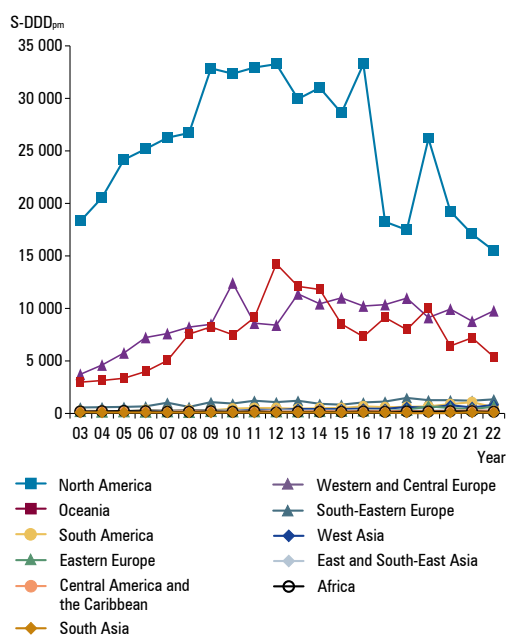


often not sufficient to meet the medical needs of the population. These regional imbalances are not due to a shortage of opiate raw materials. Supply has been found to be more than sufficient to satisfy the demand reported to INCB by Governments, but it is evident that a large number of countries may not be accurately reflecting in their reported demand the actual medical needs of their populations, and hence the disparity in availability.

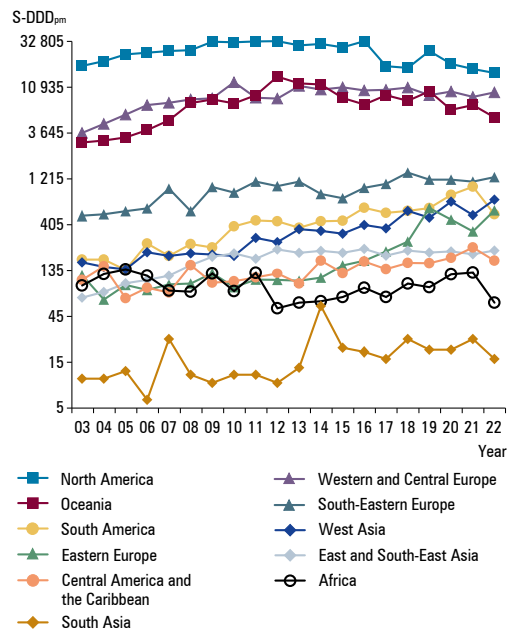
131. Regional analysis of the main trends in the consumption of the main opioid analgesics (codeine, dextro-propoxyphene, dihydrocodeine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, ketobemidone, morphine, oxycodone, pethidine, tilidine and tramperidone), expressed in S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> per million inhabitants per day (S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>), shows that the highest consumption of these drugs is in developed countries in Europe and North America.

132. The regional analysis confirms the persistence of a global disparity in the consumption of opioid analgesics. Regional S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> is calculated on the basis of the total population of the countries reporting consumption and the overall amounts of opioid analgesics reported as consumed. In 2022, the reported consumption in some countries in North America, Oceania and Western and Central Europe resulted in regional averages of 15,467 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> for North America, 9,720 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> for Western and Central Europe and 5,327 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> for Oceania. North America remains the region with the highest consumption of opioids for pain management in the world (see figures I and II).

**Figure I. Consumption of opioids for pain management in all regions, expressed in S-DDD per million inhabitants per day, 2003–2022**



**Figure II. Consumption of opioids for pain management in all regions, expressed in S-DDD per million inhabitants per day, 2003–2022 (semi-logarithmic scale)**



133. The levels of opioid consumption in North America, Oceania and Western and Central Europe are far higher than in all other regions in the world. A general upward trend in consumption was evident in South-Eastern Europe until 2018, when it reached 1,415 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>, but it has stabilized at about 1,000 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> in recent years (1,271 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> in 2022). Consumption in South America had been increasing since 2017, when countries reported 537 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>, although after an all-time high level of 1,006 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> in 2021 it dropped to 520 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> in 2022. In West Asia, consumption reached a record high level (737 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>) in 2022, up from 509 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> in 2021. In Eastern Europe, opioid consumption peaked in 2019, totalling 601 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>, but in 2021 consumption decreased to 344 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>. However, it surged again in 2022 to 572 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>. The Board considers levels of consumption of opioid analgesics in quantities between 100 and 200 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> to be inadequate, and in quantities of less than 100 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> to be very inadequate. In this context, the average levels of consumption reported in 2022 in East and South-East Asia (217 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>), Central America and the Caribbean (170 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>), Africa (62 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>) and South Asia (16 S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>) are of particular concern.

134. Figures III and IV show consumption of opioid analgesics in total S-DDD<sub>pm</sub> by substance and region. This analysis highlights once again the predominance of fentanyl in most regions of the world. Consumption of oxycodone is highest in North America, Oceania, Western and Central Europe and West Asia, although the substance is also

consumed in other regions. Hydrocodone consumption is significant in the Americas. The share of morphine consumption is less pronounced in most regions with the lowest consumption levels, except for South America and South-Eastern Europe.

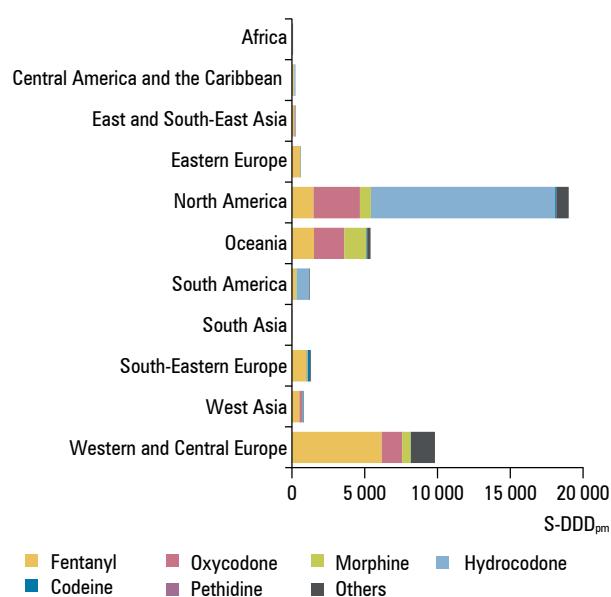
135. **The Board reiterates that there is an urgent need to increase the availability of and access to opioid analgesics and to improve their prescription and use, especially in countries reporting inadequate and very inadequate levels of consumption, and calls for targeted public policies supported by Governments, health systems and health professionals, civil society, the pharmaceutical industry and the international community.**

## 1. Patterns and trends in the production, manufacture, consumption, utilization and stocks of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

### Narcotic drugs

136. In 2021, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, countries stockpiled certain substances, in particular fentanyl analogues, in response to concerns regarding the stability

**Figure III. Consumption of codeine,<sup>a</sup> fentanyl, hydrocodone, morphine, oxycodone, pethidine and other opioids, all regions, expressed in S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>, 2022**



<sup>a</sup>Only codeine used directly for pain relief is considered. Codeine used for preparations included in Schedule III is excluded.

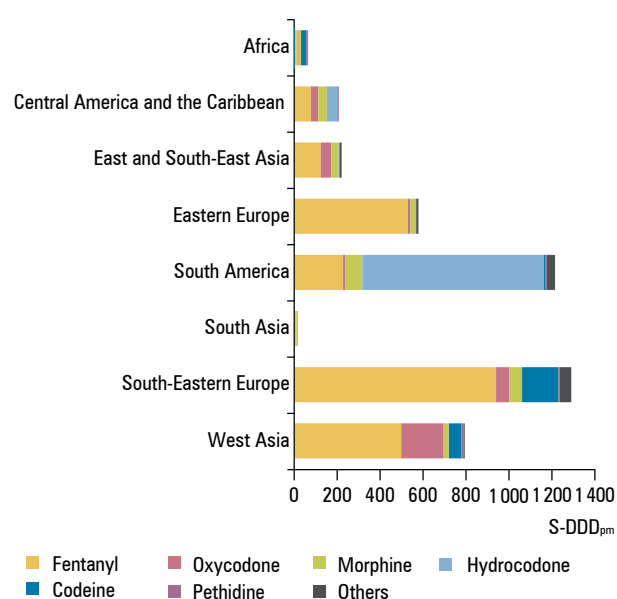
of the global medicine supply chain. The consolidated statistics on narcotic drugs for 2022 suggest a potential return to pre-pandemic levels for most indicators.

137. Analysis of the consumption of opioid analgesics, as reported by Governments to the Board, reaffirmed the persistent issue of unequal access to and affordability of opioid analgesics, such as morphine. A significant portion of the morphine produced worldwide is utilized for other purposes. In 2022, 9.9 per cent of the morphine available globally (quantities manufactured and opening stocks) was consumed directly, primarily for palliative care, an increase from the previous decade. However, of that 9.9 per cent, only a fraction (13.9 per cent) was made available to a large portion of the global population (80.2 per cent), primarily residing in low- and middle-income countries.

138. The consumption of morphine, along with other opioid analgesics, remains concentrated in developed countries in Europe and North America, and levels of consumption in other regions remain insufficient to adequately address the medical needs of their populations (see figure V). Another cause for concern is the continued decline in morphine production in 2022, a trend that commenced in 2015.

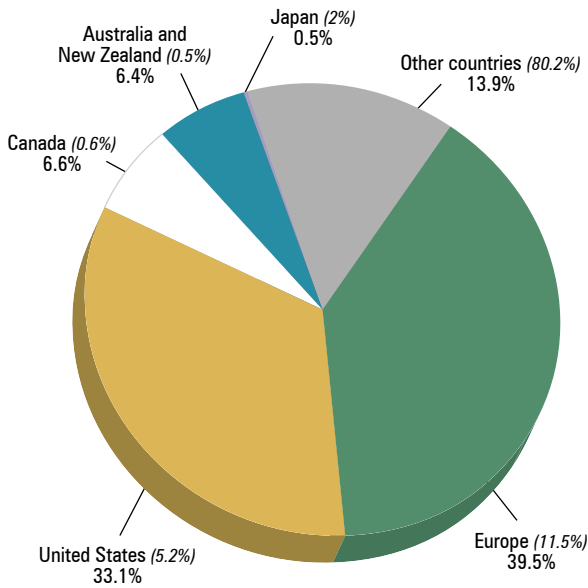
139. This imbalance does not stem from a shortage of opiate raw materials. Apart from opium, the production of which has been declining for several years, overall utilization

**Figure IV. Consumption of codeine,<sup>a</sup> fentanyl, hydrocodone, morphine, oxycodone, pethidine and other opioids, by regions with lowest consumption, expressed in S-DDD<sub>pm</sub>, 2022**



<sup>a</sup>Only codeine used directly for pain relief is considered. Codeine used for preparations included in Schedule III is excluded.

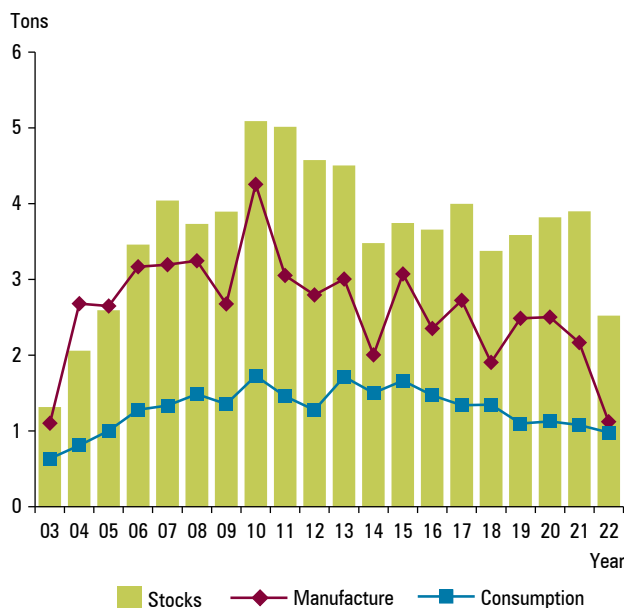
**Figure V. Morphine: distribution of consumption in relation to the share of the world population, 2022**



Note: Percentages in parentheses refer to share of the total population of all reporting countries worldwide.

of poppy straw and concentrate of poppy straw derived from both morphine-rich and thebaine-rich varieties remained high in 2022, with stocks increasing. This suggests that the supply exceeds the demand, even though the demand expressed by several countries may not accurately reflect the actual medical needs of their populations.

**Figure VI. Fentanyl: global manufacture, consumption and stocks,<sup>a</sup> 2003–2022**



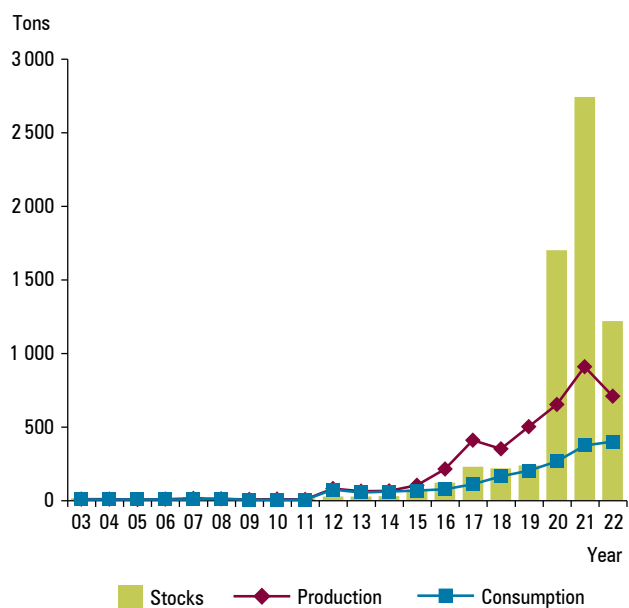
<sup>a</sup>Stocks as at 31 December of each year.

140. Global production of thebaine increased in 2022, while its utilization decreased. This trend was evident from the production of various semi-synthetic opioids derived from thebaine. The manufacture of oxycodone continued to decline in 2022, while consumption of the substance remained relatively stable. In addition, consumption of hydromorphone remained steady, but its production increased in 2022. Notably, consumption of hydromorphone was predominantly confined to the United States and remained stable, despite a decrease in its manufacture.

141. Among synthetic opioids, global manufacture of fentanyl decreased by half in 2022 compared with 2021, and consumption of the substance also declined (see figure VI). This downward trend could be attributed to ongoing concerns about overdose deaths linked to the misuse of fentanyl and similar substances.

142. The licit cultivation, production and utilization of cannabis have grown significantly since 2000, when more countries worldwide began employing cannabis and cannabis extracts for medical purposes and scientific research (see figure VII). Over the past 20 years, global cannabis production has consequently surged, reaching 797 tons in 2022. Given the substantial increase in the licit cultivation of cannabis plants for medical and scientific purposes in recent years, along with variations in yield and manufacturing processes, certain data are being clarified in collaboration with the relevant Governments to ensure consistency.

**Figure VII. Cannabis: global production, consumption and stocks,<sup>a</sup> 2003–2022**



<sup>a</sup>Stocks as at 31 December of each year.

143. In 2021, the Plurinational State of Bolivia reported the production of 24,960 tons of coca leaf, derived from the licit cultivation of coca bush. Meanwhile, Peru did not report production figures for 2022, but did report the export of 76 tons of coca leaf. Despite these figures, the global licit manufacture and consumption of cocaine continued to decrease, reaching the lowest levels in two decades.

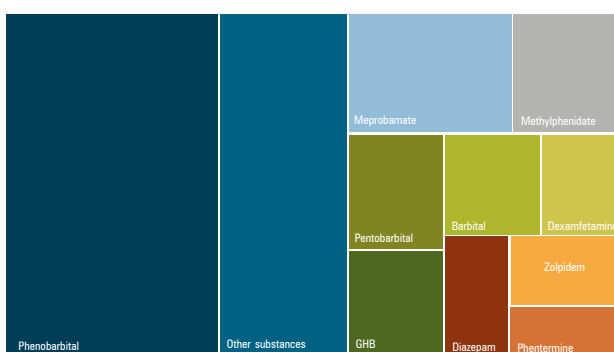
## Psychotropic substances

144. At the end of 2022, a total of 167 psychotropic substances were under international control, up from 166 at the end of 2021. Eutylone came under international control in November 2022 and was included by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Schedule II of the 1971 Convention.

145. A total of 1,049.3 tons of psychotropic substances under international control were manufactured in 2022. Of that quantity, 863.8 tons were sedatives, 160.3 tons were stimulants and 25.2 tons comprised hallucinogens, analgesics and other substances. With respect to specific substances, as can be seen in figure VIII, 10 psychotropic substances accounted for approximately 80 per cent of total global manufacture by gross weight in 2022. All other psychotropic substances combined made up about 20 per cent of overall manufacture in 2022.

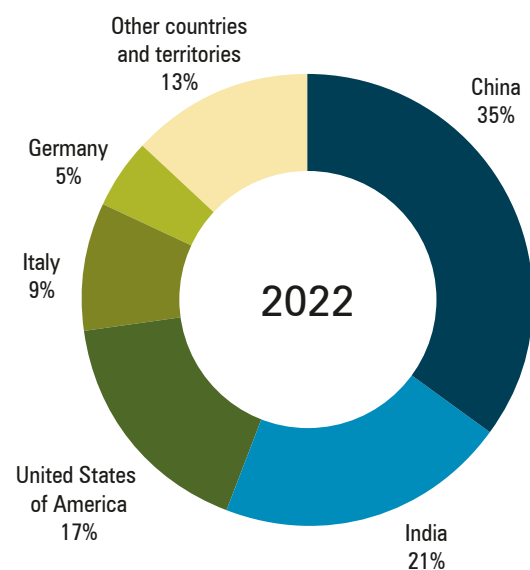
146. At 364.3 tons, phenobarbital was the most heavily manufactured internationally controlled psychotropic substance in 2022. Meprobamate was the second most heavily manufactured, at 97.1 tons, followed by methylphenidate (64.5 tons), pentobarbital (56 tons), GHB (51.9 tons), barbital (48.7 tons), dexamfetamine (40 tons), diazepam (39.6 tons), zolpidem (39.1 tons) and phentermine (29.1 tons).

**Figure VIII. Shares of manufacture of major internationally controlled psychotropic substances by gross weight, 2022**



147. With regard to the primary manufacturers of internationally controlled psychotropic substances, figure IX shows that five countries were responsible for more than 85 per cent of all global manufacture in 2022: China (35 per cent, or 363.2 tons), India (21 per cent, or 221.1 tons), United States (17 per cent, or 178.9 tons), Italy (9 per cent, or 91.7 tons) and Germany (5 per cent, or 55.2 tons). All other countries and territories combined were responsible for 13 per cent (139.1 tons) of global manufacture.

**Figure IX. Shares of total manufacture of internationally controlled psychotropic substances by gross weight, 2022**



148. With regard to international trade, seven benzodiazepines were among the most widely traded psychotropic substances in 2022 (see table below). Phenobarbital was the most widely traded barbiturate under international control, while methylphenidate was the most widely traded stimulant. Zolpidem was the most traded non-benzodiazepine non-barbiturate sedative. More than 158 countries and territories reported imports of diazepam. Imports of midazolam, phenobarbital and alprazolam were reported by 140 to 150 countries and territories.

149. With regard to the consumption of psychotropic substances, 99 countries and territories provided data regarding the consumption of at least one substance in 2022, a slight increase from the 96 countries and territories that provided such data in 2021. Reporting rates at the regional level varied widely; data on consumption in 2022 were provided by 16 countries and territories in Africa (28 per cent of the total number of countries and territories in the region), 25 countries and territories in the Americas (56 per cent),

**Table. Most widely traded internationally controlled psychotropic substances, 2022**

<i>Substance</i>	<i>Total imports (kg)</i>	<i>Number of importing countries and territories</i>
Diazepam	44 929.92	158
Midazolam	14 541.02	150
Phenobarbital	205 429.06	148
Alprazolam	9 618.90	140
Clonazepam	14 990.60	135
Lorazepam	8 882.25	129
Zolpidem	38 198.80	117
Methylphenidate	52 513.10	115
Bromazepam	12 617.66	108
Clobazam	7 457.22	91

20 countries and territories in Asia (41 per cent), 32 countries and territories in Europe (74 per cent) and 6 countries and territories in Oceania (27 per cent).

150. Diazepam was the most manufactured benzodiazepine in 2022 in terms of gross weight, at 39.6 tons, accounting for 23 per cent of all benzodiazepines with a significant presence on the licit market. Diazepam was also the most widely traded internationally controlled psychotropic substance in 2022, with 158 countries reporting imports of the substance. The global average consumption of diazepam among countries that provided data has been declining, from a high of 2.67 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub> in 2019 to 2.01 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub> in 2022. Similarly, the number of countries providing consumption data has been declining since 2020, with 91 countries providing data in that year to 85 countries providing data in 2022.

151. In terms of gross weight, phenobarbital has been the most heavily manufactured psychotropic substance under international control since 2012. In 2022, total reported manufacture of the substance was 364.3 tons, up significantly from the 262.9 tons reported in 2021. Imports of phenobarbital were reported by 148 countries and territories in 2022, making the substance one of the most widely traded psychotropic substances under international control. In 2022, the total volume of global imports was 205.4 tons, up slightly from 189 tons in 2021.

152. The number of countries and territories providing data on phenobarbital consumption increased from 71 in 2021 to 83 in 2022. Among the countries and territories that provided data, Brazil reported the highest level of phenobarbital consumption in 2022 (4.95 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub>), albeit at a lower level than in 2021 (5.23 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub>).

153. Methylphenidate is the most widely traded stimulant among the psychotropic substances under international control. Global manufacture of methylphenidate decreased from 71.3 tons in 2021 to 64.5 tons in 2022. The number of importing countries and territories also dropped slightly, from 118 in 2021 to 115 in 2022. At the same time, the worldwide volume of imports of the substance fell from 63.8 tons in 2021 to 52.5 tons in 2022.

154. A total of 62 countries provided data on methylphenidate consumption in 2022, with some countries reporting a considerable reduction in consumption of the substance. Compared with the figures reported for 2021, the consumption of methylphenidate decreased considerably in Iceland, from 53.33 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub> to 29.47 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub>; nevertheless, the country reported the highest consumption worldwide in 2022. The consumption of methylphenidate in Canada, Denmark, Netherlands (Kingdom of the) and Sweden increased slightly in 2022. While the consumption of the substance decreased in Israel and the United States, Guatemala reported a significant increase, from 0.01 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub> in 2021 to 4.87 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub> in 2022.

155. Like diazepam and phenobarbital, zolpidem is one of the most widely traded psychotropic substances under international control. In 2022, 122 countries and territories reported imports of the substance, and consumption of zolpidem was reported in all regions of the world. The manufacture of zolpidem rose from 38.2 tons in 2021 to 39.1 tons in 2022.

156. The number of countries and territories providing data on consumption of the substance rose from 63 in 2021 to 64 in 2022. In 2022, Uruguay reported the highest level of consumption of zolpidem worldwide, at 23.82 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub>, followed by Portugal at 19.16 S-DDD<sub>pt</sub>. Overall, among the countries that provided data, the average consumption of zolpidem in Europe was significantly higher than in other regions.

## 2. Supply of and demand for opiate raw materials

157. The Board, in fulfilment of the functions assigned to it under the 1961 Convention as amended and the relevant resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, regularly examines issues affecting the supply of and the demand for opiates for licit requirements and endeavours to ensure a standing balance between that supply and demand.

158. The Board analyses the data provided by Governments on opiate raw materials and opiates manufactured

from those raw materials to establish the status of the supply of and the demand for opiate raw materials globally. In addition, the Board analyses information on the use, estimated consumption for licit use and stocks of those raw materials at the global level. A detailed analysis of the current situation as it pertains to the supply of and the demand for opiate raw materials is contained in the technical report of the Board for 2023 on narcotic drugs.<sup>116</sup>

## Cultivation, production and stocks

159. The combined total area cultivated with opium poppy varieties rich in morphine, thebaine, codeine and oripavine in 2022 declined by one third compared with 2021, with a decrease in production in almost all major producing countries. However, while the production of opiate raw materials rich in morphine decreased, the production of opiate raw materials rich in thebaine increased. With regard to demand for and stocks of raw materials, a different trend was registered. In 2022, demand for and stocks of opiate raw materials rich in morphine increased, but demand for and stocks of opiate raw materials rich in thebaine decreased. Regardless of these reductions in the cultivation and production of opiate raw materials, their supply remained more than sufficient to cover the global demand as expressed by countries in their reporting to the Board for 2023 and 2024.

160. Cultivation of noscapine-rich opium poppy for the purpose of opiate production in 2022 was reported only in the planning phase, by Australia and France, and not in those countries' reporting on cultivation and harvest. Consequently, the countries did not report any extraction of the morphine alkaloid from noscapine-rich opium poppy in 2022.

161. Even though noscapine is not under international control, a significant amount of morphine can be extracted from opium poppy rich in noscapine. **For the purposes of controlling the production of morphine, the Board requests the countries that cultivate opium poppy rich in noscapine to provide information in a consistent and regular manner about the cultivation of this variety, its intended use and to report to the Board on any extraction and use of the morphine alkaloid from it.**

162. While there was an overall decline in the area under cultivation with opium poppy for the extraction of alkaloids in 2022, India and Spain both saw an increase in the cultivation of morphine-rich opium poppy. India, which is the only opium-producing country included in the present analysis, also began to cultivate opium poppy for the production of poppy straw, which led to an increase in its stocks in 2022.

Türkiye significantly reduced its cultivation and production but remained a holder of large stocks. Australia and Spain remained the leading producers of raw materials rich in morphine in 2022 and the only producers of codeine- and oripavine-rich opium poppy, while Australia was the sole producer of opium poppy rich in thebaine. Hungary and Slovakia halted cultivation of opium poppy for the extraction of alkaloids in 2022, and France maintained similar levels of cultivation but significantly increased its production of raw materials rich in morphine.

163. The total production of opiate raw materials rich in morphine amounted to 304 tons in 2022, a decline compared with the 329 tons produced in 2021. The total production of opiate raw materials rich in thebaine increased to 187 tons in 2022 compared with 164 tons in 2021. Stocks of opiate raw materials rich in morphine decreased to 838 tons in morphine equivalent in 2022, down from 888 tons in 2021, while stocks of opiate raw materials rich in thebaine decreased from 373 tons to 302 tons in the same period. Total stocks of opiates expressed in morphine equivalent amounted to 500 tons, while total stocks of opiates expressed in thebaine equivalent amounted to 302 tons.

## Balance between supply and demand

164. Demand for opiate raw materials rich in morphine increased from 225 tons to 305 tons in morphine equivalent, while demand for finished opiates decreased from 280 tons to 268 tons in morphine equivalent. Inversely, demand for opiate raw materials rich in thebaine decreased in 2022 compared with 2021, from 122 tons to 105 tons in thebaine equivalent; however, demand for finished opiates increased from 104 tons in thebaine equivalent in 2021 to 109 tons in 2022.

165. On the basis of data reported by Governments, total stocks of opiates and opiate raw materials are fully sufficient to cover demand for medical and scientific purposes for morphine-based opiates for more than a year. The quantity of stocks expressed in morphine equivalent (838 tons) is sufficient to cover global demand at the expected level for 2023<sup>117</sup> of 321 tons for 31 months, well over the 12 months required by the Board. The quantity of stocks expressed in thebaine

<sup>117</sup>In order to ensure that supply can cover expected demand for at least one year in case of unforeseen supply issues, such as crop failure, the Board assesses stocks at the end of year to calculate whether they are sufficient to cover the projected demand for the following year. For the calculation, the Board determines the total amount of stocks at the end of the year and divides that number by the total amount of projected demand, then multiplies the resulting number by 12 to arrive at the total number of months for which the stocks would be able to cover the following year's demand at the projected level.

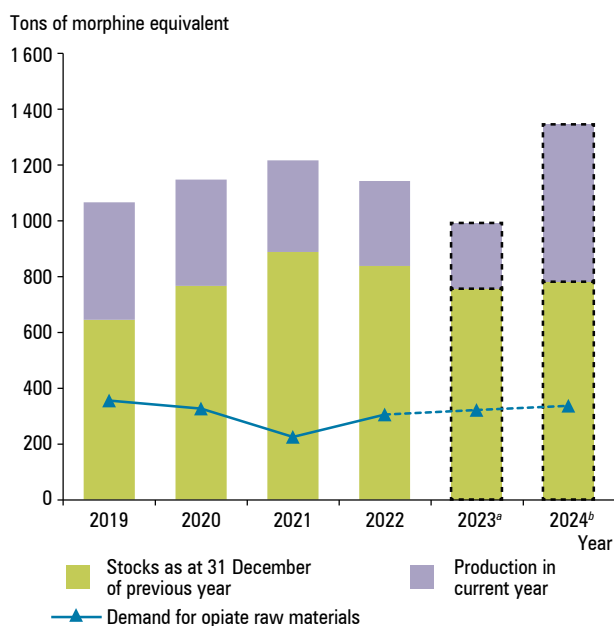
<sup>116</sup>E/INCB/2023/2.

equivalent (302 tons) is sufficient to meet global demand at the level projected for 2023 of 144 tons for 25 months.

166. Figures X and XI below illustrate the relationship between production, stocks and demand in the current year and three preceding years, as well as the data-based projections for the upcoming two years.

167. **Even though the supply of both morphine-rich and thebaine-rich opiate raw materials is calculated to be sufficient to cover the demand for medical and scientific purposes as expressed by countries, the Board highlights that there are notable disparities between countries in the availability of narcotic drugs, owing, among other reasons, to the issue that many Governments do not accurately estimate their medical needs for opioid analgesics or have limited access to them. Consequently, and in line with the provisions and objectives of the 1961 Convention as amended, the Board emphasizes the importance of ensuring sufficient availability at the global level and calls upon countries with greater availability of and access to opiate raw materials and opiates to assist those countries with limited access and availability in their efforts to increase access to and availability of such substances and raw materials.**

**Figure X. Supply of and demand for opiate raw materials rich in morphine, in morphine equivalent, 2019–2024**



<sup>a</sup> Data for production and demand for 2023 are based on advance data (dotted line) submitted by Governments.

<sup>b</sup> Data for 2024 are based on estimates (dotted line) submitted by Governments.

## C. Overall treaty compliance

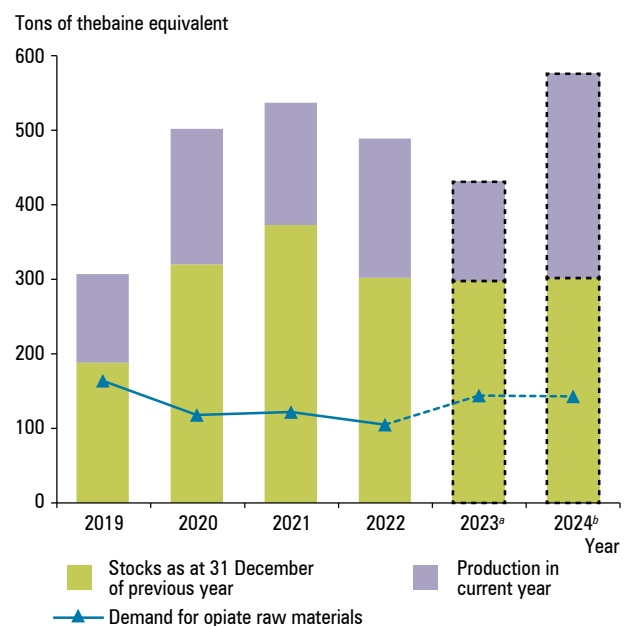
### 1. Evaluation of overall treaty compliance

168. By becoming party to the international drug control conventions, States commit to the adoption of a series of administrative, legislative and policy measures aimed at implementing their legal obligations under those instruments.

169. Such measures include: (a) establishing mechanisms for the monitoring of the licit production and manufacture of, and trade in, narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals; (b) ensuring the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes; (c) adopting legislation and policy to address drug-related behaviours, including trafficking and diversion; and (d) taking all practicable measures for the prevention of drug use and for the early identification, treatment, education, aftercare and social reintegration of persons affected by drug use.

170. The legal framework, made up of the three international drug control conventions, confers broad discretion

**Figure XI. Supply of and demand for opiate raw materials rich in thebaine, in thebaine equivalent, 2019–2024**



<sup>a</sup> Data for production and demand for 2023 are based on advance data (dotted line) submitted by Governments.

<sup>b</sup> Data for 2024 are based on estimates (dotted line) submitted by Governments.

upon States parties for the adoption of administrative, legislative and policy measures to implement their treaty obligations that they deem to be best suited to the particularities of their respective systems and that best correspond to their established priorities.

171. However, the conventions establish a series of parameters within which such discretion is to be exercised. These include the limitation of the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances exclusively to medical and scientific purposes, the respect for human dignity and rights, the adequate provision of controlled substances to meet legitimate medical needs and the principle of proportionality in the formulation of criminal justice policy for drug-related offences.

172. The conventions also set forth the responsibilities and functions of the Board. Article 9, paragraph 4, of the 1961 Convention as amended states that the Board is to endeavour to limit the cultivation, production, manufacture and use of drugs to an amount required for medical and scientific purposes, to ensure their availability for such purposes and to prevent illicit cultivation, production and manufacture of and trafficking in and use of drugs. Article 9, paragraph 5, of the same Convention provides that the measures taken by the Board under the Convention shall be those most consistent with the intent to further the cooperation of Governments with the Board and to provide the mechanism for a continuing dialogue between Governments and the Board that will lend assistance to and facilitate effective national action to attain the aims of the Convention.

173. Although the wording is not identical, and that of the 1988 Convention is somewhat more restrictive, each of the three drug control conventions also confers a clear treaty monitoring function upon the Board. The Board's monitoring functions are set out in article 14 of the 1961 Convention as amended, article 19 of the 1971 Convention and article 22 of the 1988 Convention.

174. As the monitoring body established under the three drug control conventions, and in keeping with its obligation to foster cooperation with Governments through active dialogue, the Board reviews developments in States parties with the aim of supporting them to implement the conventions by assisting in identifying implementation gaps and proposing remedial action.

175. The Board's deliberations are informed by its ongoing interactions with States parties, including the submission of information and statistical reports by Governments to the Board, the exchange of official correspondence and meetings between government representatives and the Board, the undertaking of country missions by the Board and the participation of Governments in INCB initiatives.

176. The current chapter contains a selection of the Board's appraisals of the drug control situation in selected countries.

### (a) Australia

177. The Board continues to engage in dialogue with the Government of Australia and notes with appreciation the consistent cooperation of the authorities, in particular in providing information on legislative developments in the Australian Capital Territory and nationwide. In this context, the Board takes note of the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Possession) Amendment Act 2022, which was passed in the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory on 20 October 2022.

178. Under the Act, individuals found in possession of small quantities of specific drugs may, instead of being subject to a potential prison sentence, be issued a simple drug offence notice, which can be discharged by paying a fine or participating in a drug diversion programme assessment and harm reduction session. The Australian Capital Territory intends to monitor drug trends following the changes and will review the legislation three years following its implementation. By introducing these legislative changes, the Board notes that the Australian Capital Territory is availing itself of the prerogative granted to States under the international drug control conventions to apply alternatives to conviction or punishment for drug-related behaviours of a lesser gravity, in particular when committed by persons who use drugs.

179. The Board also takes note of the rescheduling of psilocybin and MDMA by the Department of Health and Aged Care from schedule 9 (Prohibited substances) to schedule 8 (Controlled drugs) within the national Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons. As of 1 July 2023, psychiatrists approved under the Authorised Prescriber scheme by the Therapeutic Goods Administration have been allowed to prescribe MDMA for post-traumatic stress disorder and psilocybin for treatment-resistant depression. For all other uses, psilocybin and MDMA will remain on schedule 9 of the Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons.

180. The Board will continue to closely monitor the drug control landscape in Australia, including with respect to the implementation of these legislative developments. The Board values its positive cooperation with the Government of Australia and looks forward to continuing its close dialogue on matters concerning the full and effective implementation of the drug control conventions.



## (b) Germany

181. During the reporting period, the Board continued to closely monitor drug developments in Germany and to engage with the Government on matters related to the legalization of cannabis for non-medical use, as announced by the country's coalition Government.

182. The Board has had ongoing discussions with the authorities in Germany and has taken note of the evolution of the originally planned control measures following concerns expressed by the European Commission, in particular with respect to the provisions on the sale of cannabis in speciality shops to adults for non-medical purposes.

183. The Board notes that the revised draft legislation, which is currently under consideration, has moved away from the immediate establishment of a retail distribution model to one that would initially permit cultivation of up to three plants in the home by adults for personal consumption, as well as cultivation of cannabis in cultivation associations. The Board takes note of the fact that a further stage provided for in the draft legislation would be the establishment of regional pilot projects with commercial supply chains. The draft bill is to enter the legislative procedure in the second half of 2023 and is expected to be submitted to the European Commission for consideration.

184. In its interactions with the Government of Germany, the Board has reiterated that measures to permit the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes are inconsistent with article 4, paragraph (c), of the 1961 Convention as amended, which requires States parties to take such legislative and administrative measures as may be necessary, subject to the provisions of the Convention, to limit the use of narcotic drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes. Article 3, paragraph 1 (a) (i), of the 1988 Convention requires the criminalization of the production, manufacture, extraction, preparation, offering, offering for sale, distribution, sale, delivery on any terms whatsoever, brokerage, dispatch, dispatch in transit, transport, importation or exportation of any narcotic drug or any psychotropic substance contrary to the provisions of the 1961 Convention as amended or the 1971 Convention. Moreover, article 3, paragraph 1 (a) (ii), of the 1988 Convention requires the criminalization of the cultivation of cannabis plant for the purpose of the production of narcotic drugs contrary to the provisions of the 1961 Convention as amended.

185. The Board acknowledges the public health measures taken by Germany, in particular those aimed at ensuring equal access to health care for all vulnerable population groups, including those in detention. The Government has also been undertaking initiatives to make information on

the negative effects of drug use more accessible in order to increase the uptake of care provision. The Board notes the efforts made by the Government to address the manufacture and export of and trafficking in new psychoactive substances and non-scheduled precursors.

186. The Board values its constructive relationship with the Government of Germany and looks forward to continuing its dialogue on matters concerning the implementation of the country's commitments under the drug control conventions.

## (c) Ghana

187. The Board has continued to monitor drug control developments in Ghana and takes note of the constitutional challenge to section 43 of the Narcotics Control Commission Act, which resulted in the invalidation of provisions that permitted the cultivation of specific types of cannabis for medicinal and industrial purposes.

188. On 27 July 2022, the Supreme Court of Ghana declared section 43 of the Narcotics Control Commission Act unconstitutional as it violated article 106 of the 1992 Constitution, which lays out the formal requirements of the legislative process.

189. Section 43 of the Narcotics Control Commission Act, which amended the relevant provisions of the Narcotic Drugs Act 1990, provided that a minister could grant a licence for the cultivation of cannabis with "not more than 0.3 per cent THC content on a dry weight basis for industrial purposes for obtaining fibre or seed or for medicinal purposes". In its judgment, the Supreme Court found that the Parliament had not complied with the mandatory constitutional requirements of the legislative process in passing the amendment as it had not been published within the required time frame and its explanatory memorandum did not meet the conditions required. As a result of those omissions, the provision was invalidated by the Court.

190. The Board will continue to monitor changes in the drug control policies of Ghana, including any updates to the country's legal framework with respect to the use of cannabis for medical purposes. The Board encourages the Government of Ghana to continue its constructive dialogue with the Board.

## (d) Lao People's Democratic Republic

191. During the period under review, the Board continued to closely monitor the ongoing developments in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and took note of the opium

survey undertaken with UNODC to determine the levels of cultivation in the country. The Board looks forward to the results, as this is the first such survey conducted since 2015.

192. The Board takes note of Decision No. 3789 on the Control of Hemp for Medication and Products, taken by the Ministry of Health in December 2022. Under the decision, the use of cannabis sativa L is authorized for medical purposes. A medical prescription is required for dried flowers with no more than 1 per cent THC and cannabis-related products for medical use containing up to 0.2 per cent THC and at least four times as much non-psychoactive CBD as THC. Health supplements, cosmetics, beverages and essential oils containing less than 0.2 per cent THC can be distributed and used without a medical prescription. All cannabis-based products must be registered with the Food and Drug Department.

193. Under Decision No. 3789, companies with approval from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Planning and Investment may engage in the cultivation, extraction, production, processing, storage, distribution, utilization, import, export and transport of cannabis. Pursuing any cannabis-related activities without such approval remains an offence under the Law on Narcotics and the Criminal Code.

194. As far as the use of cannabis for medical purposes is concerned, the Board reminds the authorities of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, at is does with all countries allowing such use of cannabis, of the requirements of the international drug control treaties pertaining to the control of cannabis for medical purposes, including articles 23 (establishing national agencies in order to control cultivation, production and management of the resulting crops) and 28 (adopting measures to prevent the misuse of, and illicit traffic in, cannabis leaves) of the 1961 Convention as amended, as well as the mandatory reporting obligations to the Board under that Convention.

195. The Board looks forward to continuing to engage with the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to secure an INCB mission to the country to discuss issues related to the control system for narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals; progress in securing the mission has thus far been limited.

## (e) Philippines

196. During the period under review, the Board has continued to closely follow the drug control situation in the Philippines, in particular since the election of the new Government.

197. The Board notes with appreciation the continued work of the United Nations, the Government of the Philippines and their partners on the implementation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Human Rights and notes the participation of the Government of the Philippines in various activities under the initiative, including those aimed at strengthening forensic investigative techniques.

198. On the issue of human rights and drug control, the Board has continued to stress the need to address the alleged widespread extrajudicial targeting of persons suspected of drug-related activities in the Philippines and welcomes the measures taken by the incoming Government to allow for those allegations to be investigated and the steps taken towards ensuring accountability for those involved. At the same time, the Board notes that, given the number of alleged extrajudicial acts of violence committed against persons suspected of involvement of drug-related activities, further action is needed in order for all cases to be investigated and prosecuted, to ensure justice for victims and their families. In this connection, the Board has taken note of the resumption in July 2023 of the investigation by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, which was predicated on the finding by the Court that investigations and prosecutions by the national authorities with regard to the alleged crimes had been insufficient.

199. The Board continues to emphasize that any 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 the human rights norms by which all countries are bound; that all drug control actions by States should be undertaken in full respect of the rule of law and due process of law; and that violations by law enforcement personnel should be impartially and independently investigated, and prosecuted and punished as appropriate.

200. The Board continues to engage in dialogue with the Government of the Philippines on drug control policies in the country and continues to actively seek an agreement with the Government on a country mission, in order to review its implementation of the three international drug control conventions. The Board notes with concern that, although the mission has been agreed to in principle by the Government of the Philippines, almost no progress has been made in the past several years in planning it further, despite extensive outreach efforts by the Board. Accordingly, the Board reiterates its call to the Government of the Philippines to facilitate the holding of the mission at the earliest opportunity.

## (f) Thailand

201. The Board continues to follow the developments regarding drug control in Thailand and takes note of several legislative developments that occurred during the period under review.

202. The new Narcotics Code has consolidated 24 previous pieces of legislation into a single law aiming to implement a health- and human rights-based approach to drug control and to address prison overcrowding, while focusing drug use reduction efforts on tackling major drug syndicates, trafficking and the drug supply chain. Through the Narcotics Code, Thailand aims to ensure proportionate criminal justice approaches by abolishing minimum mandatory punishments for drug offences of a lesser relative gravity and expunging the criminal records of persons who use drugs who voluntarily undertake drug treatment, thereby emphasizing rehabilitation and social reintegration.

203. Changes have also been introduced with respect to the legal status of cannabis under the country's Narcotics Code, in which narcotic drugs under national control are classified into five categories, pursuant to a notification by the Minister of Health endorsed by the country's Narcotics Control Board. In January 2022, pursuant to such a notification, cannabis plant was removed from the list of controlled narcotic drugs under the Narcotics Code, and only substances containing extracts of cannabis with a THC content of more than 0.2 per cent by dry weight were listed under category 5. This measure came into effect in June 2022, following which cannabis-infused drinks, sweets and other items became available for purchase.

204. The Board notes the information provided by the Government of Thailand that, while cannabis is no longer listed under category 5 of the Narcotics Code, controls remain in place and the use of cannabis plant and its components remains regulated by existing legislation.

205. These acts and measures regulate the use of cannabis in food, cosmetics and medical products, as well as the export and import of cannabis and hemp, while preventing the sale of cannabis to people below the age of 20 and pregnant women and discouraging the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes. The processing, distribution and sale of cannabis require a licence and commercial advertising and sale through vending machines and online are prohibited.

206. The Government of Thailand has also informed the Board that the above-mentioned measures have been tightened to control and regulate the use of the flowering or fruiting tops of the cannabis plants, including for traditional medicinal purposes.

207. The Board notes that the parliament of Thailand is considering a draft cannabis bill, which is envisaged to provide a comprehensive and overarching legal framework for cannabis and its use. The bill passed its first reading in June 2022 and remains on the parliamentary legislative agenda for further consideration.

208. The Board notes that the control measures governing the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes remain in flux within the country and has reiterated to the authorities that article 4, paragraph (c), of the 1961 Convention as amended requires States parties to take such legislative and administrative measures as may be necessary to limit the use of narcotic drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes and that article 3, paragraph 1 (a), of the 1988 Convention requires the criminalization of the production, manufacture, extraction, preparation, offering, offering for sale, distribution, sale, delivery on any terms whatsoever, brokerage, dispatch, dispatch in transit, transport, importation or exportation of any narcotic drug or any psychotropic substance contrary to the provisions of the 1961 Convention as amended or the 1971 Convention, and also requires the criminalization of the cultivation of cannabis plant for the purpose of the production of narcotic drugs contrary to the provisions of the 1961 Convention as amended.

209. The Board also notes that methamphetamine use in Thailand is reported to have increased significantly during the period under review, reportedly due to the increase in illicit drug manufacture in neighbouring Myanmar, flooding the region with an ever-cheaper supply. The Board notes that, in response to these developments, the Ministry of Health of Thailand has prepared a draft regulation under which anyone caught in possession of more than two pills of methamphetamine would be prosecuted as a drug dealer. Under current legislation, people caught with up to 15 methamphetamine pills do not face legal action if they agree to undergo drug treatment.

210. Within its mandate, the Board will continue to closely monitor the evolving drug control framework in Thailand and engage in a dialogue with the new Government, in particular in relation to the legislative developments on cannabis use.

## (g) Ukraine

211. While the Board remains concerned about the armed conflicts currently under way in many different regions of the world, in the period under review, it continued to monitor the developments in Ukraine related to drug control, which have taken place against the backdrop of the continued armed conflict with the Russian Federation and the resulting humanitarian emergency affecting the civilian population of Ukraine.

212. The Board notes with grave concern the continuous targeting of health infrastructure in Ukraine. According to the WHO Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care, during the first year of the conflict, there were nearly 740 attacks on Ukraine that affected health facilities. These attacks have significantly affected the delivery of health-care services in the country, as well as the logistics associated with the provision of medicines and other supplies. Access to addiction treatment services has also been disrupted, affecting people with substance disorders throughout the country. The situation is particularly concerning in territories outside the control of the Government of Ukraine. Following the abrupt suspension of opioid agonist therapy, treatment has effectively been interrupted for patients in need.

213. The Board welcomes the ongoing efforts by WHO, the United Nations and EMCDDA to support Ukrainian institutions and experts in strengthening their capacity to identify and respond to drug-related security and health threats. In the Provinces of Kharkiv, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia, 12 United Nations inter-agency humanitarian convoys were able to deliver health kits, trauma supplies and medicines to treat non-communicable diseases. WHO, in cooperation with the Ukrainian health authorities, has put in place data-collection systems and monitoring tools to assess health-care system resources and the availability of services. EMCDDA has worked on ensuring continued access to opioid agonist therapy and HIV medicines by those in need, in particular those already receiving such treatments in Ukraine. In mid-March, a list of opioid agonist therapy and antiretroviral therapy sites and national contact points for refugees was compiled through EMCDDA and shared through WHO.

214. The Board reminds all Governments that, in acute emergencies, they may utilize simplified control procedures for the export, transportation and provision of medicinal products containing controlled substances. Competent national authorities may permit the export of medicines containing narcotic drugs and/or psychotropic substances in the absence of the corresponding import authorizations and/or estimates. Urgent deliveries do not need to be included in the estimates of the receiving country.

215. The Board takes note of the report of the State Bureau of Investigations of Ukraine on the illicit manufacture and sale of narcotic and psychotropic substances. According to the report, the Bureau detected and dismantled an illegal amphetamine laboratory, in which drugs were being manufactured on a large scale, in Chernivtsi Province. Also according to the report, criminal investigations have been initiated into more than 270 cases of trafficking in drugs and precursors since the outbreak of armed hostilities with the Russian Federation.

216. The Board will continue to monitor the humanitarian crisis and the impact of armed attacks on the situation in Ukraine, while pursuing dialogue with Member States concerning the provision of controlled substances as part of humanitarian aid. Within its treaty-mandated functions and responsibilities, the Board calls for the cessation of all attacks on the health sector in Ukraine and for the urgent provision of aid to the country's civilian population to help alleviate the human pain and suffering caused by the conflict.

## (h) United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

217. During the period under review, the Board continued to monitor drug-related developments in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and engage in constructive dialogue with the Government on all aspects of the implementation of the international drug control conventions.

218. The Board notes the decision of the United Kingdom to deny royal assent to the cannabis legalization bill of Bermuda on 6 September 2022. The bill had been reserved for royal assent by the Governor of Bermuda under section 35 (2) of the Constitution of Bermuda. According to a statement by the Governor, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs had concluded that the bill, as drafted, was not consistent with the obligations of the United Kingdom and Bermuda under the 1961 Convention as amended and the 1971 Convention.

219. In February 2023, as part of "From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives", adopted in December 2021, the Government of the United Kingdom announced that 28 local authorities across England would receive funds totalling 53 million pounds to help people in drug and alcohol treatment. The funding is aimed at providing additional housing support, including from specialist housing case workers, to improve sustainable and long-term recovery from drug use disorders by facilitating independent living. Additional funds have been allocated to 151 local authorities across the country for the creation of over 50,000 facilities for drug and alcohol treatment and have been earmarked for a drug innovation fund supporting community-based projects intended to reduce the recreational use of drugs.

220. The Board looks forward to continued cooperation and dialogue with the United Kingdom on the country's institutional and legislative framework on drug control.

## 2. Country missions

221. Every year, the Board undertakes missions to States parties to the international drug control conventions aimed at engaging with national drug control stakeholders on their experiences in the implementation of their obligations under the three international drug control conventions.

222. Discussions are held with a variety of national drug-control stakeholders, including policymakers, representatives of regulatory bodies, health-care experts, people working in the fields of prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration, law enforcement and border control officials, staff of forensic facilities and representatives of civil society groups, including those representing people with lived experience.

223. On the basis of the findings of each mission, the Board adopts a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening national drug control by suggesting specific courses of action to address challenges identified in each country. The recommendations are communicated confidentially to the Governments concerned for their consideration.

224. In the current report, information is provided on the missions that the Board undertook to Cyprus, Kyrgyzstan and the United States. Additional missions have been accepted in principle by the Governments of the Bahamas, Brunei Darussalam, Colombia, Cuba, Dominica, El Salvador, Eswatini, the Gambia, Greece, Honduras, Mexico, the Niger, the Philippines, Tajikistan, Thailand, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Yemen, but plans for those missions have not yet been finalized. In addition, the Board has contacted the Governments of Bahrain, Belize, Cameroon, Djibouti, Grenada, Guinea, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Maldives, Mali, North Macedonia, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, South Sudan and Suriname, expressing its wish to carry out missions to those countries.

### (a) Cyprus

225. In September 2023, the Board undertook a mission to Cyprus to discuss the drug control situation in the country and the status of implementation of the three international drug control conventions, to which Cyprus is a party.

226. Since the Board's last mission to Cyprus in 1998, the country has gone through considerable changes. Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004 and started to apply European Union drug policies, for both supply and demand reduction and introduce drug policies based on health and human rights approaches. The National Addiction Authority

of Cyprus was established as an interministerial body that coordinates with all relevant stakeholders in the development and implementation of national strategies and action plans on drug control.

227. The Board took note of various drug control initiatives of the Government and the progress made, including the latest data on drug prevalence from its general population survey of 2023.

### (b) Kyrgyzstan

228. During its mission to Kyrgyzstan, which took place in December 2022, the Board examined developments in the country's drug control policies, in particular in response to the needs of people who use drugs and the national security concerns arising from increased drug trafficking in the region.

229. The INCB delegation discussed with the Government and civil society representatives how, since the previous mission of the Board, in 1997, the extensive political and legislative changes in the country had affected the country's drug control landscape. Continual political and legislative reforms appear to have resulted in challenges and impediments to effective and balanced drug control.

230. The Board noted that the country's drug control efforts would benefit from the allocation of additional resources and also noted the need to improve coordination between the Government and civil society with a view to developing an informed and balanced approach to addressing the country's drug use and trafficking problems. Persistent socioeconomic challenges, such as a lack of access to affordable health care, have affected public health initiatives and priority concerns such as ensuring the availability of controlled medicines and limiting the spread of HIV, in particular in prison settings.

### (c) United States of America

231. An INCB mission to the United States took place in December 2022. The objective of the mission was to review the drug control situation in the country and to discuss with the Government its compliance with the international drug control treaties. In particular, the Board wished to obtain information on the institutional framework on drug control; the legislative and policy measures related to drug control at the federal and state levels, including with respect to cannabis; regulatory control mechanisms and reporting to the Board; supply reduction efforts; precursor chemicals control; and measures aimed at the prevention and treatment

of drug use and the rehabilitation and social integration of people who use drugs.

232. The Board noted that, in the previous two decades, the country had struggled with the public health effects of an “opioid epidemic” – made worse by the overdose deaths related to the consumption of synthetic opioids – which had claimed an estimated 1 million lives and exacted a major toll on public health and the country’s economy. The Board stands ready to assist the Government in addressing this matter through the tools it has at its disposal.

233. In response to this and other matters relating to the implementation of the provisions of the international drug control conventions, the Board noted that the Government had developed legal and policy frameworks governing all aspects of drug control, guided by the 2022 National Drug Control Strategy. It has a robust supply-reduction apparatus, is committed to international cooperation on drug control matters and is a major provider of financial and technical assistance at the international level.

234. Although cannabis remains subject to the highest level of control under the Controlled Substances Act, use of the drug has been legalized in several states for non-medical purposes. The Board has repeatedly expressed its concern that these developments may be inconsistent with the country’s legal obligations as a party to the three international drug conventions.

235. The Board continues to maintain a constructive dialogue with the Government of the United States on these matters.

### 3. Evaluation of the implementation by Governments of recommendations made by the Board following its country missions

236. Every year, the Board follows up on developments in countries that received INCB country missions three years prior and requests the Governments of those countries to provide information on legislative or policy actions taken to implement the Board’s post-mission recommendations and on any other drug-related developments that have occurred in the country since the mission was carried out.

237. As no missions were carried out in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2023, the Board invited the Governments of the countries and territories that had not yet submitted their reports or had submitted incomplete reports on the implementation of the recommendations

following missions undertaken in 2019 or earlier, namely Chile, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Egypt, Madagascar, Mauritania, Montenegro, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan, as well as Kosovo,<sup>118</sup> to provide their pending reports.

238. The Board wishes to express its appreciation to the Governments of Chile, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Uzbekistan for submitting the information on follow-up to the Board’s missions to those countries and reiterates its call upon the Governments of Côte d’Ivoire, Madagascar, Mauritania, Montenegro and Sri Lanka, as well as the government of Kosovo,<sup>118</sup> to provide the information requested at the earliest opportunity.

#### (a) Chile

239. In March 2019, the Board undertook a mission to Chile, to discuss the Government’s implementation of the three international drug control conventions, to examine drug policy developments and to assess the drug-related challenges being faced by the country. In April 2023, the Government of Chile submitted a progress report relating to the institutional framework introduced to address both drug supply and demand reduction efforts and reporting on practical efforts relating to border control and drug use prevention.

240. The Board took note of the launch by the Government of its first national policy on organized crime. Implementation is being coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security; the policy brought together 17 government institutions to enhance inter-institutional coordination in order to better address organized crime. A key focus was improving areas such as container control, information analysis, the transfer of information and the updating of risk analysis systems. Concrete steps included the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the UNODC-WCO Global Container Control Programme to implement activities at two ports in the country.

241. Concerning drug use prevention, the Government reported that by the end of 2022, social reintegration services had been established in five regions of the country, with coverage to be expanded to three more regions in 2023. The overall objective was to contribute to the sustainability of the achievements made in treating children, adolescents, young people and adults; reducing the stigma attached to individuals with problematic use of various types of substances; and helping to create equal opportunities for

<sup>118</sup>References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

children, adolescents, young people and adults facing social exclusion on account of their substance use.

242. The Government also provided information on the drug and alcohol treatment courts programme; those courts were used to provide an alternative procedure for adult and adolescent offenders with problematic use of psychoactive substances. The aim of the courts was to facilitate the identification of those who engage in problem drug use and to ensure that they receive treatment, helping them to lessen their consumption of such substances, as well as reducing the risk of recidivism. As at March 2022, the programme was operating 35 courts in 11 regions of Chile.

243. Finally, during the mission in 2019, it was observed that the Government was considering legislative provisions authorizing the self-cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes. While no update on this matter was provided in the progress report, the Board reiterates that authorizing the self-cultivation of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes may contravene the international drug control treaties, in particular the 1961 Convention.

## (b) Democratic People's Republic of Korea

244. In September 2019, the Board undertook a mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in order to review the drug control situation in the country and the implementation of the three United Nations drug control treaties, including reporting to and cooperation with INCB, in accordance with the conventions.

245. The Board received a progress report from the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in June 2023, informing that the Drug Management Law of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was amended on 14 December 2021. Supply reduction efforts were reported to be further enhanced through the Law on Customs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which prohibits the import and export of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals and, pursuant to that law, the Customs Bureau was working in close cooperation with bordering countries to prevent the trafficking of illicit drugs and precursors.

246. At the time of the mission, the reported consumption of narcotic drugs for medical and scientific purposes in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was one of the lowest not only in Asia but in the world. The reported consumption of psychotropic substances for licit purposes was also very low, and the Board encouraged the Government to examine the causes for the underutilization of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes. While the Government assured the Board that there were no

issues with the current legal framework that would result in reduced availability of substances for medical and scientific use, the Board urges the Government to continually review the mechanisms in place to ensure their adequacy.

247. The Ministry of Public Health confirmed that it had conducted an assessment of trade discrepancies in relation to psychotropic substances as raised by the mission and reported that no inconsistencies in such trade were noted during the global health crisis. The Board remains concerned that discrepancies relating to international shipments of both narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances continued to be identified, and the Board stands ready to assist the Government in addressing the matter to improve the Government's control and monitoring of international trade.

## (c) Egypt

248. In June 2017, the Board undertook a mission to Egypt to review the Government's compliance with the provisions of the international drug control treaties and its cooperation with the Board.

249. Following upon previous reports, the Government of Egypt submitted additional information during the reporting period describing efforts to strengthen the drug control system in the country in line with the Board's recommendations.

250. The Board commends the Government of Egypt for the extensive information that it has provided, including data based on population surveys, such as the national comprehensive survey on narcotic drug demand, regarding the use of new psychoactive substances.

251. While welcoming the progress made in the implementation of its recommendations, the Board reiterates its encouragement to the Government of Egypt to actively use the INCB tools, including I2ES, PICS and IONICS, developed for Governments to facilitate the trade of internationally controlled substances and prevent trafficking in new psychoactive substances and to continue to take measures to promote the adequate availability of controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes.

## (d) Jordan

252. In October 2019, the Board undertook a mission to Jordan in order to discuss the Government's implementation of the three international drug control conventions and to examine drug policy developments in the country. The

Board received an initial response from the Government of Jordan in January 2022 with more detailed information on treatment and rehabilitation services being received in July 2023.

253. The Government reported that, due to the successful experiences of the Addiction Treatment Centre affiliated with the Public Security Directorate of the Anti-Narcotics Department, the Centre was expanded to 170 beds and is now equipped with sports facilities, pottery and sewing workshops and computer laboratories. The Government reported that the Centre observed treatment protocols that conform with the relevant international standards and that treatment was provided to 951 people in 2022. Based on these experiences, a further 40-bed facility was established to treat people who use drugs in one of the country's correctional and rehabilitation centres. While treatment services had been expanded in the northern and southern regions of the country, solutions were however still being sought for treating juveniles.

254. High levels of international cooperation were reported by the Government in order to deal with cross-border drug trafficking faced by the country. Ongoing efforts include exchanging information with liaison officers concerning drug smuggling networks, suspicious persons and smuggling routes and *modi operandi*. An Electronic Surveillance Office was also created to address drug trafficking operations via the Internet, including on social networking sites.

255. The Board takes note of the steps introduced by the Government of Jordan and understands that a draft national strategy to combat narcotic drugs has been pending with the office of the Prime Minister since 2020. The Government is urged to finalize this strategy as a matter of urgency in order to complement the initiatives already introduced to address the country's drug use situation and data collection methods.

### (e) Tunisia

256. In October 2018, the Board undertook a mission to Tunisia with a view to comprehensively discussing with the Government the various issues relating to national drug control and the measures necessary to achieve the objectives of the international drug control treaties at both the policy and technical levels. Additional information relating to the Board's recommendations were received in July 2023.

257. The Government reported that the third survey on the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs in schools was undertaken in 2021 as part of the Mediterranean School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (MedSPAD).

The survey revealed an increase in the use of drugs since the second MedSPAD survey in 2017, highlighting the need for the establishment of health-care facilities similar to the AMAL Center and of a national drug observatory.

258. The Minister of Health approved a national strategy in June 2021 for preventing and reducing the risks of, and treating, disorders related to the use of illicit psychoactive substances in community and prison settings, covering the period 2023–2027. The strategy was drawn up by two experts – national and international – within the framework of cooperation with UNODC, and an order for the delivery of methadone to Tunisia had been placed by the Global Fund as a part of the implementation of the national strategy and in the context of treatment for people who inject opioids.

259. The Board took note of the activities initiated by the authorities of Tunisia to reform legislation, prepare and implement a national action plan and introduce effective precursor chemical control, but is concerned that many of those reforms have not yet been finalized. The Government is urged to address these issues as a matter of urgency.

### (f) Uzbekistan

260. In March 2019, the Board undertook a mission to Uzbekistan to discuss the drug control situation in the country and the status of implementation of the three international drug control conventions.

261. In April 2023, the Government of Uzbekistan submitted a progress report on the implementation of the Board's recommendations following its mission to the country. The Government of Uzbekistan reported that measures had been taken to prevent the illegal distribution of pharmaceutical preparations outside pharmacies and to strengthen control over the quality of such preparations. The Board acknowledges that efforts have been made to strengthen the procedures for the import, export and transit of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors on the territory of Uzbekistan and to control the movement thereof.

262. The Board takes note of challenges posed to Uzbekistan by drug trafficking from Afghanistan and commends the Government for its supply-reduction efforts, in particular with regard to the work of law enforcement agencies aimed at eliminating channels used for the transit and sale of narcotic drugs and at coordinating and organizing operational and preventive measures to reduce the demand for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.



263. With regard to the non-medical and non-scientific use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, the Board noted the information provided by the Government of Uzbekistan regarding the joint preparation of a survey, in cooperation with UNODC, to assess the prevalence of drug use in the country.

264. In 2020, the Government of Uzbekistan approved legislation to regulate matters relating to the treatment of drug use, based on the principles of legality, confidentiality and social protection, and to provide resources and equipment for drug use treatment services. The Government also approved a programme of measures for the further development of the drug use treatment service for the period 2022–2026.

265. The Board welcomes the willingness of the Government of Uzbekistan to register with and be trained to use the IONICS platform and the PEN Online system. The Board acknowledges the efforts made to set up preventive programmes, with the involvement of community-based institutions and civil society.

## **D. Action taken by the Board to ensure the implementation of the international drug control treaties**

### **1. Action taken by the Board pursuant to articles 14 and 14 bis of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol, article 19 of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and article 22 of the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988**

266. When the Board has objective reasons to believe that the aims of the international drug control treaties are being seriously endangered by the failure of a State party to comply with the legal obligations contained therein, or there is a serious situation requiring cooperative action at the international level, the Board may decide to engage in a formal dialogue with the State in question with a view to fostering compliance with the treaties. This formal process is set forth in articles 14 and 14 bis of the 1961 Convention as amended, article 19 of the 1971 Convention and article 22 of the 1988 Convention, which establish the formal steps

and parameters under which these confidential consultations are to be held.

267. Since its inception, INCB has invoked these compliance-related provisions with respect to a number of States in order to initiate formal consultations with them to examine potential issues of non-compliance through active dialogue, requests for additional information and requests for remedial actions to be taken, as deemed appropriate.

268. Pursuant to the relevant provisions of the conventions, the fact that consultations have been initiated and the name of the State concerned are not publicly disclosed by the Board unless it decides to bring the situation to the attention of the parties, the Economic and Social Council or the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in cases where the State party in question has failed to give satisfactory explanations when called upon to do so or has failed to adopt any remedial measures that it has been called upon to take, or where there is a serious situation that requires cooperative action at the international level with a view to addressing non-compliance.

### **2. Consultation with the Government of Afghanistan pursuant to articles 14 and 14 bis of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended by the 1972 Protocol**

269. In May 2000, the Board decided to invoke article 14 of the 1961 Convention as amended with respect to Afghanistan, having determined that the country had become the world's largest illicit producer of opium, seriously endangering the aims of the Convention. Pursuant to paragraph 1 (a) of article 14, the Board decided to propose to the then de facto authorities of Afghanistan the opening of consultations in order to identify possible courses of action to address the grave threats to international drug control posed by the situation in the country.

270. Consultations with Afghanistan continued pursuant to article 14 of the 1961 Convention as amended following the transition to a civilian Government in 2001 until its overthrow by the Taliban in August 2021.

271. In May 2018, the Board also invoked article 14 bis of the 1961 Convention as amended in order to call upon the competent organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system to provide technical and financial assistance to the Government of Afghanistan in support of its efforts to carry out its obligations under the 1961 Convention as amended.

272. With the question of the diplomatic representation of Afghanistan at the United Nations still being considered by the Credentials Committee, there was no communication between the Board and the de facto authorities of Afghanistan during the period under review. However, the Board continued to underscore the need to support the Afghan population in its meetings with partners, including UNODC, WHO, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Economic and Social Council.

## Situation in Afghanistan

273. During the reporting period, Afghanistan continued to face significant challenges, including severe humanitarian needs, a substantially weakened economy and the further curtailment of the human rights of the civilian population by the de facto authorities.

274. Conflict-related security incidents continued to take place in Afghanistan. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) claimed responsibility for several high-profile attacks targeting civilians and the Taliban. Several armed clashes with the de facto authorities took place during the reporting period, which were mainly led by three resistance groups, namely, the National Resistance Front, the Afghanistan Freedom Front and the Afghanistan Liberation Movement.<sup>119</sup>

275. The de facto authorities of Afghanistan continued to make senior appointments within the Government and security and justice sectors at the central and provincial levels. All appointees were male and predominantly Taliban affiliates.<sup>120</sup>

276. The de facto authorities also continued to overhaul the justice system, in particular through the restructuring of courts, the disqualification of lawyers, the repeal of existing laws and the promulgation of edicts on the application of punishments purported to be consistent with sharia law. In November 2022, the de facto Ministry of Justice published five decrees, including one outlining the procedure for making laws, regulations and procedures. In January 2023, the leader of the Taliban issued a decision that declared all rules and regulations adopted by the former Government contrary to sharia law and void.<sup>121</sup>

277. Several anti-corruption decrees were issued by the leader of the Taliban during the reporting period, including decrees prohibiting the de facto officials from participating

in government contracts or employing relatives in institutions under their responsibility, and regulating the distribution, lease and sale of government land.<sup>122</sup>

278. Women and girls continued to be particularly affected by the systematic curtailment of human rights. In late 2022, the Taliban issued several decisions resulting in the exclusion of women from university education until the “right sharia environment in line with Afghan culture” has been established. In January 2022, the de facto authorities issued instructions for reopening educational facilities for girls’ classes up to the sixth grade in the provinces where they had previously been suspended. At the same time, another set of instructions were issued prohibiting private tertiary institutions from registering female students for entrance examinations until further notice, entailing the suspension of university education for women.

279. In December 2022, the Taliban announced a ban on women working for national and international non-governmental organizations. Additional measures restricting women’s rights have included the closure of women-owned and operated businesses and the banning of women from frequenting public parks.

280. On 5 April 2023, the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs verbally informed the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA that with immediate effect, no Afghan woman would be permitted to work for the United Nations in Afghanistan, with exemptions applicable only to the education and health sectors. In response, the United Nations issued statements of condemnation on 5 and 11 April, indicating that it would request all United Nations national personnel, irrespective of gender, not to report to United Nations offices, with limited exceptions made for critical tasks.<sup>123</sup> In its resolution 2681 (2023) of 27 April 2023, the Security Council condemned the decision by the Taliban to ban Afghan women from working for the United Nations in Afghanistan.

281. Further limitations on women’s access to education have been condemned by the Secretary-General, UNAMA leadership, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Public protests in Afghanistan against the restriction of women’s rights have been violently repressed, with protesters facing warning shots, water cannons, threats, beatings, arrests and detention.

<sup>119</sup> A/77/914-S/2023/453.

<sup>120</sup> A/77/772-S/2023/151 and A/77/914-S/2023/453.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> A/77/914-S/2023/453.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

282. The Board notes with serious concern that Afghanistan continues to face a major humanitarian crisis. Rapid surveys by the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group and the Humanitarian Access Working Group found that 67 per cent of 129 responding organizations reported that female staff were not coming to the office following the ban of 24 December 2022 on Afghan women working in non-governmental organizations. As at March 2023, 77 per cent of women-led organizations had either fully or partially ceased their activities and 54 per cent did not have sufficient funding to continue activities.

283. The Secretary-General reported that projections indicate limited prospects for growth and poverty reduction because of limited investment in development, and that millions of Afghans are dependent on international humanitarian assistance flows. There is a critical shortage of humanitarian funding for 2023, with the Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2023 having received only 9 per cent of the total requirement of \$4.63 billion as at 2 June 2023.

284. Humanitarian organizations continued to supply food and livelihood support, health care, help to address acute malnutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene assistance, education, emergency shelter and household items to the Afghan population in need. The assistance continued despite the high incidence of interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities, including attacks on humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities and numerous gender-related incidents against female staff.

285. On 8 March 2023, the de facto authorities issued a decree banning cannabis cultivation in Afghanistan, stating that “in case of a violation, the plants would be destroyed, and violators would be punished according to sharia laws”.<sup>124</sup> On the same day, the de facto Deputy Minister of the counter-narcotics authority called upon countries in the region to cooperate in addressing drug and precursor trafficking and money-laundering and providing alternative livelihoods to farmers who had been affected by the earlier ban on the cultivation of narcotic drugs announced in April 2022.

286. It appears that the price of high-quality cannabis resin in Afghanistan increased by 10 per cent after the latest cannabis ban was issued. More information on drug-related developments in the country is presented chapter III of the present report.

<sup>124</sup> Ariana News, “IEA’s supreme leader bans cultivation of cannabis in Afghanistan”, 19 March 2023; and TRT World, “Taliban leader bans cannabis cultivation in Afghanistan”, 19 March 2023.

## United Nations action

287. On 16 December 2022, the General Assembly approved the decision of the Credentials Committee to “postpone its consideration of the credentials” for Myanmar, Afghanistan and Libya “and to revert to consideration of these credentials at a future time in the seventy-seventh session”, which ended in September 2023.<sup>125</sup>

288. In January 2023, in the face of limitations on women’s rights, a four-day United Nations mission to Afghanistan was conducted on behalf of the Secretary-General by the Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations in order to express the Organization’s concerns about the exclusion of women from education and public life and to request the Taliban to reconsider these measures in light of the fundamental role played by Afghan women in the country’s continued development.<sup>126</sup>

289. On 16 March 2023, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2678 (2023), extending the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2024. In the resolution, the Security Council stressed the critical importance of a continued presence of UNAMA and called upon all relevant Afghan political actors and stakeholders, including relevant authorities and international actors, to coordinate with UNAMA in the implementation of its mandate and to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel throughout the country.

290. On the same day, the Security Council also adopted resolution 2679 (2023), in which it requested the Secretary-General to conduct and provide an integrated, independent assessment, after consultations with all relevant Afghan political actors and stakeholders. The Council requested that the independent assessment provide forward-looking recommendations for an integrated and coherent approach among relevant political, humanitarian and development actors, within and outside of the United Nations system, in order to address the current challenges faced by Afghanistan, including those relating to the humanitarian situation, human rights, especially the rights of women and girls, religious and ethnic minorities, security and terrorism.

291. On 3 July 2023, the United Nations country team launched the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan for the

<sup>125</sup> A/77/600, para. 11.

<sup>126</sup> UNAMA, “High-level UN delegation led by the Deputy Secretary-General calls on Afghanistan’s de facto Taliban authorities to reverse course on recent decrees limiting women’s and girls’ rights, says Afghans must not be abandoned”, 22 January 2023.

period 2023–2025, implementation of which had been paused because of the ban imposed by the de facto authorities on Afghan women working for non-governmental organizations in December 2022. The Strategic Framework is a planning instrument that articulates the approach of the United Nations to addressing basic human needs in Afghanistan, prioritizing the needs and rights of the most vulnerable, including women and girls, children and young people, internally displaced persons, returnees, refugees and ethnic and religious minorities.<sup>127</sup>

292. In May 2023, the Secretary-General convened a meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan to strengthen international engagement around common objectives. A special coordinator of the independent assessment mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 2679 (2023) attended the meeting as an observer. Participants highlighted the need for a strategy of engagement that allows for the stabilization of Afghanistan but also for addressing important concerns shared by the international community, which include the lack of inclusive governance, violations of human rights, the presence of terrorist organizations and the spread of drug trafficking.<sup>128</sup>

293. UNAMA continued to facilitate outreach meetings on governance-related issues, including principles of good governance, service delivery and girls' access to education, between local de facto authorities, ulama, civil society organizations, the media, young people and other community members in 16 provinces. In addition, UNAMA continued to promote regional cooperation by hosting monthly meetings of Kabul-based regional ambassadors in order to coordinate engagement with the de facto authorities. UNAMA noted with concern that the enforcement of the severe restrictions on Afghan female personnel of the United Nations was affecting United Nations outreach to Afghan stakeholders, particularly women.<sup>129</sup>

294. UNODC continued to provide an alternative development programme, which had reached more than 2,375 households, 47 per cent of which were female-headed, in Helmand, Kandahar, Laghman and Nangarhar Provinces. The programme, which is funded by the Governments of Italy and Japan, together with contributions from the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, supports farmers with improved vegetable production, poultry farming, cereal crop production, animal husbandry and dairy processing and by connecting beneficiaries to the local markets. UNODC also provided essential medicine,

medical equipment, supplementary food packages and basic hygiene kits to 24 drug treatment centres and seven drop-in centres.<sup>130</sup>

### 3. Supporting Governments' compliance with the treaties

#### (a) INCB Learning

295. INCB Learning is the Board's initiative to enhance the ability of Governments to estimate and assess their requirements for internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, in compliance with the three international drug control conventions. Since its launch in 2016, the programme has been supporting Member States and their competent national authorities in implementing the recommendations contained in the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, held in 2016, and the reports of the Board for 2015, 2018 and 2022 on the availability of internationally controlled substances.<sup>131</sup>

296. The objective of INCB Learning is to promote the adequate availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances required for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their abuse and diversion into illicit channels. The submission to the Board of timely and accurate national reports of estimated requirements and statistical data for controlled substances and estimates of annual legitimate requirements for precursors is essential to achieving this objective.

297. INCB Learning supports Member States in fully implementing and complying with the international drug control conventions through training and awareness-raising. Capacity-building activities include regional training seminars, availability workshops, e-modules, bilateral consultations and, since mid-2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, online training sessions.

298. An INCB Learning subregional in-person training seminar and an awareness-raising availability workshop for officials from the competent national authorities of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama were held in San Salvador from 13 to 17 February 2023. Over four days, 34 officials participated in 18 training sessions, which were dedicated to expanding knowledge of the provisions of the international

<sup>127</sup>UNAMA, "UN launches new Strategic Framework for supporting Afghan people", 3 July 2023.

<sup>128</sup>UNAMA, "Secretary-General's statement following two-day meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan", 3 May 2023.

<sup>129</sup>A/77/914-S/2023/453.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>E/INCB/2015/1/Supp.1, E/INCB/2018/1/Supp.1 and E/INCB/2022/1/Supp.1.

drug control treaties and further strengthening capacity for improved treaty implementation. A one-day awareness-raising availability workshop brought together specialists from Governments, WHO/the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and civil society to find ways to improve access to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical use in the subregion. Both activities were organized in close collaboration with the Government of El Salvador and CICAD.

299. On 8 and 9 June 2023, INCB Learning held a two-day virtual workshop focused on raising awareness of the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes as part of the Board's ongoing efforts to support Member States in ensuring that essential medicines are available, while preventing their diversion and abuse. The event brought together officials from the competent national authorities of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and a diverse group of stakeholders that included representatives from palliative care associations, experts in drug control and public health, and members of the international community. Over the two days, participants discussed various themes related to improving access to controlled substances for medical purposes, including regulatory frameworks, barriers to access, and the importance of national and international cooperation.

300. Both in-person and virtual INCB Learning seminars are evaluated anonymously by participants. In past years, the activities have received high ratings and evaluations have consistently shown that the content meets participants' expectations, the sessions are highly relevant and the learning materials are of a high quality.

301. E-modules are a valuable tool for closing knowledge gaps. To date, INCB Learning has developed five e-modules to support Governments in their implementation of the international drug control treaties. Available in English, French, Russian and Spanish, as well as Portuguese, the five e-modules offer interactive, self-paced training. The e-modules cover the following thematic areas: (a) the system of estimates of annual legitimate medical and scientific requirements for narcotic drugs; (b) the system of assessments of annual legitimate medical and scientific requirements for psychotropic substances; (c) the system of estimates of annual legitimate requirements for imports of precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants; (d) the international drug control framework and the role of INCB; and (e) ensuring adequate availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

302. Officials from competent national authorities continue to utilize the e-modules, and as at 1 November 2023,

1,462 officials, 67 per cent of whom were women, from 154 countries and territories had enrolled in INCB Learning e-modules. Successful completion of the modules is acknowledged with an online certificate; to date, 1,664 digital certificates have been issued. Those who have taken the modules come from all regions of the world and their countries are home to 95 per cent of the world's population. **The Board encourages Governments to continue to register officials of their competent national authorities for the e-modules and to provide feedback on the content of existing e-modules and suggestions for areas in which the development of further training is needed.**

303. In its capacity-building activities, INCB Learning works with key partner organizations such as the African Union Commission, CICAD, UNODC and WHO.

304. A compendium of frequently asked questions, which was first developed in 2021, is available on the INCB Learning website in English, French, Russian and Spanish. It provides information on compliance with the provisions of the three international drug control conventions and on the regulatory control and monitoring of licit trade in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals. Drug control officials can use the tool to find information related to, for example, the accurate submission of forms and timelines. Access to all the forms is also provided in the compendium.

305. To assist competent national authorities in their duties, all training materials have been consolidated and are now available on a dedicated page of the INCB Learning website. The page provides links to the text of the international drug control treaties in all six official languages and Portuguese, training materials, guidelines, tools and forms that support reporting to INCB.

306. INCB Learning newsletters are published regularly on the INCB Learning website and disseminated to competent national authorities upon subscription. The Board invites national drug control officials interested in INCB Learning activities and learning tools to subscribe to the newsletter by sending an email to [incb.learning@un.org](mailto:incb.learning@un.org).

307. **The Board is grateful for the contributions to INCB Learning made by the Governments of Australia, Belgium, France, the Russian Federation, Thailand and the United States and for the support offered by CICAD, and encourages Governments to consider actively supporting INCB Learning by participating in its activities and providing the resources required to ensure the programme's continuation and expansion.**

## (b) International Import and Export Authorization System

308. I2ES is an Internet-based electronic system developed by UNODC, with financial and technical support from Member States, and administered by the Board to allow for rapid paperless trade in internationally controlled substances. Launched in 2015 pursuant to numerous Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolutions, in particular resolutions 55/6 and 56/7, I2ES allows for the secure issuance and exchange of import and export authorizations between countries, reducing the processing time for authorizations and the risk of diversions from forged authorizations. The system is compliant with the 1961 Convention as amended and the 1971 Convention, and its importance was recognized in the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, held in 2016.

309. The INCB secretariat continually works to assist Governments in registering and implementing I2ES within their national drug control systems. Technical materials regarding the platform and its functions are available on the INCB website. The INCB secretariat also conducts webinars for interested Governments to demonstrate the functionality of the system.

310. I2ES is the only system approved by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for the issuance and exchange of import and export authorizations pursuant to the provisions of the 1961 Convention as amended and the 1971 Convention. Recent developments regarding the use of electronic import and export authorizations among countries, including the views of the Board on those developments, are discussed in chapter III, section A, of the present report.

311. In the 12-month period ending on 1 November 2023, two Governments registered to use I2ES, bringing the total to 77 Governments that have an active administrator account. The number of Governments actively using I2ES is slowly growing, and the frequency with which Governments use the platform is increasing. During the 12-month period ending on 1 November 2023, authorities from 14 countries uploaded a total of 5,407 import authorizations and 1,202 export authorizations.

312. The Board has noted that some competent national authorities wishing to use I2ES face legislative and regulatory hurdles at the national level. These include limitations regarding how import and export authorization documents are approved and the means by which such documents can be transmitted or exchanged. Some countries require import and export authorizations for internationally controlled substances to be issued as physical documents.

313. The Board has also noted that a certain lack of features and technical limitations in I2ES make implementing the system difficult for some Governments. This includes the lack of a multilingual interface, support for nationally controlled substances and advanced statistical reporting functions. In addition, deeper integration between I2ES, other INCB systems and some national-level systems would allow for easier, quicker and more accurate data exchange between Governments and the Board.

314. Updates to I2ES and PEN Online will be provided in the context of the development of the next-generation international drug control system, the INCB initiative to update and expand the functionalities of the existing database, the International Drug Control System (IDS). IDS contains data that are provided by Governments pursuant to the provisions of the international drug control treaties and other international obligations enshrined in resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, as well as information that is provided voluntarily.

## (c) Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances Programme

315. The INCB GRIDS Programme focal point networks form the robust infrastructure that enables the rapid exchange of information and alerts and the development of intelligence and facilitates operational action to assist in investigations and in the dismantling of organized criminal groups trafficking in non-scheduled dangerous substances. As at 1 September 2023, there were 3,055 Project Ion focal points representing 633 agencies from 193 Governments and 21 international organizations, and 3,029 OPIOIDS project focal points representing 621 agencies from 188 Governments and 21 international organizations.

316. As a result of the expanding focal point network, the number of real-time incidents communicated through IONICS has consistently grown and, in 2023, exceeded 77,000. Consequently, Governments have been able to carry out investigations and analyses that have in turn led to seizures of dangerous substances, arrests of traffickers, prosecutions and disruptions of international trafficking networks.

317. Leveraging the Project Ion, OPIOIDS project and Project Prism (in relation to chemical precursors) law and regulatory enforcement focal point networks, INCB coordinated an operation (known as “Operation Knockout”) to identify emerging global trafficking sources and destinations of shipments of 1,4-butanediol, flubromazepam, *gamma*-butyrolactone and ketamine, substances associated

with drug-facilitated sexual assault reported in a number of countries. The operation involved 160 law and regulatory enforcement officials from 76 national agencies and organizations and six international partners. This led to 671 seizures, amounting to more than 785 kg and 225 litres of drugs seized during the operational period. Of the total incidents communicated, 282 incidents involved carisoprodol (141 kg and 100 units); 224 incidents involved ketamine (516 kg and 7.2 litres); 101 incidents involved 1,4-butanediol (46 kg and 200 litres); 61 incidents involved *gamma*-butyrolactone (82 kg and 18 litres); and three incidents involved flubromazepam (51 grams and 10 units).

318. One of the pillars of the GRIDS Programme is its unique approach to public-private partnerships, assisting Governments in their efforts to foster voluntary cooperation with companies to prevent the exploitation of legitimate services by traffickers. In this work, the focus is on four key areas: manufacture, marketing, movement and monetization. In the 12-month period ending on 1 September 2023, expert group meetings and other related events were held, bringing together leading global private sector partners from a number of relevant sectors, including e-commerce platforms, social media companies, chemical and drug manufacturers and private postal and express mail and courier services. These events resulted in operational outcomes, as a substantial number of vendors of dangerous synthetic opioids were identified by INCB and, through law and regulatory enforcement focal points, removed from e-commerce platforms, thereby reducing the availability of fentanyl and related dangerous substances.

319. Between 1 November 2022 and 1 November 2023, five global alerts and special notices were circulated to Project Ion and OPIOIDS focal points for voluntary action by law, regulatory and private sector counterparts. This included an alert relating to emerging trafficking in tianeptine – a substance with opioid-like effects – and trafficking in bromazolam and flunitrazolam, both emerging novel triazolobenzodiazepines with no known legitimate use. The Board invites all relevant government authorities to communicate seizures and suspicious shipments involving these substances through IONICS.

320. Through the GRIDS Programme, in-person training courses were conducted, supplemented by distance-learning technologies. Between 1 November 2022 and 31 October 2023, 26 training events were held on topics that included raising awareness of new psychoactive substances and emerging opioids, information exchange using IONICS, intelligence development and targeting using the GRIDS Intelligence tool, safe handling of opioids and fentanyl, personal protective equipment, presumptive testing for synthetic opioids and interdiction methods. A total

of 533 law and regulatory enforcement officers and postal inspection officers, representing 58 Governments and two international organizations, took part in the training courses and also received access to the eLearning Individual Training Environment (ELITE) platform, which is offered in the six official languages of the United Nations. The Board recognizes the ongoing cooperation with its international partners, in particular UPU, whose 2018 cooperation agreement with INCB has significantly raised the awareness of postal operators worldwide about the safe handling of packages containing dangerous substances.

321. Also through the GRIDS Programme, the sixth annual operational meeting on countering trafficking in dangerous synthetic drugs and chemicals through postal, courier and air cargo services was held in Vienna from 11 to 15 September 2023. The event brought together over 94 officers from 36 Governments, as well as several international organizations and private sector entities. Participants identified the latest *modi operandi* for trafficking in synthetic opioids and new psychoactive substances, exchanged case studies and engaged in multilateral meetings to enhance cooperation across borders.

322. In addition, under the GRIDS Programme, the third international expert group meeting on expanding INCB lists of dangerous substances with no known legitimate use and novel approaches for their identification in falsified, substandard or otherwise illicitly manufactured pharmaceuticals was held in Vienna from 18 to 22 September 2023. The event was attended by more than 40 representatives from 16 Governments, as well as several international organizations and private sector entities.

**323. The Board encourages Governments and international organizations to enable their law and regulatory enforcement focal points to take advantage of the suite of INCB proprietary counter-trafficking tools, including the Project Ion Incident Communication System (IONICS) for secure real-time exchange of information on incidents involving new psychoactive substances; the GRIDS Intelligence HD strategic and operational targeting platforms; the eLearning Individualized Training Environment (ELITE) platform referred to in Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 66/2; and the Scanning of Novel Opioids on Online Platforms (SNOOP) tool for the detection and dismantling of online vendor marketplaces, along with the GRIDS Programme operational activities.**

## (d) Project Prism and Project Cohesion

324. Since 2003 and 2006, respectively, Project Prism (in relation to amphetamine-type stimulants and other synthetic drugs) and Project Cohesion (in relation to illicit manufacture of cocaine and heroin) have guided INCB operational initiatives on precursors. Supported and often engineered by the Precursors Task Force,<sup>132</sup> these operational initiatives have resulted in valuable analysis and helped to identify and address new trends in precursor trafficking, as well as gaps and weaknesses in the international precursor control system.

325. In October 2023, Operation Backup was launched under Project Prism with the aim of generating information on non-scheduled precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants (P-2-P methyl glycidic acid and its esters, and esters of 3,4-MDP-2-P methyl glycidic acid) and of fentanyl and its analogues (4-piperidone and 1-Boc-4-piperidone). The information gathered through Operation Backup will also support the review of the chemicals targeted by INCB for a possible scheduling recommendation to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2024.

326. A closed, information-sharing meeting, organized under Project Prism, was held in Vienna in June 2023. The meeting facilitated the exchange of information among countries in Africa, Europe and West Asia on the diversion of and trafficking in pharmaceutical preparations containing pseudoephedrine originating in Africa.

327. During the reporting period, INCB issued three alerts through Project Prism. The first alert focused on a new method of concealment for the smuggling of pseudoephedrine; the second alert highlighted common characteristics of a series of shipments of glycidic acid derivatives of P-2-P and 3,4-MDP-2-P in the Netherlands; and the third alert raised awareness of the identification of a new designer precursor of MDMA and related “ecstasy”-type substances, the sodium salt of isopropylidene (2-(3,4-methylenedioxyphenyl)acetyl)malonate (IMDPAM).

**328. The Board commends all Governments that have supported the operational initiatives under Projects Cohesion and Prism, including the time-bound intelligence-gathering operations and case meetings. Further, in order to ensure that follow-up investigations of precursor cases**

**and suspicious shipments are conducted efficiently, the Board encourages all Governments to nominate suitable precursors focal points, if they have not done so, and to inform INCB of any changes or updates in a timely manner.**

## (e) Precursors Incident Communication System

329. PICS is an online platform for the sharing by competent authorities of real-time actionable information related to incidents and suspicious shipments involving precursors and equipment used in illicit drug manufacture. PICS automatically alerts users via email about new incidents. It allows users to conduct both free text and structured searches with several fixed and dynamic search options, enabling users to generate tailor-made reports for intelligence and analysis. It also enables the sharing of pictures and documents that can be used by countries in the conduct of backtracking investigations.

330. As at 1 November 2023, PICS had more than 600 registered users from 129 countries and territories and 300 organizations. Information related to over 4,300 incidents that had taken place in more than 80 countries and that involved nearly 300 substances had been shared through PICS. A total of 77 incidents included information related to equipment. In the reporting period, information on nearly 500 unique incidents involving nearly 1,200 communications on the substances involved (145 communications on substances in Table I, 218 on substances in Table II, 553 on substances included in the limited international special surveillance list of non-scheduled substances, 253 on non-scheduled substances not included in that list and 47 on cutting agents) was shared through PICS. Information on 14 cases involving laboratory equipment was also shared through PICS during the same period.

**331. The Board encourages Governments to make greater use of PICS and to share timely information on incidents relating to precursors and laboratory equipment with the requisite actionable details to enable the conduct of investigations by law enforcement authorities in the countries concerned.** The sharing of information through PICS enables the Board to issue alerts through Project Prism and Project Cohesion (see para. 327 above) and to update the limited international special surveillance list of non-scheduled substances. It also provides the basis for conducting time-bound intelligence-gathering operations.

332. Further details on the Board’s precursor-related operational activities can be found in the report of the Board

<sup>132</sup>The current members of the INCB Precursors Task Force are Australia, China, Colombia, Germany, India, Mexico, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Nigeria, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Switzerland, Türkiye, and the United States, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), UNODC, the World Customs Organization, the European Commission and the Inter-American Drug Control Commission.



for 2023 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.

#### (f) Pre-Export Notification Online Light system

333. PEN Online Light is an online platform that is similar to PEN Online and that was launched in October 2022 for the voluntary exchange of information about legitimate planned exports involving chemicals that are not controlled internationally but that may be under national control in some countries. As at 1 November 2023, 12 exporting countries had used PEN Online Light to inform 50 importing countries and territories about 725 planned shipments of chemicals not under international control. **The Board commends those Governments that actively use PEN Online Light and encourages the authorities of all other exporting countries and territories to consider using it with a view to enhancing knowledge of international movements of substitute and alternative chemicals that may be used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.**

#### (g) INCB newsletter on precursors

334. To keep stakeholders abreast of developments and initiatives in the areas of precursor control and equipment that may be used in illicit drug manufacture, INCB publishes a newsletter on a quarterly basis, which is disseminated to all Project Prism and Project Cohesion focal points, competent national authorities and relevant partners. Available data indicate that the newsletter enjoys a high level of readership, giving an indication of the interest of the targeted audience for this service.