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## REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### *Africa*

- In most countries in Africa abuse of drugs and especially psychotropic substances appears to be on the rise, especially the number of women and children abusing drugs is increasing and the age of people turning to drugs for the first time is falling.
- Civil war, poverty, HIV/AIDS, crime and corruption are very much linked to the drug control problems in the region. Inadequate systems of licensing and weak inspection mechanisms fuel the growing abuse in psychotropic substances.
- In 1999, seizures of cannabis, heroin and psychotropic substances increased significantly, compared with 1998, while cocaine seizures declined. However, seizures of illicit drugs in African countries remain very limited due to lack of resources for drug control. Therefore, the actual dimensions of drug activity are far higher than figures show.
- Morocco has made considerable efforts to strengthen its law enforcement authorities, particularly customs control, but remains a major source of cannabis resin. According to the World Customs Organization and ICPO/Interpol, 70-80% of the cannabis resin seized in Europe and one half of the cannabis resin seized worldwide are of Moroccan origin.
- African countries continue to serve as transit points for drugs on their way to Europe: for cocaine from South American countries, mainly transitting Brazil, as well as for heroin originating from Afghanistan and Myanmar.
- South Africa has the world's highest prevalence of methaqualone abuse.

### *America*

- Cannabis continues to be the drug most commonly abused in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Cultivation of highly potent cannabis, hydroponically grown, is spreading in Canada and parts of the United States and continues to constitute a major concern to law enforcement authorities. In Canada, cannabis growers and traffickers often receive too lenient court sentences reducing the impact of efforts by law enforcement authorities.
- In the United States, substantial results in eradicating illicit cannabis production have already been achieved by law enforcement agencies. Education and information campaigns on the negative effects of drugs have lead to a decline of cannabis abuse among young people.
- The Board welcomes the Canadian Government's recent integration of 44 psychotropic substances into the "Controlled Drugs and Substances Act".
- In addition to widespread methamphetamine abuse, there is an increasing trend of MDMA (Ecstasy) abuse, mostly among young people in North America.
- In the United States, the Board notes the sharp increase in prescriptions of psychoactive drugs for children under the age of six. The Board appreciates efforts by the government of the United States in conducting scientific research on drugs widely used as medicines or abused by young people and children.
- Throughout the region of South America national legislation appears to be comprehensive and policies are well formulated, however, organizational, political and financial impediments hamper their implementation.

- Bolivia's Dignity Plan proved to be successful resulting in a drastic reduction of coca production. The Board finds that this development deserves the support of the international community. However, the Board warns that coca bush cultivation in Bolivia could shift from the Chapare region to the Yungas area.
- The Board calls on the governments of South America to closely cooperate with Colombia in the execution of Plan Colombia, containing a comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy to combat illicit drug manufacture and trafficking.
- Illicit opium cultivation is spreading and heroin seizures have increased sharply in Colombia.
- The use of the Caribbean for illicitly trans-shipping and storing drugs has led to increased drug abuse and drug-related crime. The availability and abuse of cannabis, "crack" and especially cocaine have increased significantly.
- Control systems for properly identifying and tracking precursor chemicals in Central America and the Caribbean are either inadequate or non-existent. Some countries have no national legislation on precursor chemicals at all.

### *Asia*

- Continuing production of opium in Afghanistan and the resulting smuggling of opiates and related criminal activities in West Asia remains a major concern. Positive developments in Afghanistan include the banning of the collection of taxes on heroin and cannabis in March 2000 and the passing of a law to ban opium poppy cultivation in July 2000 by the Taliban.
- Smuggling of firearms, insurrections and drug trafficking continue to be inter-related, especially in the central Asian states. Drug trafficking groups are expanding their network of cooperation into multinational dimensions exploiting weaknesses in law enforcement caused by corruption, lack of concern for drug-related issues and lack of human and financial resources.
- In Iran and Pakistan opium and heroin addiction rates are among the highest in the world.
- In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the abuse of benzodiazepines (Rohypnol) in the form of pharmaceutical tablets is widespread. Benzodiazepines are often abused in conjunction with opium and heroin. The abuse of benzodiazepines is also increasing in Turkey.
- Illicit drug prices decreased in CIS member states while the availability of heroin increased leading to growing abuse of heroin by injection.
- In East and South-East Asia there has been a drastic increase in the manufacture of, trafficking in and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants. Youth in practically all of the major cities of the sub-region are principal abusers.
- In some countries in East and South-East Asia, seizures and the number of abusers of MDMA (Ecstasy) have increased markedly. More and more adolescents are abusing ketamine in conjunction with MDMA (Ecstasy). Most of the MDMA (Ecstasy) seized in the region originates in Europe, mainly the Netherlands. Laboratories in the border area between Myanmar and Thailand may, however, already be manufacturing relatively inexpensive MDMA (Ecstasy) for local abuse.
- Profits in the illicit trade in stimulants are continuously rising. In East and South-East Asia, illicit trafficking in stimulants is becoming more widespread than illicit trade in opiates.
- In Lebanon, bank secrecy in cases involving drug traffickers has not been lifted yet. Under the current legal framework in Lebanon, it is extremely difficult to investigate money-laundering and it is virtually impossible to confiscate assets of drug traffickers.

### Europe

- Availability of drugs is increasing in Europe. While cannabis abuse remains stable, abuse of synthetic drugs and cocaine continues to rise in most parts of Europe.
- Europe continues to be a major source of illicitly manufactured amphetamines and amphetamine-type stimulants, especially MDMA (Ecstasy) not only for the region but also throughout the entire world.
- Activities to reduce harm associated with drug abuse constitute an important element of some European drug control strategies. While the Board acknowledges the importance of harm reduction activities, it stresses that such programmes cannot be substitutes for a comprehensive national strategy to reduce the demand for illicit drugs.
- Albania is the only country in Europe that is not a party to any of the international drug control treaties. The Board urges the government of Albania to accede to the three international drug conventions as soon as possible.
- Cannabis remains to be the most widely trafficked drug in Europe. Whereas Morocco is the main source of cannabis resin, Albania remains a major source country of cannabis herb.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina has become an important transiting country for drug trafficking. Countermeasures require a close cooperation between the two entities of that country. The Board, therefore, welcomes the agreement of February 2000 for the drafting of coordinated new drug control legislation.
- Indoor cultivation of cannabis remains a significant problem in Western Europe. The fact that cannabis seeds and paraphernalia for growing cannabis continue to be sold via the Internet, contributes to this trend.
- Countries in Central and Eastern Europe continue to be used for storage of heroin and cocaine destined for countries in Western Europe.
- Cocaine abuse in Western Europe has increased in recent years. According to recent studies, cocaine abuse has increased in Belgium, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Demand for cocaine has also risen in Eastern European countries.
- Heroin abuse in Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Romania, the Russian Federation and Slovenia is a major concern. In Hungary, intravenous heroin abuse is increasing at an alarming rate.

### Oceania

- In Australia, heroin abuse continues to be prevalent: heroin related death tolls and arrests are on the rise.
- Harm reduction continues to be a major element of drug abuse strategies in both Australia and New Zealand.
- In New Zealand, the demand for MDMA (Ecstasy) is rising, LSD continues to be a major problem.
- Seizure data indicate that the Pacific islands are increasingly being used for trans-shipment of heroin and cocaine.
- Large orders of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine have been placed from Papua New Guinea. Since both chemicals are used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine (Ice) the Board trusts that the Government will fully investigate any attempts to divert large quantities of such chemicals into clandestine drug manufacture.