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## REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### *Africa*

The abuse of 'crack' cocaine is growing faster than the abuse of any other drug in South Africa because the drug has become more affordable. Cocaine abuse has increased significantly in Angola and Namibia.

Injecting heroin is becoming more common in parts of Africa which will further contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS infection which is already widespread in the region. In South Africa there has been an increase of 40 per cent in the number of intravenous heroin abusers over the last three years.

Twenty-two per cent of cannabis herb seizures worldwide were effected in Africa. The main African source countries for cannabis smuggled to Europe continue to be Morocco and South Africa.

The abuse of psychotropic substances is widespread. The abuse of MDMA (Ecstasy) is spreading in South Africa.

There has been a decrease in the age at which a growing number of young people and women start abusing drugs. Unemployed youth and the poor are particularly at risk of being exposed to drug abuse.

### *Americas*

In Colombia drug traffickers have diversified their operations as is shown by seizures of substances other than cocaine and heroin such as MDMA (Ecstasy). It appears that South American cocaine is smuggled into Europe, where it is exchanged for MDMA (Ecstasy), which is then smuggled back into South America and onto the north.

The Government of Canada has passed a regulation allowing individuals to access cannabis for medical purposes although the medical usefulness of the drug has not been proved and the action was explicitly opposed by the Canadian Medical Association. Federal authorities in the United States have forestalled similar moves by certain states.

Combined operations by the law enforcement agencies of nearly 30 countries in Central America, the Caribbean and South America, part of a joint task force initiated by the United States, seized over 50 tons of cocaine during 2000, a significant share of the total amount of cocaine seizures. Several arrests were made and assets confiscated.

In Canada and the United States cocaine abuse appears to be stabilizing and in many parts even declining but heroin abuse among young people is on an upward trend.

Opium poppy cultivation and heroin production appear to be on the increase in some countries in the Andean subregion while the overall level of production of coca leaf has remained stable.

Regional measures to cooperate against organized crime, money-laundering, diversion or precursor chemicals and trafficking in drugs and arms, were agreed at the Summit of the Americas held in Canada in April 2001.

### *Asia*

Myanmar accounted for most of the world's illicit poppy cultivation in 2001 following the ban on cultivation in areas of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban authorities and the prolonged drought in the country.

Following military action in Afghanistan, large quantities of opiates were released from illicit stocks. Opiates originating in Afghanistan continue to be smuggled into and through Iran and Pakistan.

In Tajikistan the quantity of heroin seized in the first six months of 2001, was equal to the quantity seized in the entire previous year. There have been similar increases in drug seizures in other Central Asian countries.

Opiate addiction rates in Iran and Pakistan continue to be among the highest in the world.

There was a reduction in the total area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam and opium poppy cultivation in Thailand remains at negligible levels.

The abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants is increasing in a number of countries in the region including Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand. MDMA (Ecstasy) which was virtually unknown in the region about a decade ago continues to gain popularity among young people.

In almost all countries in South Asia heroin abuse has spread and there has been a shift from smoking and inhaling heroin to injecting it.

The Board urges Israel, the only country in West Asia which has not yet become a party to the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, to accede to that Convention.

### *Europe*

Europe remains the major source of illicitly manufactured synthetic drugs such as MDMA (Ecstasy), which are easily available and widely abused by young people both within and outside Europe.

Illicit poppy cultivation was discovered for the first time in Albania in 2001. There is small scale cultivation of opium poppies in other countries in central and eastern Europe.

Some countries in western Europe have decriminalized offences related to the possession and abuse of controlled drugs and openly tolerate the abuse of drugs, particularly cannabis and MDMA (Ecstasy). None of the Governments has been able to show the Board how the application of such measures reduces the demand for illicit drugs.

In central and eastern Europe there has been a noticeable increase in drug abuse and trafficking. In particular, illicit manufacture and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants is spreading.

There has been an increase in the flow of Afghan heroin into the Russian Federation.

Most countries in central and eastern Europe which have been transit countries for drug traffickers, now face serious problems with heroin abuse. HIV infection and hepatitis C infection are spreading among intravenous drug abusers in many countries.

### *Oceania*

Hydroponically-grown cannabis has become the most popular form of cannabis abused in Australia while outdoor cannabis cultivation continues to decrease.

In 2000, the total amount of cocaine seized by Australian law enforcement officers reached a record-high - more than twice the total amount seized in 1999.

The number of detected clandestine laboratories manufacturing amphetamine-type stimulants in Australia has also increased, as has the number of seizures of MDMA (Ecstasy) at its air and sea borders.

An increasing number of Pacific Islands is becoming offshore financial centres which could provide opportunities for drug traffickers to launder their illicit profits.

The Board regrets the establishment of a drug injection room in New South Wales in Australia stating that such facilities run counter to the provisions of the international drug control treaties.

*For more information, see chapter III of the report, paragraphs 237-569.*