



INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD

2010

PRESS KIT

Annual Report



EMBARGO

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

All of us have a stake in drug control. Civil society, families and individuals have a need to be protected from the negative consequences of drug abuse and drug trafficking. We also need to have access to licit drugs—the medicines that are necessary to alleviate pain and suffering and to treat other illnesses. These two aims are intricately connected and have been agreed upon by the international community, through the international drug control conventions. A delicate balance needs to be maintained between ensuring equitable access to such medicines and ensuring that these substances are not diverted for illicit purposes.

While more drugs for medical and scientific purposes are consumed worldwide, the consumption is unevenly distributed across the globe. In many countries, medicine for treatment of illnesses is not readily available. This has to change. Governments must identify and remove the barriers to availability to prevent unnecessary suffering. The Board has brought these issues to the attention of governments in a special supplement to its report.

The implementation of the conventions has been successful in almost completely eliminating the diversion of controlled substances at the international level. However, diversion continues to occur at the national level. Illicit drug use must be tackled from both a supply and demand perspective. However it is crucial that any efforts aimed at preventing illicit drug use and drug trafficking do not limit the availability of controlled substances for licit purposes. This also applies to the precursor chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs. These chemicals also have legitimate uses. International initiatives, such as PEN-Online, Project Prism and Project Cohesion, seek to enhance the control of precursor chemicals to ensure that they are not diverted for the illicit manufacture of drugs.

We are grateful for the courageous efforts of those men and women working to protect us from the dangers of drug trafficking, who put their lives at risk every day. Sadly, their sacrifices are often counteracted by drug-related corruption and intimidation. Corruption and intimidation weaken law enforcement and judicial systems, putting at risk the international efforts to counteract the drug problem. The Board, in chapter I of its report, has highlighted the risks of corruption to drug control and has brought together a set of recommendations for the consideration of Governments.

The Board's Annual Report for 2010 focuses not only on these issues but also on the challenges presently faced in drug control and recommends measures to be taken. The situation is dynamic but together we—the international community, Governments, non-governmental organizations, local communities and individuals—must continue our efforts to ensure the effectiveness of international drug control.



Hamid Ghodse

President

International Narcotics Control Board



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GREATER EFFORTS NEEDED TO LIMIT DAMAGING EFFECTS OF DRUG-RELATED CORRUPTION

Vienna, 2 March (United Nations Information Service) — Preventing corruption must be a higher priority in the fight against drug trafficking, the Vienna-based International Narcotics Control Board says in its Annual Report 2010, launched today in Vienna.

“Nothing has the same damaging effect on the efforts to combat drug trafficking as the successful attempts of criminal organizations to intimidate and corrupt public officials,” Hamid Ghodse, President of the Board, says, underlining the need for urgent action and lasting commitment.

He notes that the “police and justice officials often face tremendous pressure from organized crime when working to stop drug trafficking. Without adequate protection they find themselves confronted with a difficult choice between becoming victims of violence and possibly losing their lives or their integrity and becoming accomplices of criminals”.

The Report points out that the vast profits generated in the illicit drug markets often exceed the financial resources of state institutions, thus posing a major threat to public and international security. Criminal organizations with drug trafficking empires have in some cases become political forces with the power and authority of legitimate institutions. The very authorities established to control and repress drug trafficking are then themselves compromised by corruption.

Corruption is used strategically

Evidence shows that the most successful criminal organizations make a strategic and systematic use of violence and corruption to ensure an unimpeded flow of illicit drugs, says the Board. What they cannot achieve through bribery, they can still achieve through violence and intimidation and vice versa, notes the Report. This is why areas with intense drug trafficking often suffer a very high incidence of violence and corruption.

In order to maximize the profits of drug trafficking, most criminal organizations seek and find ways to obtain the complicity of key public officials.

Measuring the actual prevalence of corruption is not easy. Official national data on corruption are usually drawn from national crime statistics and are more indicative of the success of anti-corruption initiatives than the actual level of corruption. Official data is also affected by public confidence in the police and the victim’s willingness to report the crime. Surveys that capture public perception are used to complement the official data.

The impact of corruption however is easy to spot. The Report describes corruption as having a detrimental effect on the credibility and efficiency of the criminal justice system and weakening the rule of law. Countries where narco-trafficking exists are particularly vulnerable.

Narcotics control units that handle large sums of money and quantities of drugs are the most affected, along with the respective judicial and customs units. Officers working in these units not only have more corruption opportunities than others, but they are also aggressively recruited by criminal groups.



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Combating drug-related corruption

The Report sets out strategies for tackling drug-related organized crime and implementing preventive measures. With globalized criminal networks commanding enormous resources and having access to sophisticated technologies, they are able to quickly adjust to new drug control tactics and can exploit weaknesses of drug control agencies. Preventive measures thus become ever more important, the Report emphasizes.

The Report calls on Governments to establish efficient, transparent and objective systems of recruitment and promotion of public officials as well as a system of performance measurement and rotation of staff. All agencies involved in drug control should have in place procedures for disclosure of conflicts of interest, registration of assets and disciplinary mechanisms.

Increasing transparency is vital to preventing judicial corruption. Proceedings should be public and judges must qualify their decisions—and these decisions must be recorded and accessible to the public and media.

The President of the Board calls on policymakers to provide adequate resources to the rule of law sector to enable it to fulfil its duties. Assistance should be provided to States which require technical or other forms of assistance. While primary responsibility lies with the Governments to protect their citizens against intimidation and corruption, international cooperation is essential to enable relevant law enforcement agencies to cooperate with each other.



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MEDICINES FOR TREATMENT OF PAIN AND ILLNESS MUST BE AVAILABLE FOR ALL—INCB CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO TAKE ACTION

More than 80 per cent of the world's population has no or insufficient access to pain relief drugs and are suffering unnecessary pain because of it, according to a special supplement to the INCB Annual Report published today.

"Ninety per cent of the licit drugs are consumed by ten per cent of the world's population in the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and some European countries," Hamid Ghodse, President of the Board, expresses INCB's concern. Many countries in Africa, Asia and parts of the Americas have very little or no access to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes.

According to the Board, there is enough raw material available to meet everybody's medical needs for opioid analgesics. However, there are a number of barriers preventing adequate access to these medicines. Although cost is often assumed to be the primary obstacle, low-cost preparations have been effectively distributed in a number of countries. This proves that economic barriers can be overcome.

Barriers to adequate availability of medicines include lack of education of health professionals, regulatory constraints, difficulties in distribution, and the absence of a comprehensive health policy that includes pain treatment. Drug control systems can help to ensure that enough narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are available for medical and scientific purposes and at the same time prevent their inappropriate use and abuse.

While the lack of availability of controlled medicines can deprive patients of their right to health benefits and relief from pain and suffering, excessive availability can lead to abuse and subsequently drug dependence. In the Report, the Board draws attention to the problem of abuse of pain relief drugs, which in some countries has even exceeded the levels of abuse of illicit drugs.

The Board urges Governments, with the assistance of the international community, to adopt the recommendations included in the Report in order to identify the barriers to adequate availability and take remedial action as appropriate. The recommendations of the Board cover a full spectrum of areas affecting the availability of drugs for medical and scientific purposes, for example, the collection of statistical data on licit drug requirements, legislation, education and training, national control systems, and prevention of diversion and abuse.



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DESIGNER DRUGS ESCALATING OUT OF CONTROL, MAJOR EFFORTS REQUIRED TO COUNTER THE PROBLEM, SAYS INCB

The rapid development of new designer drugs which are produced to bypass existing control systems is highlighted in the INCB's Annual Report launched today.

These drugs of abuse are often manufactured by slightly modifying the molecular structure of controlled substances, resulting in a new substance with similar effects which can circumvent national and international control measures. Detailed instructions for the manufacture of designer drugs are often shared via the Internet.

“Given the health risks posed by the abuse of designer drugs, we urge Governments to adopt national control measures to prevent the manufacture, trafficking in and abuse of these substances,” says Hamid Ghodse, President of the Board.

To address the problem of designers quickly changing a single component of a drug to avoid legal control, some Governments have adopted measures to control entire groups of structurally related synthetic compounds.

INCB cites the designer drug 4-methyl-methcathinone, known as “mephedrone”, as having been abused in a growing number of countries and regions. With effects similar to cocaine, amphetamine and MDMA (“ecstasy”), the substance has resulted in a number of deaths. First noted in 2007 in the United Kingdom, mephedrone has now become a problem drug of abuse in Europe, North America, South-East Asia and Oceania (in Australia and New Zealand).

Mephedrone is available through the Internet and also through retail outlets known as “smart shops”, sometimes advertised as bath salt, plant food or research chemical to avoid detection and legal proceedings. Organized crime groups are involved in the trafficking and distribution of mephedrone.

Mephedrone is one example of a large number of designer drugs that are being abused. In Europe alone there are 15 other “designer cathinones” that are currently being monitored by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and in Japan 51 drugs have been recently placed under control. As with mephedrone, the abuse of new substances can spread quickly within and across regions.

INCB calls on Governments to remain vigilant in monitoring trends in drug abuse and in identifying new substances of abuse. Bilateral and international cooperation is essential in sharing information on this cross-border phenomenon. In the interests of public health, Governments should place these substances under national control, in order to be able to prosecute the individuals involved in their manufacture and distribution. Where possible, the Board recommends that Governments consider generic scheduling to control entire groups of such substances.



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REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Africa

The Annual Report 2010 of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) states that cocaine smuggling through Africa to Europe is on the rise again. After a decline in cocaine trafficking in the region in the past two years, trafficking has resumed as indicated by several large-scale seizures in 2010.

In June last year, a record seizure of 2.1 tons of cocaine was made in the Gambia. In May, members of a trafficking network were arrested in Liberia for attempting to smuggle at least 4 tons of cocaine to Europe. A serious danger posed by cocaine is its enormous value relative to the size of the local economies. Traffickers have the resources to bribe officials to protect their operations. In March 2010, eleven senior officials of Gambian law enforcement agencies were arrested in connection with drug trafficking.

Cannabis is still the drug most widely produced, trafficked and abused in Africa. Annual prevalence rates of abuse on the continent among the population aged 15-64 fluctuate between five and ten per cent, representing about double the global average rate. Morocco remains among the world's largest producers of cannabis resin, but reports a significant reduction in plant cultivation (from 134,000 ha in 2003 to 56,000 ha in 2009) and resin production (from 3,070 tons to 820 tons over the same period).

East Africa is the main transit route for smuggling heroin from Asia to Africa, mainly through the major airports of Addis Ababa and Nairobi. According to estimates, about 35 tons of heroin are smuggled into Africa each year, of which more than half (25 tons) are used to supply Africa's population of drug addicts (an estimated 1.2 million people) with the remainder being shipped on to other regions, in particular Europe.

The Board is concerned about the fact that the abuse of almost all types of drugs has increased in Africa over the past few years. This is particularly alarming as in many countries national health-care systems do not have the resources for treatment of drug-dependent persons.

While the trafficking of precursor chemicals needed to produce drugs is on the decline, counterfeit medicines remain a major problem. In many African countries fake pharmaceutical products are available on street markets and pose a high risk for public health.

Americas

Central America and the Caribbean

The Central America and Caribbean region continues to be used as a major transit point for the large-scale trafficking of illicit drugs because of its location at the crossroads of the main producing countries in South America and the consumer markets in North America and Europe. While the total amount of cocaine smuggled to North America has declined due to reduced demand, the proportion transiting through Central America has increased.



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Endemic corruption, poverty and high unemployment have exacerbated drug-related crime despite considerable efforts made by Governments in the region to combat the problem. It is estimated that the street value of all drugs transiting through the Caribbean exceeds that of the legal economy.

In Central America, drug-related violence continues to plague El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras: these countries have the world's highest homicide rate.

In the Caribbean, the Government of Jamaica declared a state of emergency in the summer of 2010 after a stand-off between gang members and police, who were attempting to arrest the alleged head of a drug trafficking ring. Jamaica remains the largest producer and exporter of cannabis in Central America and the Caribbean, with 30 per cent of the region's total amount produced in the country.

Before the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, the country was already a major transit area for illicit drugs. The loss of capacity of the Haitian State due to the destruction caused by the quake has raised concerns that the country will be increasingly targeted by drug traffickers. Almost 30 per cent of the cannabis seized in the Dominican Republic in 2009 originated in Haiti, with the overall amount significantly increasing from 885 kg in 2008 to 1,400 kg in 2009. Dominican authorities also reported a sharp increase in cocaine seizures in 2009 to 3,400 kg, 64 per cent of which was accounted for by five large seizures.

While in most countries in the region drug injection is not the major source of HIV infection, Puerto Rico is a notable exception: in 2009, drug injection accounted for 40 per cent of new HIV infection cases among men and 27 per cent of cases among women.

The Board recognizes that the central problem for prevention and treatment programmes in the region is a lack of capacity to collect relevant data and encourages greater international support to that end.

North America

The United States is the main destination for illicit drug shipments. Drug trafficking organizations based in Mexico dominate the market for cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine in the United States. In 2009, an increase in the abuse of all drugs except cocaine was reported in the United States. From 2007 to 2009, several agencies reported the abuse of prescription drugs as the greatest drug-related threat.

In Mexico drug trafficking organizations responded with unprecedented violence to vigorous law enforcement measures by the Government to disrupt trafficking operations. Since 2006, more than 28,000 people have been killed in drug-related incidents in the country.

Mexico-based criminal organizations strengthened their position as suppliers of illicit drugs for the United States market while the influence of Colombia-based criminal organizations has diminished. In the United States, the retail distribution of illicit drugs is controlled by about 20,000 street gangs. Alliances with Mexico-based criminal organizations enabled the gangs to expand their influence at the expense of independent drug dealers.

Canada remains one of the world's primary sources for illicitly manufactured synthetic drugs, particularly MDMA ("ecstasy") and methamphetamine.



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In the United States, about 38 million people used illicit drugs in 2009, an increase of 2.5 million over 2008. From 1999 to 2007, the number of drug-related deaths doubled to 38,371 (2007). In some states, the number of drug-related deaths has surpassed the number of deaths from motor vehicle accidents. Cannabis remains the most commonly abused drug (28.5 million people in 2009).

In Canada, drug abuse declined among young people (15-24 years old): the abuse of cannabis went down from 32.7 per cent in 2008 to 26.3 per cent in 2009; cocaine and MDMA abuse almost halved over the same period of time.

South America

In 2009, the total area under coca bush cultivation in South America decreased for a second consecutive year, due to a significant reduction of that area in Colombia. In Bolivia and Peru the area under coca bush cultivation increased for the fourth consecutive year.

While the market for cocaine has decreased in North America (about 40 per cent market share), it continues to grow in Europe (30 per cent). The Southern Cone only accounts for 10 to 20 per cent. The Central American and the Caribbean region continues to be a major trafficking route for illicit drugs originating in South America and destined for North America and Europe. Colombia remains the primary source of cocaine for Europe, with Peru becoming increasingly important.

In past years, the use of semi-submersibles for smuggling drugs has significantly increased, as has the capacity of such vessels to carry drugs. In 2008 and 2009, law enforcement authorities seized 34 semi-submersibles. A submarine seized in Ecuador in July 2010 was able to carry 14 tons of drugs. There are also signs of increased cocaine trafficking through Africa by large cargo planes.

Almost 10,000 coca-processing laboratories were destroyed in 2008 in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. However, in the past years, cocaine laboratories were also dismantled in Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile and Ecuador. In October 2009, the Ecuadorian authorities dismantled one of the largest cocaine manufacturing laboratories ever in the country, which had the capacity to manufacture 20 tons of cocaine per month.

The area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in South America accounts for less than 1 per cent of the total area under such cultivation worldwide. In Colombia, the country in which most of the illicit opium poppy cultivation in South America takes place, such cultivation has gradually declined from 6,500 ha in 2000 to 356 ha in 2009.

Potassium permanganate remains the key oxidizing agent used to manufacture cocaine in South America. In 2009, 22.8 tons of potassium permanganate seized in Colombia accounted for the smallest total quantity of the substance seized in the country in the past decade. In Colombia, a portion of seized potassium permanganate has been illicitly manufactured in clandestine laboratories in the country. The amount of potassium permanganate illicitly manufactured in the country is believed to satisfy most of the traffickers' needs for the substance.



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Asia

East and South-East Asia

The manufacture, trafficking and use of synthetic drugs has significantly increased in East and South-East Asia since 2008. Illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants has taken place where the required precursor chemicals were easily accessible. Important quantities of methamphetamine were trafficked from the Islamic Republic of Iran and neighbouring countries to the region as a recent trend.

In 2009, 6.6 tons of methamphetamine and 1.1 million ecstasy tablets were seized in China. The importance of Europe as a source of MDMA decreased and more countries outside Europe reported domestic manufacture. For example, China and the Netherlands were indicated as sources of MDMA seized in Indonesia.

The progress in reducing opium production in the region has been reversed, due to a significant 11 per cent increase in Myanmar, which accounts for 95 per cent of the total production in East and South-East Asia. Despite the increase, only five per cent of global illicit opium production originates in the region.

Heroin continues to be the primary drug of abuse in China, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Viet Nam, with most countries in the region reporting declining or stable trends in heroin abuse.

Increasing abuse of methamphetamine has been reported from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. Methamphetamine is already the main drug of abuse in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand and the second most commonly abused drug in Cambodia and China.

An estimated 25 per cent of all injecting drug abusers in the world live in East and South-East Asia. The risk of an HIV epidemic in the region remains high. The Board underlines the importance of providing assistance for HIV prevention, treatment, support and care for drug dependent individuals in East and South-East Asia.

South Asia

South Asia has become one of the main regions used by drug traffickers to obtain the chemicals needed for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine, namely ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.

Indian law enforcement agencies seized 1.2 tons of ephedrine in 2009. Criminal networks are increasingly targeting Bangladesh as a source of pharmaceutical products containing these precursor chemicals. Pseudoephedrine from India is also formed into tablets in Bangladesh before being sent to Central America and the Caribbean.

India increasingly uncovers facilities where methamphetamine destined for markets in other countries is illicitly manufactured.

Pharmaceutical products containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are widely abused in South Asian countries. In Bangladesh, 18,600 ampoules containing buprenorphine, a painkiller,



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were seized in 2009—a significant increase compared to 2006. India is one of the main sources of psychotropic substances sold through illegal Internet pharmacies.

Cannabis is cultivated on a large scale throughout South Asia. For example, in 2009, law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh seized 2.1 tons of cannabis herb.

West Asia

Illicit opium production was almost cut in half in the region in 2010 compared to 2009. The sharp decline to now 3,600 tons was mainly due to a fungus affecting the poppy plants. The extent of the area under illicit cultivation remained the same as in the previous year.

Opium stockpiles in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries total some 12,000 tons, equivalent to 2.5 years of global illicit demand for opiates. The fact that illicit opium production decreased in 2010 does not mean that there will be a decline in heroin manufacture on the illicit market, as sufficient stocks of opium are available.

As opium prices exploded, with one kilogramme of dry opium now being sold for US\$ 207 compared to US\$ 78 in 2009, there is a possibility that Afghan farmers may consider growing even more opium poppy in 2011.

Almost all of the illicit opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is concentrated in the southern and western parts of the country. In the province of Helmand, 53 per cent of the land available for agriculture is used to grow opium poppy. A stable 20 out of the 34 Afghan provinces are free of opium poppy, with the northern region maintaining its poppy-free status achieved in 2009.

Drug abuse in the country itself has increased dramatically. There are now nearly 1 million drug users in Afghanistan, roughly 8 per cent of the population aged 15-64 years. Compared to 2005, opium use increased by 53 per cent and heroin use by 140 per cent.

Afghanistan could also be the world's largest producer of cannabis resin ("hashish") with a production capacity of between 1,500 and 3,500 tons a year. The extremely high yield of cannabis resin in Afghanistan (145 kg per ha) is more than three times the yield in Morocco (40 kg per ha).

While crop eradication campaigns did not have a vast impact, law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan were successful in their fight against drug trafficking, seizing 2.5 tons of heroin, 7.5 tons of morphine, 59 tons of opium, 23 tons of cannabis resin and more than 400 tons of solid precursor chemicals.

Afghan opiates are smuggled predominantly through the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia. The countries along the trafficking routes are faced with a wide range of problems related to large-scale drug trafficking, such as organized crime, corruption and a high demand for opiates in-country. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, for example, an estimated 2.8 per cent of the population between the ages 15-64 is dependent on opiates.

The shortest route for smuggling Afghan opiates to Europe is through the Islamic Republic of Iran. An estimated 37 per cent of Afghan heroin is smuggled through the country each year, with the remainder going through Pakistan or through the Central Asian route of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. The Middle East is mainly used as a transit area for heroin smuggled from Afghanistan into Arab countries.



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Abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants has grown dramatically in the region. There was a 60 per cent increase in the amount of seized amphetamine-type stimulants in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2009. Tablets sold as Captagon, which contain predominantly amphetamine but also caffeine, are produced in Syria and Turkey and smuggled into Saudi Arabia, the largest illicit market for Captagon, and Iraq.

Europe

The abuse of cocaine is spreading from Western Europe into other parts of the region. In some countries, cocaine may be replacing amphetamine and ecstasy as a drug of abuse, for example in Denmark, Spain and the United Kingdom, where increases in cocaine abuse occurred at the same time as decreases in the abuse of amphetamines.

Western Europe is the world's largest market for heroin, with approximately 60 per cent of regional consumption being accounted for by four countries (United Kingdom, Italy, France and Germany). European countries consume almost half of the heroin abused worldwide. The Russian Federation has the highest level of opiate abuse (1.6 per cent) in Europe. Almost all heroin available in Europe originates from Afghanistan.

Overall in Europe, cannabis use seems to be stable and in some countries even on the decline. 1.2 per cent of European citizens used cocaine in the previous year; Spain reports the highest rate with 3.1 per cent.

Eastern Europe is one of the few areas in the world where HIV prevalence is on the rise. Severe and spreading epidemics are reported from the Russian Federation and Ukraine. At over 1.6 per cent, the rate of HIV infection among adults in Ukraine is the highest in Europe. The use of contaminated equipment for drug injection was the source of over 50 per cent of the newly diagnosed HIV cases in Eastern Europe.

Oceania

Cannabis continues to be the drug most often used in Oceania. The annual prevalence of cannabis abuse in New Zealand is among the highest worldwide, with 14.6 per cent of the population aged 14-64 years. Lifetime prevalence of cannabis abuse in Fiji and Papua New Guinea was about 47 and 55 per cent respectively. As there is extensive cultivation within the region, smuggling into Oceania remains at a low level.

The use of ecstasy in Oceania has been increasing steadily in recent years, Australia having the highest annual prevalence of such abuse worldwide.

Recent seizures indicate that the region is increasingly used as a trans-shipment area for drugs and precursors.

In Australia, the amount of amphetamine-type stimulants seized at the border has increased by 58 per cent over the past two years. New Zealand has given high priority to fighting against manufacture and abuse of methamphetamine and in 2010, law enforcement agencies reported a number of seizures of the drug being smuggled in from China by air passengers.



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SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS ADDED TO HERBAL MIXTURES SUCH AS “SPICE” CONTINUE TO BE ABUSED—A CAUSE FOR CONCERN, ACCORDING TO INCB

According to the International Narcotics Control Board, the availability of herbal mixtures containing synthetic cannabinoids continues to be a matter of concern to governments. During recent years these mixtures, marketed under brand names such as “Spice”, have been increasingly available over the Internet and in specialized shops. Synthetic cannabinoids—correctly termed “synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists”—have psychoactive effects similar to cannabis. While cannabis is internationally controlled under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, synthetic cannabinoids are not under international control.

Given the health risks posed by the abuse of substances containing synthetic cannabinoids, several governments have adopted national control measures to prevent trafficking in and abuse of these substances. Some countries have added specific synthetic cannabinoids to the list of substances controlled under national legislation. While this is a first step to protect individuals, a large variety of synthetic cannabinoids can be manufactured through minor chemical modifications, making it possible to circumvent legislation and place the modified synthetic cannabinoids on the market. Such cases have been reported by some countries, including Finland, Japan, the Russian Federation and Sweden. The Governments of these countries have reported that, since the adoption of national legislation to control specific synthetic cannabinoids, non-controlled synthetic cannabinoids were detected in herbal mixtures that had been seized in their countries.

To avoid this problem, some Governments have adopted measures to control groups of structurally related synthetic compounds. For example, Ireland and the United Kingdom have placed groups of structurally related synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists under national control. Recently, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration within its emergency scheduling authority took steps to temporarily control five chemicals commonly added to such herbal mixtures.

INCB welcomes the timely efforts of governments to prevent the trafficking in and abuse of synthetic cannabinoids but warns that they should continue monitoring the situation and adopting preventative measures as necessary.



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INCB URGES GOVERNMENTS AND INDUSTRY TO TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT THE USE OF DRUGS TO FACILITATE CRIME

The International Narcotics Control Board is urging Governments and industry to take urgent action to prevent the diversion and use of medicines for the commission of drug-facilitated crime. In its Annual Report, the Board reveals that drug-facilitated criminal acts have occurred in many countries and regions.

Over recent years, INCB has repeatedly warned the international community about the misuse of drugs such as flunitrazepam to commit sexual assault, and implementation of the recommendations of the Board has contributed to a reported decrease in the use of flunitrazepam for sexual assault. INCB has been increasingly concerned about the misuse of psychoactive substances for other drug-facilitated crimes such as robbery and ownership fraud.

The victims of drug-facilitated sexual assault are mainly young women, and in cases of drug-facilitated robbery and ownership fraud the victims tend to be young men. While the increasing trend in such crimes is worrying, its true extent is unknown as it is believed that the problem is underreported, due to a lack of forensic evidence.

The lack of evidence can stem from a loss of memory that can be caused by such substances. Furthermore, the substances administered are tasteless, colourless and odourless and the victims are therefore unaware that they have been drugged. Feelings of shame and fear may also prevent the reporting of these crimes, especially in societies where there is a stigma associated with being a victim of sexual assault.

Initiatives have already started in cooperation with industry to prevent the diversion and use of drugs to facilitate crime while at the same time preventing a negative impact on the availability of the medicines for legitimate purposes. Many governments have already introduced counter-measures to tackle this problem, as called for in Resolution 53/7 of the Commission of Narcotic Drugs of March 2010. INCB calls on Governments, the international community and industry to build upon these first steps and urges those Governments that have not yet taken action to do so immediately.



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INCB CALLS FOR CONTINUED VIGILANCE AND INCREASED COOPERATION TO STEM THE DIVERSION OF PRECURSOR CHEMICALS FOR THE ILLICIT MANUFACTURING OF DRUGS

In its Annual Report released today, INCB reminds Governments of the need to remain vigilant in identifying and addressing new trends in the diversion of precursor chemicals intended to be used in the illicit manufacturing of drugs.

Criminal networks have shown themselves to be highly adaptable in modifying their diversion and production methods in order to circumvent stricter control measures adopted by national Governments.

This year's INCB Report reflects the Board's findings that criminal networks are increasingly turning to "non-scheduled substances", substances which are not subject to control measures, in order to bypass existing regulatory frameworks. In addition to using new substances, these criminal groups have also resorted to using derivatives of substances currently under international control.

In response to this threat, the Board encourages Governments to extend monitoring mechanisms for precursors to some of the derivatives and other forms of these substances, such as natural product sources and esters. The Board also recommends that Governments regularly consult the INCB "Limited International Special Surveillance List" and engage stakeholders such as private industry in establishing voluntary codes of practice aimed at preventing the diversion of precursors.

The success of global drug control measures is contingent upon the capacity of States to communicate effectively with the Board and with each other. The 2010 Annual Report once again underscores the importance for States of making active use of the Board's system of pre-export notifications (PEN online) to send and respond to enquiries aimed at verifying the legitimacy of precursor shipments. The Report notes that while use of the PEN online system has significantly increased, registration among African States remains low and urges those States to register and use the system without delay.

In the pursuit of its mandate, the Board relies extensively on the cooperation of Governments to provide estimates as to their legitimate requirements for precursor chemicals. In order to optimize its effort and to avoid unduly hindering the availability of chemicals for legitimate purposes, the report highlights the importance for Governments in ensuring the accuracy and the currency of the estimates communicated to the Board.



ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) is the independent monitoring body for the implementation of the United Nations international drug control conventions. It was established in 1968 in accordance with the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961. It had predecessors under the former drug control treaties as far back as the time of the League of Nations.

Membership

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) consists of 13 members who are elected by the Economic and Social Council and who serve in their personal capacity, not as government representatives.

Functions

The functions of INCB are laid down in the following treaties: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961; the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971; and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

INCB cooperates with Governments to ensure that adequate supplies of drugs are available for medical and scientific uses and that the diversion of drugs from licit sources to illicit channels does not occur. INCB identifies weaknesses in national and international control systems and contributes to correcting such situations.

INCB has a secretariat that assists it in the exercise of its treaty-related functions. Based in Vienna, the INCB secretariat is an administrative entity of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime but is under the direction of the Board in all substantive matters relating to the exercise of powers and the performance of functions of the Board pursuant to the Conventions.

Annual report

Based on its activities, INCB publishes an annual report that is submitted to ECOSOC through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The report provides a comprehensive review of the drug control situation in various parts of the world. As an impartial body, INCB tries to identify and predict dangerous trends and suggests necessary measures to be taken.

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