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EMBARGO:

**28 February 2012,
1100 hours CET**

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

AFRICA

The trafficking of cocaine from South America through Africa and into Europe has emerged as a major threat in recent years. West Africa continues to be used for the trafficking of cocaine, with drug traffickers increasingly using shipping containers and commercial aircraft to smuggle cocaine into the region.

Heroin enters the continent through East Africa and is smuggled, either directly or via West Africa, into Europe and other regions. In 2011, record seizures of heroin were effected in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Board is particularly concerned that the increasing flow of heroin into Africa has led to increased drug abuse throughout the region, particularly in East Africa and Southern Africa.

While cannabis grows wild all over Africa, it is illicitly produced in all subregions of the continent. Morocco remains a major producer of cannabis resin, most of which is destined for Europe or North Africa, although the area under cultivation has decreased significantly in recent years.

The smuggling of amphetamine-type stimulants from Africa into other regions has emerged as a new threat. West Africa is now one of the sources of the methamphetamine found on illicit markets in countries in East Asia. In particular, Nigeria is at risk of becoming a hub for the smuggling of methamphetamine.

Africa continues to be used by traffickers as an area for the diversion of precursor chemicals. East Africa and West Africa continue to be vulnerable to trafficking in precursors, especially those used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants. In Southern Africa, large quantities of legally imported ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are diverted for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine.

The availability of prescription drugs on unregulated markets remains a serious public health problem in Africa. This includes drugs that have been diverted or counterfeited, and contain controlled substances, possibly amphetamine-type stimulants, as well as sedatives and tranquillizers. In many African countries, the non-medical use of prescription drugs continues to cause considerable problems. In Mauritius, buprenorphine (Subutex), a drug for the treatment of heroin dependence, is abused more frequently than heroin itself.

Most countries in Africa still lack proper systems for monitoring drug abuse and are therefore unable to gather sufficient data on the extent and patterns of drug abuse. Cannabis remains the most widely abused drug in Africa, with annual prevalence rates between 3.8 and 10.4 per cent of the African population aged 15-64. In Africa, cannabis abuse accounts for 64 per cent of all treatment for drug-related problems—a higher proportion than in any other region.



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AMERICAS

Central America and the Caribbean

Central America and the Caribbean continue to be used as a major transit area for the trafficking of drugs from South America to North America. Drug trafficking organizations have increased their operations in the region, posing a serious threat to the security of the region. Some Mexican drug cartels, under pressure from Mexican law enforcement authorities, have moved their drug trafficking operations to Central America, employing increasing levels of violence. Central American countries have increased in importance as trans-shipment areas in recent years. In 2010, Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua were identified, for the first time, as major transit countries for smuggling drugs primarily destined for the United States.

The escalating drug-related violence involving drug trafficking organizations, transnational and local gangs and other criminal groups in Central America has reached alarming and unprecedented levels, significantly worsening the subregion's security and making it one of the most violent areas in the world. Drug trafficking, youth-related violence and street gangs, along with the widespread availability of firearms, have contributed to increasingly high crime rates in the subregion. Drug trafficking has become an important driver of homicide rates in Central America and is the single main factor behind the rising levels of violence in the subregion. El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the countries of the so-called "Northern Triangle", together with Jamaica, now have the world's highest homicide rates. Corruption and limited law enforcement capacity have facilitated the use of smuggling channels and drug trafficking activities in the region.

Approximately 90 per cent of the cocaine in the United States is trafficked via Mexico. Drugs continue to be smuggled into the Central American subregion primarily by sea, with drug traffickers making use of go-fast boats and submersible and semi-submersible vessels. Light aircraft are also increasingly used by criminal groups. The use of containers and cargo ships to smuggle drugs has become an increasing concern in this subregion. Several countries in Central America and the Caribbean reported seizures of "crack" cocaine, cocaine base or cocaine salts. The largest number of such seizures worldwide—4,173 cases—occurred in the Dominican Republic. Approximately 50 per cent of all demand for treatment for drug abuse in the region is reportedly related to cocaine abuse, while cocaine is also ranked as the main substance causing drug-induced or drug-related deaths. The prevalence of cocaine abuse in Central America (0.5-0.6 per cent) and the Caribbean (0.4-1.2 per cent) is above the global average.

North America

North America remained the world's largest drug market with all three countries in the region continuing to have high levels of illicit drug production, manufacture, trade and consumption. Cannabis remains the most widely produced drug in the region, with vast amounts produced in all three countries.

In Mexico, widespread drug-related violence has continued despite vigorous efforts by the Government of Mexico to address this problem. In July 2011, the Government of Mexico announced the detection of



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the largest cannabis plantation ever discovered in the country, covering 120 hectares and with the potential to yield an estimated 120 tons of cannabis with an estimated street value of \$ US 160 million.

It is estimated that over 45,000 people in the region die of drug-related causes every year, the highest annual drug-related mortality rate in the world. Prescription drug abuse in North America has remained a significant problem and now constitutes the fastest growing drug problem in the United States.

South America

In 2010, the total area under illicit coca bush cultivation in South America was 154,200 hectares, 6 per cent less than in 2009. The area under illicit cultivation significantly decreased in Colombia and slightly increased in Peru. There was no considerable change in coca bush cultivation in Bolivia.

Although global seizures of cocaine were stable in the period 2006-2009, the location of cocaine seizures has shifted from the consumer markets in North America and Europe to the source areas in South America, with South America accounting for 60 per cent of global cocaine seizures in 2009.

Cannabis has remained the primary drug of abuse throughout South America. The annual prevalence of cannabis abuse among the general population aged 15-64 was in the range of 2.9 to 3.0 per cent, or between 7.4 million and 7.6 million people, in 2009. Despite indications of stabilizing prevalence of cocaine abuse in South America, the prevalence of cocaine abuse in the region, at a level of between 0.9 and 1 per cent, was higher than the global average. Cocaine also continues to be the primary drug of abuse among persons treated for drug problems and ranks as the substance most frequently cited as cause of drug-induced or drug-related death in South America.

ASIA

East and South-East Asia

Illicit opium poppy cultivation and opium production continued to increase in Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 2010. Large-scale illicit trafficking in methamphetamine was reported in 2010, particularly in the area encompassing China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand. Illicit trafficking in and growing abuse of ketamine, a substance not under international control, is a prominent problem in the region.

The abuse of methamphetamine is on the rise in many countries in the region, and especially among young people. Limited drug treatment services and the shortage of qualified health-care professionals have greatly restricted the development of programmes for the prevention and treatment of drug abuse in many countries in East and South-East Asia.

South Asia

South Asia is experiencing increasing problems with abuse of prescription drugs and over-the-counter pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Many of these



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substances are obtained through pharmacies that do not respect prescription requirements or through illegally operating Internet pharmacies.

The illicit manufacture and trafficking of amphetamine-type stimulants and their precursors continues to take place in South Asia. Drug abuse by injection is rising in South Asia, contributing to an increase in HIV and hepatitis C infection rates.

West Asia

West Asia remains the epicentre of illicit opium poppy cultivation and significant increases in opium production occurred in 2011. The combination of spreading opium poppy cultivation in provinces in Afghanistan, a substantial increase in the farm-gate price of opium, and planned decreases in the International Security Assistance Force could lead to even further increases in production beyond 2011. This is of great concern to the Board, particularly in a region which already suffers from some of the highest levels of abuse of opiates.

Drug seizures reported in West Asia have increased greatly for most classes of controlled drugs over the past decade with the tripling of opium seized to some 645 tons, and near doubling of heroin and cannabis resin seized. Stimulant trafficking and potential for abuse is of growing concern for the Board, as cocaine seizures have quadrupled and methamphetamine manufacture and trafficking in the region are becoming increasingly commonplace.

Related to this, the Board continues to witness considerable increases in the annual legitimate requirement for imports of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine—precursors that can be used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine—in many countries in West Asia. The Board urges the Governments of countries in West Asia to review their annual legitimate requirements for these and other precursor chemicals and to ensure they are based on legitimate end-use.

Countries in the Middle East, in particular Jordan and Saudi Arabia, continue to be affected by large-scale amphetamine trafficking. In 2010, the volume of amphetamines seized in those countries amounted to 10 tons, mainly reported by Saudi Arabia, which remains the main country of destination for fake Captagon tablets.

EUROPE

Cannabis abuse is increasing in a small number of countries in Europe. The illicit cultivation of cannabis plants in Western and Central Europe has increased dramatically. Cannabis plants are increasingly cultivated on an industrial scale, mainly indoors, and with the involvement of organized criminal groups. The Board has noted that, while some countries in the region tolerate the indoor cultivation of cannabis plants for personal use, this is not in compliance with the international drug control conventions. Cannabis seizures in Europe decreased in recent years, possibly as a result of increased numbers of seizures in North Africa. Albania and Serbia remain the main source countries of cannabis herb seized by the customs authorities in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The amount of cannabis, both herb and resin, seized in countries along the Balkan Route increased in 2010 compared with 2009.



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Although the abuse of cocaine has stabilized in recent years in most countries in Western and Central Europe, levels of abuse are still relatively high. The diffusion of cocaine abuse from Western Europe into South-Eastern and Eastern Europe seems to continue and Europe remains the world's second-largest cocaine market. There has been diversification in the routes of cocaine trafficking to Europe, with increased trafficking via North Africa. The volume of cocaine seized by customs authorities in Eastern Europe rose dramatically in 2010. Ukraine and the Russian Federation were the main countries of destination for cocaine shipments in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and cocaine shipments from Ecuador to the Russian Federation appear to be an ongoing trend.

There is increasing diversity in the methods and routes used for smuggling heroin into Europe. For example, in 2010 the quantity of heroin seized in Europe that had been smuggled along the northern Balkan route via Turkey to Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and then Austria decreased compared with the quantity that had been smuggled along the southern Balkan route into Italy via Greece, Albania or the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Europe accounts for the largest proportion of the global opiate market, and the abuse of heroin is the biggest drug problem in Europe in terms of morbidity and mortality. In the Russian Federation, an estimated 1.7 million people abused opiates in 2010, and consumed around 70 tons of the estimated 73 tons of opiates consumed in Eastern Europe.

In some countries in Europe, the abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants is increasing. Levels of abuse of MDMA ("ecstasy") have remained relatively stable, with decreasing levels of abuse apparent in some countries. The illicit manufacture of amphetamine is increasing. Seizures of methamphetamine in Western and Central Europe increased fivefold from 2004 to 2009, and methamphetamine appears to be replacing amphetamine in the northern part of Europe.

The Board remains concerned about the variety of substances abused in Europe, which continues to grow. Results of a 2011 survey of young people aged 15-24 showed that 5 per cent of respondents had abused substances that were not under control. In 2010, a record level of new substances were identified, many of which are not under international control. In response to the increased abuse of mephedrone, the Governments of States members of the European Union decided in December 2010 that mephedrone should be placed under national control.

OCEANIA

The low rate of accession to the international drug control treaties remains a challenge for the region. Nine States (the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) are not yet parties to one or more of the treaties. Many of those countries have become trans-shipment areas and destinations for trafficked drugs and precursors. The abuse of cannabis and amphetamine-type stimulants has been reported in those countries.

In Australia, the abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants decreased while abuse of cocaine and pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotic drugs increased. The trafficking of cocaine into Australia is an emerging issue and organized criminal groups are actively involved in drug trafficking in Oceania.