



INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD



Report 2025

Press material

EMBARGO

Observe release date:

Not to be published or broadcast before

Thursday, 26 February 2026, at 11:00 hrs. (CET)

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is an honour to present the Annual Report and Precursors Report of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) for 2025, a year which saw the 80th anniversary of the United Nations and wide-ranging discussions on how the United Nations can continue delivering for Member States and people worldwide today. INCB is committed to continuing its close cooperation with Member States, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), civil society and other partners to advance implementation of the three drug control conventions and ensure the effective functioning of the international drug control system.



This year's thematic chapter focuses on international cooperation, highlighting achievements and INCB initiatives to facilitate cooperation in drug control. It also reviews the challenges that have emerged, including the proliferation of synthetic drugs, gaps in availability for medical use, and differing views among some States regarding the implementation of certain aspects of the conventions.

This press material includes for the first time a summary of INCB's achievements with Member States over the past year. These successes exemplify multilateralism at work and the translation of treaties into action for the benefit of all.

While the drug control conventions provide flexibility in the choice of legislative and administrative measures, national systems must ensure that the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances is limited exclusively to medical and scientific purposes, in accordance with the 1961 Convention as amended, and that implementation measures comply with human rights obligations, the principle of proportionality, and the rule of law.

INCB calls on Governments to intensify implementation of the drug control conventions and act on its recommendations, including those in its 2025 reports, to safeguard the health and welfare of people globally.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Sevil Atasoy', written in a cursive style.

H. H. Sevil Atasoy

President
International Narcotics Control Board



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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH THE DRUG CONTROL CONVENTIONS HAS HELPED HUMANKIND ACROSS THE GLOBE, SAYS INCB IN ITS ANNUAL REPORT

Through working together States are better able to effectively tackle the challenges posed by illicit drugs

International cooperation, through the framework of the drug control conventions, has helped to protect the health and well-being of people worldwide, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) says in its 2025 Annual Report. The collaboration and collective action by States for more than six decades have played an important role in lessening the social and economic harms of illicit drugs, the report says.

The President of the International Narcotics Control Board, Professor Sevil Atasoy said:

“One of the aims of the United Nations Charter is to solve global problems through international cooperation. Tackling the trafficking and misuse of drugs while ensuring the availability of essential medicines has been carried out effectively over the last 60 years through the drug control conventions, a robust framework for working together with almost universal support. Our role is to reinforce the cooperative efforts of countries and territories through our work”.

By addressing their common challenges through joint measures using the international drug control framework, States have understood that the most effective way to protect their citizens and provide for their medical and scientific needs is through coordinated and universal action. This is stated in the preamble to the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and reaffirmed in the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

The scope of cooperation in international drug control was broadened further in the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 which includes provisions against money-laundering and the diversion of precursor chemicals. It also assigned new responsibilities to INCB to manage the trade in chemicals used to manufacture plant-based drugs and fully synthetic drugs.

The rising global synthetic drug problem has added further pressure on the framework of international drug control. Such drugs can be manufactured, concealed and trafficked more easily than plant-based drugs. Criminal groups have exploited regulatory gaps and circumvented existing control mechanisms, making it more difficult for States to respond effectively.

Action has been taken to deal with the threat of synthetic drugs, including the public-private partnerships initiative of INCB’s GRIDS programme. More than 100 global companies in 19 different sectors have partnered with Governments, as of 2025, to regularly exchange information on emerging synthetic drugs and chemicals.





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INCB promotes international cooperation among Governments

The Board recognizes the positive steps taken by countries to work together across borders and has consistently called for enhanced international cooperation in combating drug-related challenges to achieve effective national action.

In its role promoting treaty compliance, INCB reviews progress made by States in implementing the international drug control conventions and engages with Governments through meetings, correspondence, country missions, participation in INCB initiatives and the submission of statistical reports.

The sharing of information is an essential element of international cooperation in drug control. Under the conventions Governments need to provide INCB with information to enable it to effectively monitor the licit cultivation, production, manufacture and consumption of and trade in controlled substances with a view to preventing their diversion. Estimates and assessments are essential tools used for this purpose. Due to the efficiency of this system, the level of diversion of licitly produced substances into illicit channels is very low, which is an unheralded international success story.

Narcotic drugs

The estimates system has proved to be effective because it applies to all States, regardless of their status as parties or non-parties to the conventions. The Board supports countries and territories to properly evaluate the required levels of consumption of narcotic drugs for medical and scientific purposes, most importantly for use in pain relief and palliative care. To ensure that Governments can import narcotic drugs for medical and scientific purposes, the Board also estimates requirements for countries that are unable to supply them.

Psychotropic substances

The diversion of licitly produced psychotropic substances into illicit channels has virtually stopped, through the strengthening of the international drug control system.

In response to the attempts to divert large quantities of psychotropic substances in the late 1970s and early 1980s using forged or counterfeit import authorizations, the assessment system that invites Governments to provide INCB with assessments of their legitimate annual medical and scientific requirements for psychotropic substances was put in place.

Measures proposed by INCB, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in 1981, mean assessments provided by Governments are used by national authorities of exporting countries to ascertain whether an import request appears to be excessive in relation to the reported annual requirements for the importing country concerned. Discrepancies are investigated by the Board in cooperation with the competent authorities of the relevant countries.

Precursor control

The Board has a range of tools, resources and platforms to promote international cooperation in countering illicit drug manufacture while ensuring the smooth and efficient conduct of international



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trade in controlled precursors. INCB annually reviews and shares with Member States a list of chemical substances warranting special attention in view of their possible use in illicit drug manufacture. Revised again in September 2024, this list contains over 500 substances that are derivatives and chemical relatives of internationally scheduled precursors.

Operational platforms with real-time information-sharing

Real-time, data-driven information-sharing services on shipments of chemical substances likely to be used in illicit drug manufacture are offered by INCB to Governments. Developed further to article 12 of the 1988 Convention, the PEN Online system notifies in advance to Member States planned exports of internationally scheduled precursor chemicals. Launched in 2022, PEN Online Light provides advance notification of shipments of precursors that are not under international control but have been used to illicitly manufacture drugs. Over 35,000 pre-export notifications pass through the INCB PEN platforms yearly, guaranteeing free trade and minimizing the risk of diversion to illicit drug manufacture. The INCB secure online PICS platform enhances real-time communication and information-sharing between national authorities on incidents concerning illicit laboratories, precursors and related equipment. PICS has provided early warning of the emergence of new substances used by traffickers that are not under international control.

The International Import and Export Authorization System (I2ES) developed and administered by INCB with the assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) allows countries to securely exchange electronic import and export authorizations. It eliminates the need for physical documents which reduces the risk of fraudulent authorizations.

INCB also organizes time-bound international intelligence gathering operations supported by Project Prism for precursors of synthetic drugs and Project Cohesion for precursors of cocaine and heroin.

Voluntary international cooperation on non-scheduled substances

INCB uses its mandates and unique convening powers under the relevant international drug control conventions to enable voluntary international cooperation among Governments, their enforcement agencies including police, customs, postal and regulatory authorities and relevant private sector partners.

The GRIDS programme, established in 2019, strengthens voluntary international cooperation to address trafficking in dangerous substances not scheduled under the conventions through information exchange and training.

Through its range of platforms, national authorities exchange and access operational information in real time on trafficking methods, seizures and suspicious shipments involving emerging substances. Nearly 200 Governments, territories and international partners such as the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU) use the GRIDS tools and resources to strengthen coordination and enhance the exchange of intelligence.





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INCB Learning

Around 1,500 officials from 160 countries and territories have accessed INCB Learning e-modules which support States to fully implement the provisions of the international drug control conventions. It is especially useful for States which have encountered challenges in collecting and reporting data as it strengthens their knowledge and enables their implementation of the control measures required under the conventions. More than 600 officials from 112 Governments have attended training events, held in all regions of the world, resulting in increased accession to the conventions, improved reporting rates, better engagement and improved dialogue between Governments and the Board.

Cooperation beyond Governments

The successes achieved in international precursor control efforts are a direct result of coordination and cooperation among national, regional and global counterparts and partners including INTERPOL, UNODC, WCO and regional entities such as the European Commission and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.

Strong collaboration among United Nations entities entrusted with functions under the international drug control system is also essential for its effective functioning. For example, INCB regularly cooperates with the Expert Committee on Drug Dependence of the World Health Organization (WHO), providing technical information and data on substances being reviewed and participating in the review process.

The Board meets regularly with civil society representatives to better understand the views of organizations working with people who use drugs and the impact of drug policies around the globe.

INCB is working with the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care to exchange research data and analysis on the topic of availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

The Board has also worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross, Médecins sans frontières and other international organizations to draw up practical recommendations to expedite the delivery of controlled substances during emergency situations.

Partnerships with the private sector

Working with industry is also an important part of the international drug control system. Close cooperation is needed with manufacturers, importers, exporters, wholesalers and retailers in the chemical industry to be able to monitor the international trade in scheduled substances as provided for in the 1988 Convention. Beyond the mandatory provisions, voluntary cooperation has become increasingly crucial in precursor control, particularly for addressing designer precursors and other chemicals not under international control.

In countries which have pursued industry cooperation, it has been possible to balance a favourable commercial environment for the licit trade in chemicals with effective control to prevent illicit drug manufacture.



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INCB encourages public-private partnerships and Government initiatives aimed at fostering private sector engagement, not just with the chemical industry but also with key sectors that are exploited by drug traffickers including e-commerce, social media, marketing, payment and financial services, freight forwarding and postal and express courier services.

Working together to deal with the world drug problem

Despite the challenges facing international cooperation in drug control, the Board encourages Governments to engage in policy dialogue and consensus-building to further the shared goal of promoting the health and welfare of humankind.

INCB President Professor Sevil Atasoy said:

“Protecting the health of people around the world from the dangers of illicit drugs is a common and shared responsibility. The international drug control system relies on the willingness and capacity of countries to work together. We call on Governments to reiterate their pledges to cooperate to address the world drug problem and support the well-functioning international drug control system”.





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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT AND KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD: WAYS IN WHICH THE BOARD WORKED TO IMPROVE GLOBAL HEALTH AND WELFARE IN 2025

In 2025, the Board, supported by its secretariat:



Supported efforts to secure borders, strengthen trusted private sector partners and disrupt trafficking in dangerous new psychoactive substances, synthetic opioids and related chemicals by:

- Exchanging, as of 2025, over 125,000 government intelligence pieces on seizures in real time, involving over 3 million trafficking signals through the IONICS suite of tools, in line with mandates in article 35, subparagraph (g), of the 1961 Convention as amended
- Facilitating the action of 95 national law and regulatory enforcement agencies and six international partner organizations in Operation Zeneth, in which over 1.5 million lethal doses of nitazenes were detected and seized in 2024
- Coordinating the agencies of Kenya and Uganda in Operation African Star II, which detected 48,000 falsified, unauthorized or illicitly manufactured pharmaceutical products entering East Africa, with detection through United States law enforcement agencies, the Pulse platform of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, the IONICS suite of tools and the Scanning of Novel Opioids on Online Platforms (SNOOP) systems and related technologies
- Providing early-warning alerts to Governments, for enforcement actions, on ketamine trafficking, MDMB-INACA and related chemicals, vaping products containing new psychoactive substances, new psychoactive substances, performance-enhancing substances and 7-hydroxymitragynine
- Delivering 115 INCB GRIDS Programme expert meetings and training events increasing enforcement capabilities and access to state-of-the-art tools and technologies to over 880 agencies, thereby securing borders and strengthening the resilience of communities and businesses at risk of being targeted by drug traffickers
- Coordinating operational responses through its regional technical officers posted in Abuja, Almaty (Kazakhstan), Bangkok, Cairo, Mexico City and New Delhi, and at the GRIDS Cyber-Communications Centre in Vienna.





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Ensured the global availability and supply of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes by:

- Reviewing and approving over 4,600 estimates and establishing over 300 annual estimates for narcotic drugs used in anaesthesia, pain management and opioid agonist therapy
- Processing over 4,000 annual assessments and 500 modifications for psychotropic substances used in the treatment of a wide range of neurological and mental health conditions and in opioid agonist therapy
- The Board also received and processed the annual statistical reports of 176 countries, as well as 147 quarterly statistical reports relating to psychotropic substances listed in Schedule II of the 1971 Convention, including full and partial submissions



Prevented the diversion of narcotic drugs into the illicit market by:

- Cross-checking 652 quarterly trade reports against 20,000 records regarding trade in 2024
- Following up on trade-related discrepancies, missing reports and reported levels of trade that exceeded the approved estimates
- Cooperating with law enforcement authorities in the investigation of cases involving the diversion of narcotic drugs into the illicit market



Prevented or reduced the illicit manufacture of drugs by:

- Monitoring more than 34,000 shipments containing a total of 90,000 tons and 8 billion litres of controlled precursor chemicals through the Pre-Export Notification Online (PEN Online) system and alerting the authorities of more than 170 countries to shipments of controlled precursors
- Preventing 3 tons of the fentanyl precursor 1-boc-4-piperidone, which could have potentially yielded between 1.4 and 3.3 tons of fentanyl, equivalent to between approximately 700 million and 1.6 billion potentially lethal doses, from possible diversion into illicit channels
- Tracking over 1,400 shipments of nearly 185,000 tons and more than 250 million litres of precursor chemicals not under international control through the PEN Online Light system, and alerting authorities in 74 countries to their potential diversion into illicit drug manufacture
- Facilitating investigations into the diversion of nearly 450 tons and more than 1 million litres of precursor chemicals through the Precursors Incident Communication System
- Targeting the precursors of methamphetamine, ephedrine and pseudoephedrine through Operation Pseudonym, which included the participation of 60 countries and territories and four international organizations, and resulted in more than 160 seizures involving those substances and the identification of gaps in the regulation and monitoring of trade in pharmaceutical preparations containing scheduled precursors to be addressed by the participating countries
- Alerting Governments to the emergence of three new precursor chemicals, two of which had been used in the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants and one in the manufacture of a fentanyl analogue



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Strengthened the knowledge and capacity of national authorities¹ to implement the drug control conventions by:

- Delivering training on the drug control conventions to more than 1,500 officials from 160 countries in all regions by means of five e-modules and online and in-person training
- Engaging Governments, international and regional organizations, and civil society actors in an ongoing dialogue on treaty implementation in the areas of the availability of controlled substances for licit purposes, supply reduction and demand reduction
- Providing countries with the knowledge and capacity to implement the international drug control conventions, including through the findings and recommendations contained in the Board's annual report and report on precursors for 2024, which were launched globally by its members, as well as its technical publications on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances
- Participating in the regular session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, including in thematic discussions and in a special event to commemorate the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and launch the UNODC *World Drug Report 2025*, as well as in side events and an informal dialogue with the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs held on the margins of the session, and in intersessional meetings



Ensured treaty compliance and furthered the goals of the international drug control conventions by:

- Holding consultations with more than 50 Governments and international partners during the 141st session of the Board in order to review the human rights dimensions of drug control, including in relation to the right to health, due process and proportionality in national drug policies
- Engaging with partners such as the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, UNODC, WHO, INTERPOL, WCO and OHCHR to discuss the implementation of the drug control conventions in accordance with international law and human rights obligations
- Extending cooperation agreements with UPU and the Oceania Customs Organization

¹Owing to the liquidity crisis affecting the United Nations Secretariat, in 2025 the Board was unable to conduct country missions, the purpose of which is to assess needs in order to formulate recommendations aimed at increasing the implementation of the drug control conventions with a view to achieving national health and welfare objectives.





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Facilitated treaty implementation through cooperation with Governments and civil society by:

- Concluding a cooperation agreement with the International Association of Hospice and Palliative Care to promote access to controlled medicines for medical and scientific purposes, including in humanitarian emergencies
- Engaging in an informal dialogue with civil society held on the margins of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, consulting with civil society representatives on international cooperation in drug control during the Board's 143rd session and engaging in ongoing cooperation with the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs
- Calling upon Governments to ensure timely access to essential medicines in crisis situations, and engaging in global policy discussions to promote the evidence-based and rights-based implementation of treaty obligations





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Expanding access to essential pain medicines and psychotropic substances and improving affordability particularly important for low- and middle-income countries

Despite the overall sufficient supply and stable global stocks, unequal access to affordable opioid analgesics, such as morphine, is a persistent issue.

In the decade since the General Assembly unanimously adopted the outcome document of its special session on the world drug problem held in 2016, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”, the international community has gained awareness of the importance of ensuring the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. The momentum towards correcting the significant disparity in the consumption of opioid analgesics for pain management has been transformed into practical national policies in some countries, proving that access to controlled substances can be scaled up even in low-cost settings.

Global licit cultivation and production of opium poppy increased in 2024 across all major varieties, with more countries now cultivating multiple types and thereby reducing risks of supply shortages. Production of opiate raw materials rose significantly and is projected to continue growing through 2026.

One major factor is that a significant portion of the morphine manufactured worldwide is not used directly for pain relief. The consumption of morphine, along with other opioid analgesics, remains highly concentrated in developed countries in Europe and North America. Consumption of opioid analgesics in other developing regions is far below the medical needs of their populations. Many countries continue to report difficulties in procuring medications containing morphine. INCB reiterates that economic and commercial interests, knowledge and training, as well as regulatory frameworks, continue to restrict the ability of developing countries to procure and administer morphine for the treatment of pain.

Determining the global availability of psychotropic substances remains a challenge. Despite this, INCB also takes note of limited availability of psychotropic substances, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Analysis of the statistical data on psychotropic substances submitted by Governments, in particular on consumption data, shows that there has been some progress but that there are still several areas requiring action and that improving availability of and access to controlled psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes requires an integrated approach, in particular, tackling the issue of availability and access to controlled substances for medical purposes along with addressing the issue of affordability. INCB calls on Governments to strengthen their capacity to collect the best possible data from all stakeholders in the supply and consumption chain for determination of an appropriate estimation of their requirements for controlled substances.

Global manufacture of anti-epileptic medication phenobarbital remains the highest in 2024; manufacture of anxiolytic diazepam decreased by more than 50 per cent





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Compared to the previous year (2023), 2024 saw mixed overall trends in the manufacture of internationally controlled psychotropic substances used in the treatment of neurological and mental health disorders and opioid agonist therapy. As has been the case for many years, the anti-epileptic medication phenobarbital was the most manufactured psychotropic substance in terms of gross weight at 308 tons, though in terms of dosages (S-DDD) it was manufactured in lower quantities than other substances.

Consumption trends relating to psychotropic substances in 2024 were also mixed. Alprazolam, a benzodiazepine used to treat anxiety, was the most consumed substance globally, though consumption in terms of doses was down from 2023. Consumption of other benzodiazepines such as the anti-epileptic clonazepam, a key anxiolytic diazepam, which is included in the WHO list of essential medicines, and zolpidem, a sedative hypnotic, also dropped sharply in 2024. In contrast, global consumption of other substances rose, with consumption of the anxiolytic lorazepam rising by nearly 1 billion doses in 2024. Most other substances saw minor increases or decreases in consumption in 2024 but were at levels similar to previous years.

INCB makes recommendations aimed at reducing impediments for international travellers carrying prescribed medicines

People travelling internationally with controlled substances for their legitimate medical use must navigate complex regulations and controls when they cross international borders. INCB encourages countries to introduce legislation or regulations to permit travellers legitimately holding medicines containing controlled substances to enter their territory without impediment.

INCB also encourages more countries to share the most up-to-date information on their regulations with INCB and to make that information readily available on the Internet for the benefit of international travellers. INCB publishes the information collected from countries about the documentation required and this is the only central source of such information for travellers.





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PRECURSORS AND EQUIPMENT REPORT

Use of INCB platform prevents the diversion of a fentanyl precursor shipment that could have resulted in the manufacture of up to 1.6 billion potentially fatal fentanyl doses

In March 2025, use of the INCB platform PEN Online (Pre-Export Notification Online) prevented the diversion of 3 tons of 1-boc-4-piperidone, a fentanyl precursor included in Table I of the 1988 Convention in December 2024. Had the shipment not been stopped, it could have been used to manufacture an estimated 1.4 to 3.3 tons of fentanyl.

In 2025, the Governments of more than 190 countries and territories cooperated through the INCB PEN Online platform and monitored more than 34,000 planned shipments of internationally controlled drug precursors.

New major trends in trafficking in precursors

Amphetamine and methamphetamine precursors

- Despite the increasing amount of methamphetamine seized worldwide, the quantities of ephedrine seized in 2024 remained at similar levels to 2023 and are still lower compared to seizures a decade ago.
- Seizures of the recently controlled P-2-P methyl glycidic acid and its esters amounted to less than half of the amount seized the previous year.
- New alternative precursors of amphetamine and methamphetamine emerged in Europe.
- Highly sophisticated methods of methamphetamine manufacture are spreading further geographically.

Precursors of semi-synthetic and synthetic cannabinoids

- Custom-made “semi-finished synthetic cannabinoids” are increasingly being seized as designer precursors that can be converted into the desired end products, such as MDMB-4en-PINACA, by readily applicable means and with very limited technical knowledge.
- The control of CBD as a drug precursor in China and the voluntary notification of planned CBD exports by the Government of China help to shed light on licit CBD markets.

Precursors of other drug end products

- Notable quantities of methadone precursors were seized in Europe.
- Over 230 tons of potassium permanganate were seized globally in 2024, mostly in South American countries, reflecting surging levels of cocaine manufacture and prompting renewed calls for stronger domestic controls.



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Illicit drug-manufacturing equipment (Article 13 of the 1988 Convention)

Illicit drug-manufacturing laboratories worldwide are becoming increasingly sophisticated, and tableting machines constitute the most frequently seized type of equipment. In November 2025, INCB released the second edition of its technical report on equipment used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and on Article 13 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

Cooperation with industry

In 2025, INCB published a guidance document entitled “Guiding Industry Partnerships: A Policy Framework for Preventing Chemical Diversion”. Presented as a Conference Room Paper at the March 2025 session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the document reflects the outcomes of the 2024 international conference “Engaging the Private Sector to Address Illicit Drug Manufacture—Know Your Industries”.





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ANALYSIS OF THE WORLD DRUG SITUATION

Global issues requiring continued attention

The Annual Report includes a set of specific global issues that require closer examination and continued attention:

- International travellers carrying internationally controlled substances
- Cultivation and production of low-THC cannabis (hemp) for industrial purposes
- Monitoring of essential equipment for the purpose of preventing the illicit manufacture of drugs
- Use of immunotherapies and psychedelic substances in the treatment of drug use disorder
- Trends in new psychoactive substances, performance-enhancing substances and cognition-enhancing substances

The global issues are presented in Chapter III, Section A.

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Africa

Over the last few years, **Africa has become one of the regions of great concern regarding access to and availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes.**

Although cannabis is the main plant-based drug that is cultivated and produced in Africa, a wide variety of drugs can now be found in the region. The trafficking of all kinds of drugs into and out of the region is flourishing, while their consumption is rising.

Africa is increasingly being targeted by cocaine traffickers, serving both as a transit hub and an emerging destination for cocaine, as part of a broader expansion into new markets.

The drug-related issue of greatest concern in Africa is trafficking in pharmaceutical opioids, including substandard ones.

The use and rapid spread of drug mixtures, including kush, continue to pose serious public health challenges in parts of Africa.

Americas

Central America and the Caribbean

In Central America and the Caribbean, new psychoactive substances pose an increasingly greater threat. A significant number of incidents involving benzodiazepines and opioids have been reported in the region.

Located between major production areas and key consumer markets, **the region remains vulnerable to drug trafficking.**

Coca bush cultivation has increasingly been reported in Central America in recent years.





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North America

Canada, Mexico and the United States have further stepped up their action to address the continuing illicit manufacture and trafficking of synthetic drugs, particularly fentanyl.

The number of drug overdoses has decreased both in Canada (by 17 per cent) and the United States (by 27 per cent), but at the current time it is too early to assess whether the decrease will develop into a sustained trend. **The use of opioids for non-medical purposes remains a public health concern.**

South America

The cocaine market is the fastest-growing illicit drug market, with increased production in South America leading to a market expansion across Asia and Africa.

Ecuador has been particularly impacted by the activities of local and international criminal groups linked to organized crime. In 2024, Ecuador reported having seized a record amount of cocaine.

In Catatumbo, Colombia, armed conflicts between groups linked to international drug trafficking organizations have led to the most serious humanitarian emergency in the country since an official registry of such cases was established.

According to the report on coca crop monitoring in the Plurinational State of Bolivia for 2023, **illicit coca bush cultivation in protected areas of the country increased by 34 per cent in 2023, in contrast with the overall increase of 4 per cent nationwide.**

The UNODC World Drug Report 2025 describes the intertwining of gold mining with drug trafficking and other serious crimes in various countries in South America, notably in the Amazon region, including the involvement of licit corporations and businesses.

Asia

East and South-East Asia

Collaboration across East and South-East Asia has strengthened through joint actions and new policies to address drug-related challenges, alongside important initiatives such as the signing of the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime in Hanoi, which also highlights drug trafficking concerns.

Countries are increasingly adopting health- and rights-based prevention approaches, through evidence-based policies integrating treatment and awareness-raising. **The region faces high rates of drug use by injection and HIV among people who use drugs**, and the world's largest population of people who use amphetamines.

Legislative reforms have tightened controls on synthetic drugs, precursors, and substances such as cannabis and nitazenes. Despite some regional efforts at abolition, some countries still pursue capital punishment for drug-related offences.

Methamphetamine remains the dominant synthetic drug threat, with record seizures, while concerns grow over ketamine and emerging substances. Since 2024, the region has been the world's largest source of illicit opium. Trafficking networks are expanding beyond the region, leveraging advanced technologies and diverse routes.





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South Asia

South Asia continues to be the largest consumer market for opioids worldwide. In 2023, there were an estimated 20.7 million people (1.8 per cent of the population aged 15–64) in the region who used opioids, comprising one third of the globally estimated number of people who used opioids.

According to the World Drug Report 2025, **South Asia is increasingly identified as a destination for cocaine shipments. Methamphetamine manufacture and use have also spread in the region.**

Global codeine seizures have risen from no reported seizures in 2015 to seizures totalling over 200 tons in 2023. Most of the codeine trafficked in the period 2022–2024 originated in or departed from South Asia.

West Asia

Opium poppy cultivation remained at a historic low in Afghanistan, with 10,200 hectares used for illicit cultivation in 2025. Consequently, illicit production of opium is estimated to have fallen to 296 tons. These reductions are linked to crop failures, droughts and the continued enforcement of the drug ban in the country.

Illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs, including methamphetamine, fake “captagon” and other new psychoactive substances, continued to expand across West Asia, driving increased availability and rising demand for drug treatment services in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Drug use patterns in West Asia are continuing to shift from traditional opiates toward synthetic stimulants and emerging synthetic opioids. The contracting illicit supply of heroin, due to declining opium cultivation in Afghanistan, may push people who use drugs towards more potent and dangerous synthetic opioids, including nitazenes.

Europe

Cocaine trafficking to Western and Central Europe has dramatically increased in recent years, as evidenced by the widespread availability of the substance and the total amount seized.

The illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs in Europe is expanding. The growing availability of highly potent synthetic opioids, in particular nitazenes, poses a threat to the entire region, with the Baltic countries particularly affected.

The proliferation of new psychoactive substances continues to pose a significant challenge. By the end of 2024, the European Union Early Warning System on New Psychoactive Substances was monitoring a total of 1,000 different substances.

Despite the wide availability of needle and syringe exchange programmes in the European Union, significant gaps in the coverage of services to reduce the negative health and social consequences of drug use persist. In 2023, only 7 of the 25 European countries providing data met the targets for service provision set by the World Health Organization (WHO).





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Oceania

Drug trafficking through Pacific island States to Australia and New Zealand continued at unprecedented levels. Organized criminal groups were using increasingly sophisticated modi operandi. Based on seizure data, the Pacific island States most affected are Fiji, Papua New Guinea and, to a lesser extent, Tonga.

Drug use has surged as a critical public health and social concern across the Pacific, contributing significantly to disability, social challenges and economic losses. The use of drugs such as methamphetamine has been rapidly expanding in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Tonga.

In 2025, HIV outbreaks were declared in Fiji and Papua New Guinea. It is estimated that half of the people on antiretroviral therapy in Fiji likely contracted HIV through the use of drugs by injection.

Several countries in Oceania are yet to become Parties to the international drug control conventions. Accession to and full implementation of the treaties would strengthen regional efforts to address drug-related challenges by enhancing cooperation, improving the availability of controlled substances for medical, scientific and industrial purposes, and facilitating international judicial and law enforcement cooperation to address drug trafficking.





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INCB INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT MEMBER STATES

INCB Learning

INCB Learning is the Board's Programme to support Governments in their compliance with the provisions of the international drug control treaties and their reporting to the Board, with a view to improving the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. The Programme includes five e-modules for online learning (in English, French, Russian and Spanish, as well as Portuguese) along with virtual and in-person training and seminars.

In January 2025, INCB Learning conducted an in-person training seminar for States in the Horn of Africa and East Africa for officials from Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

In August 2025, INCB Learning held a virtual seminar for officials from the competent national authorities of countries in francophone Africa, with the participation of representatives from Algeria, Benin, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Mauritania, Morocco, Rwanda and Senegal.

As of 1 November 2025, 1,506 officials from 160 countries and territories have enrolled in the INCB Learning e-modules. The Board encourages Governments to register officials from their competent national authorities for the e-modules.

INCB Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) programme

The INCB GRIDS Programme, established by INCB in 2019 following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 73/192 on international cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem, strengthens voluntary international cooperation to address trafficking in dangerous substances not scheduled under the international drug control conventions. It operates under INCB's unique mandates and convening powers under the relevant international drug control conventions as a trusted holder of data submitted by Member States to facilitate voluntary international cooperation. Nearly 200 countries, territories and international operational partners utilize GRIDS tools and resources to strengthen coordination, exchange information in real time, enhance the exchange of intelligence and advance international cooperation among nearly 5,000 focal points.

INCB has demonstrated major gains in global efforts to strengthen borders, ensure safer communities and prevent exploitation of the private sector by traffickers of dangerous new psychoactive substances and synthetic opioids, driven by the expansion of outcomes under its GRIDS Programme. Through no-cost access to the IONICS Suite of tools, expert training, and support to authorities under international operations such as Operation Zeneth and Operation African Star II, Governments have exchanged information on more than 125,000 seizures, intercepted over 1.5 million lethal doses and deployed cutting-edge technologies to track and dismantle illicit supply chains. With 115 capacity-building and networking events in 2025 and numerous operational alerts issued worldwide, INCB is strengthening national resilience, empowering public-private cooperation, and supporting front-line agencies in addressing rapidly evolving drug threats.





For information only — not an official document

INCB precursor and equipment programme

Licit trade monitoring to prevent diversion: PEN Online and PEN Online Light

Under the 1988 Convention, Governments are required to exchange pre-export notifications for precursors listed in its Tables, to facilitate legitimate trade and prevent their diversion. As of 2025, more than half a million such pre-export notifications have been exchanged through INCB's electronic platform. At present, 170 Governments have registered users on the platform.

Additionally, in 2025, 74 importing Governments were notified of planned shipments through the PEN Online Light system, an extension of the PEN Online platform, enabling Governments to voluntarily issue pre-export notifications for chemicals not listed under the 1988 Convention but known to be used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.

Law enforcement operations and intelligence sharing

In addition to providing the Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS)—a platform that enables law enforcement and other relevant national authorities to exchange information on precursor and equipment seizures—INCB convenes case meetings and issues alerts that assist authorities in identifying and investigating incidents involving chemicals and equipment used in illicit drug manufacture worldwide. In 2025, ten alerts were issued. Three of these alerted Governments of two new precursors of amphetamine-type stimulants and one new precursor of fentanyl analogues. None of these substances are under international control.

Equipment, industry cooperation, and virtual markets: a comprehensive view of illicit drug manufacture

As illicit drug markets have evolved from the trafficking of primarily plant-based substances to the growing dominance of synthetic drugs, INCB has continued to support Governments in implementing additional provisions of the 1988 Convention. Since 2024, the INCB Precursors Report has included a dedicated chapter (Chapter III) addressing these broader aspects of illicit drug manufacture.



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.

Based on its activities, INCB publishes an annual report that is submitted to the United Nations Economic and Social Council through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The report provides a comprehensive survey 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.