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Africa under attack

Drug trafficking has acquired a whole new dimension

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Mr President,
Secretary General
Your Excellencies,

I am honoured to report again to the Security Council. In the past few years the Council has looked at **drug trafficking as a threat to peace and stability** in a number of theatres -- Afghanistan, West Africa, and Central America. Today I'll report on new, worrisome developments concerning **both West and East Africa**, as well as **across the Saharan landmass**.

There are indeed reasons to worry. In the past Africa, already suffering from other tragedies, never had a drug problem. Today, under attack from several sides, the continent is facing a **severe and complex drug problem**: not only **drug trafficking**, but also **production and consumption**. Serious consequences in terms of health, development and security are inevitable. I will demonstrate this aided by a set of maps under distribution as I speak.

First about West Africa: from coke trafficking to amphetamine production

West Africa, particularly Guinea-Bissau, has received a lot of attention by the Security Council, because of the 50-60 tons/year of **cocaine trafficked** through the region over the past few years. As I mentioned at this Council meeting in November, the recent discovery of 7 laboratories in Guinea (Conakry) is evidence that West Africa is also becoming a **producer of synthetic drugs (amphetamine) and of crystal cocaine** (refined from pasta basica).

For sure, there is also encouraging news, for which the Security Council can take credit. Initiatives by ECOWAS, Member States and the UN (involving DPKO, DPA and UNODC working together) have attracted attention and resources to the issue: we have detected a decline of cocaine flows into West Africa since mid-2008. A donor conference last week in Vienna attracted financial support: I thank Austria for hosting that event.

My second point is about Eastern Africa, where we have detected heroin trafficking flows

On the other side of the continent, **30-35 tons of Afghan heroin** are being trafficked into East Africa every year. This is causing a dramatic increase in drug addiction of the worse type, namely heroin injection. This is spreading HIV, as I witnessed two weeks ago in the slums of Nairobi and Mombasa. Drug treatment facilities are badly needed and I urge donors to help.

Drug trafficking is only one illicit activity in Eastern Africa. Mainly because of the dramatic situation in Somalia, the region is becoming a **free economic zone** for all sorts of trafficking: drugs, migrants, guns, hazardous waste and natural resources, in addition to having the world's most dangerous waterways because of piracy. On 24 November, in Nairobi, Ministers from the region issued a Political Declaration to strengthen the rule of law and human security. UNODC was pleased to see its action plan for the region endorsed by the Ministers. Resources to assist the Eastern African countries under attack are badly needed.

My third point is about drug trafficking across the Sahel: a new problem, though inevitable

We have acquired evidence that the **two streams of illicit drugs -- heroin into Eastern Africa and cocaine into West Africa -- are now meeting in the Sahara, creating new trafficking routes** across Chad, Niger and Mali. Repercussions in neighbouring countries (in the Maghreb for example) are inevitable. Two facts are noteworthy.

First, as cocaine from the West is being traded 1:1 with heroin from the East, drugs are becoming a sort of new currency in the area. Drugs not only enrich organized crime. Like in the Andes and in West Asia, **terrorists and anti-government forces** in the Sahel extract resources from the drug trade to fund their operations, purchase equipment and pay foot-soldiers.

Second, drug trafficking in the region is taking on a whole new dimension. In the past, trade across the Sahara was by caravans. Today it is larger in size, faster at delivery, and more high-tech, as evidenced by **the debris of a Boeing 727** found on 2 November in the Gao region of Mali – an area affected by insurgency and terrorism. It is scary that this new example of the **links between drugs, crime and terrorism was discovered by chance**, following the plane crash.

A Trans-Saharan Crime-net

What can be done? First and foremost, we must strengthen national capacity: greater and stronger development is needed in across the region, so as to improve judicial systems and the rule of law. But no state can tackle this trans-national threat on its own.

Therefore, and second, information-sharing must be promoted among affected countries in order to disrupt trafficking networks. UNODC has brokered regional **intelligence-sharing platforms** in Central Asia, West Asia and the Gulf. Such arrangements are **not a threat to sovereignty**: on the contrary, they defend sovereignty now appropriated by sinister actors.

Thirdly, and to be practical about finding solutions, I urge you to consider the creation of a **Trans-Saharan Crime Monitoring Network** to improve information, monitor suspicious activity, exchange evidence, facilitate legal cooperation, and strengthen regional efforts against organized crime. Such a **Trans-Saharan crime-net** would ensure a first, practical response to a growingly serious problem: such an early warning device will help review situations that warrant careful investigations. Together with our traditional partners (DPA, DPKO and Interpol) we would be happy to assist. At the same time, UNODC shall continue to **report on new developments** in the region, in order to facilitate understanding of the situation on the ground and, as a result, enable an appropriate response.

Thank you for your attention.