

Factsheet: Supply reduction and related measures*

Afghanistan remains, by far, the largest source country for opiates worldwide. As of 2011, global aggregate seizures of **morphine and heroin** increased by approximately one half (50 per cent) over a period of three years, in spite of the decreasing trend in production over the period 2007-2010. While heroin use was reportedly decreasing or stabilizing in established markets in North America and West and Central Europe, data on seizures and heroin use suggest that heroin markets were expanding in some parts of Africa and Asia.

Cocaine manufacture remained unchanged at year end 2011 and reported cocaine seizures declined during both 2010 and 2011. Geographic distribution of production and trafficking has remained stable in the major producing and transit regions.

Cannabis is the world's most widely-used illicit substance. Given the relative ease with which cannabis herb (marijuana) can be produced, demand is often met through local production, resulting in a pattern of trafficking flows tending to be rather localized in comparison with other plant-based illicit drugs.

Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) remain a significant global threat, with increasing reports of use and seized quantities. Manufacture of ATS is spreading to new markets and there are increasing reports of precursor chemical diversion. ATS seizures reached new highs across all regions, with Asia, North America and Europe registering the most marked increases. Seizures of ATS, in particular methamphetamine, have been increasing since 2008. The increase in seizures of ATS shows that Member States are responding to changes in the type of drugs being illicitly trafficked.

The emergence of **new psychoactive substances (NPS)**, substances of abuse that are not controlled by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs or the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, continues to pose major challenges to authorities worldwide. The increasing number of NPS appearing on the market has also become a major public health concern, not only because of increasing use but also because of the lack of scientific research and understanding of their adverse effects.

Achievements

– Member States continue to actively engage in drug supply reduction activities and have increased international co-operation among law enforcement agencies. These activities include cross-border information sharing, joint investigations and joint controlled delivery operations, which resulted in many arrests and the seizure of significant quantities of illicit drugs as well as disruption to organized criminal groups.

* Prepared by the Secretariat as part of the preparations for the high-level review (shortened version, original paper including references can be obtained from: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/session-57.html>)

–Between 2010 and 2011, there has been an increase in the proportion of countries providing technical assistance in the area of drug supply reduction while the number of countries receiving technical assistance has remained stable.

–In addition, the UNODC Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends (SMART) programme, designed to improve the capacity of Member States to generate, manage, analyse, report and use information on illicit synthetic drugs has led to an improvement in the understanding of the phenomenon of ATS.

Challenges

–With the significant growth in volumes of international trade and passenger movements by sea, air and across land borders, it is incumbent upon authorities to develop an effective law enforcement response that maintains the security of their borders, but does not add an additional burden or delay to the transit of legitimate persons and trade through their borders.

–Because of their mobility and anonymity, cyber-technologies are offering new assistance to criminals and creating new offences that challenge existing legislation.

–The increasing involvement of gangs in many aspects of drug trafficking, from street sales and distribution to the enforcement of sales territories and the collection of drug-related debts and money-laundering, is reflected in related violence and rising homicide statistics in many countries.

–Insurgency and insecurity are closely linked to illicit drug manufacture and trafficking in a number of countries, seriously challenging the ability of law enforcement agencies to combat these activities.

–There is a need to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of domestic legal needs and requirements of controlled chemicals, in order to arrive at a baseline figure that will assist in the identification of attempts at illicit diversion.

–Weak focus of regulatory controls over pharmaceutical preparations for pain management increases the threat of abuse of highly addictive preparations.

–The illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants does not necessarily involve sophisticated chemical processes. Therefore, small-scale operators can manufacture large quantities of such stimulants in so-called “kitchen laboratory” operations. A number of potentially dangerous new psychoactive substances which may pose risks to public health and safety continue to be marketed as legal alternatives to internationally controlled substances and provides an increasingly lucrative market for criminal groups.