GLOBAL SMART UPDATE 2012
The threat of synthetic drugs is one of the most significant drug problems worldwide. After cannabis, amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) are the second most widely used drugs across the globe, outstripping the use of cocaine and heroin. Since 1990 the illicit manufacture of ATS has been reported from more than 65 countries and the figure keeps rising. Trends on the synthetic drug market evolve quickly each year.

The UNODC Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends (SMART) Programme enhances the capacity of Member States in priority regions to generate, manage, analyse, report and use synthetic drug information to design effective policy and programme interventions. Global SMART was launched in September 2008 and provides capacity-building in East and South-East Asia and, since 2011, in Latin America. Global SMART also regularly reviews the ATS situation in the Pacific region. Features of UNODC Global SMART are online data collection, situation reports and regional assessments. A review of the global ATS situation was issued in September 2011. The third annual review of patterns and trends of ATS and Other Drugs in Asia and the Pacific 2011 was issued in November 2011, providing detailed data and information on 15 countries in East and South-East Asia, with regional coverage of South Asia and Oceania.

The Global SMART Update is designed to provide regular brief reporting on emerging patterns and trends of the fast changing global synthetic drug situation. Given the speed at which changes in the ATS markets occur, it is especially important to have a simple sustainable mechanism for frequent information sharing from different parts of the world. The Global SMART Update is published twice a year and is available in English and Spanish.

The Update reports synthetic drug information in several categories, such as significant or unusual drug or precursor chemical seizures, new locations, methods and chemicals used for clandestine manufacture, new trafficking groups or routes, changes in legislation to address the problem of synthetic drugs, environmental impact from their illicit manufacture and destruction, emerging drugs or user groups, and health implications related to their use.*

Each issue of the Update contains special coverage and thematic segments. Since October 2010, the special segment of the Update has been expanded to provide a more in-depth review of an issue of current interest. In addition, short regional overviews have been added to provide snapshots of the situation in the regions of the world. In previous issues, the Update highlighted the increasing dimension of ATS trafficking from Africa; the situation on ATS in South Asia; the latest developments on synthetic substances which are sold in ATS markets as ‘bath salts’ and ‘plant food’; and the recent changes in illicit ATS manufacture, particularly the replacement of traditional precursors with alternate chemicals or chemically-modified forms not under international control. The special segment of the current issue takes a closer look at new psychoactive substances (NPS)-substances which are not controlled under the international drug conventions but which have emerged in all regions of the world and may pose a risk to public health. Broad global concern continues over NPS led to the adoption of resolution 55/1 entitled “Promoting international cooperation in responding to the challenges posed by new psychoactive substances”, at the 55th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the main United Nations drug-making body. The segment provides an overview of the various NPS available on illicit ATS markets and a critical assessment of some of the challenges posed by NPS to the international community.

While data on ATS seizures is often easy to obtain, information about the demand for ATS remains scarce and anecdotal in nature. Nevertheless, the Update continues to make a determined effort to highlight the human toll of ATS use. Various demand-related subjects are covered in this issue, including facts that have come to light about the use of synthetic drugs and their impact in Argentina, Australia, Canada, Croatia, Hungary, Japan, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uruguay, and Viet Nam. The Update also covers the results of the latest ESPAD/EMCDDA study on substance use among students in various European countries.

In this issue

Regional overviews

Oceania. Australia and New Zealand continue to be significant markets for ATS, with the highest number of ATS seizures in a decade made at the AustralianATS labs. Data on the ATS situation in the Pacific region remains sparse but lifetime prevalence of the use of methamphetamine is reported to be high among the young generation. There is also evidence of injecting methamphetamine use in many Pacific Island States and territories, for example, in Vanuatu. Ecstasy use is on the decline in Australia and New Zealand, but annual prevalence remains high at 2.9 per cent.

East and South-East Asia. East and South-East Asia has the second biggest ATS market with methamphetamine seizures steadily increasing accounting for almost half of the global total. Illicit manufacture is reported from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Thailand. Drug trafficking organizations from West Africa continue to target the region for methamphetamine smuggling activities. Diversion of pharmaceutical preparations containing pseudoephedrine are commonly observed. New psychoactive substances have also been reported in several countries in the region and Japan has introduced measures against their sale and distribution.

South Asia. In South Asia, there has reportedly been an increase in the use of ATS in Bhutan, Sri Lanka and in Bangladesh, where methamphetamine pills are widely available, especially in urban areas. South Asia continues to be targeted by organized crime groups as a source of ATS precursors, particularly ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. Data on ATS use and manufacture in the region is very sparse as no comprehensive assessment on the ATS situation has ever been undertaken.

West Asia and the Middle East. Amphetamine, commonly sold as Captagon, continues to be the most frequently seized substance in this region. The region experienced a large decrease in amphetamine seizures from 23.8 mt in 2009 to 13.5 mt in 2010. However, methamphetamine seizures have increased in some countries in West Asia, including Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Some countries have high requirements of ATS precursors which make them vulnerable to possible diversion of the chemicals to illicit channels. In Pakistan, the disappearance of almost 9 mt of ephedrine is being investigated by authorities. There is an information gap about the use of ATS in the region.

Europe. Amphetamine seizures in Europe continued their downward trend. A significant rise in seized clandestine amphetamine laboratories was observed. Methamphetamine use in Europe continues to expand. The European ‘ecstasy’ market is on the rise as seizures more than doubled from 595 kg in 2009 to 1.3 mt in 2010 and the MDMA content of ecstasy pills seems to increase. New psychoactive substances continue to emerge in the region and data on their use was reported from the UK and Spain. In April 2012, Hungary adopted generic controls over new psychoactive substances and their manufacture, distribution, importation and exportation.

Africa. Methamphetamine continues to be trafficked from West Africa to East and South-East Asia. Seizures started to increase in West Africa in 2008, with methamphetamine being smuggled into countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea. Most illicit ATS laboratories are reported from South Africa, but two methamphetamine laboratories have been dismantled in Nigeria. The lack of adequate law enforcement capacity, infrastructure and appropriate legislation hampers the efforts of governments in the region to properly address the activities of drug trafficking organizations.

North America. North America accounted for approximately half of global methamphetamine seizures in 2010 with 22 mt compared to 13.7 mt in 2009. The largest increase of seizures was reported from Mexico where seizures doubled to almost 13 mt. The United States reported a 1 mt increase in methamphetamine seizures as well as higher average purity levels of methamphetamine and declining prices. Furthermore, seizures of unscheduled chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine are rising. With regard to new psychoactive substances, legislation adding numerous substances to Schedule 1 of the Controlled Substances Act was enacted in July 2012.

Central and South America. Increased seizures of ATS precursors have been reported from countries such as Argentina, Belize and Guatemala. Illicit manufacture of methamphetamine has been reported, mainly from Guatemala, where two laboratories were dismantled. To counter the drug threat, Uruguay enacted legislation controlling pharmaceutical preparations containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine. The use of ATS has been reported from many countries in the region, most recently from Argentina, due to the focus on the international drug trade. The ATS situation in cocaine, the true ATS situation may be underreported.

*The information and data contained within this report are from official Government reports, press releases, scientific journals or incidents confirmed by reliable sources. Neither do they imply any endorsement. Suggested citation: Global SMART Update Volume 8, September 2012.
New psychoactive substances (NPS) were one of the key issues deliberated in March 2012, at the 55th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Broad global consensus was reached to the adoption of resolution 55/1 entitled “Promoting international cooperation in responding to the challenges posed by new psychoactive substances”. The resolution calls on Member States to monitor emerging trends in the composition, production and distribution of new psychoactive substances, patterns of use and share that information and adopt appropriate measures aimed at reducing supply and demand.

What are NPS?
A NPS is a new narcotic or psychotropic drug, in pure form or in preparation, that is not controlled by the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs or the 1971 United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances, but which may pose a public health threat comparable to that posed by substances listed in these conventions (European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)).

Some NPS have pharmacological properties and effects similar to controlled drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy and amphetamines and are therefore frequently marketed as “legal alternatives” to scheduled drugs. NPS are sold as “plant food”, “bath salts” or as “research chemicals”, in powder, tablet, capsule form or as smoking blends. Seizures of NPS have been made in all regions of the world, including Australia and New Zealand, East and South-East Asia, Near and Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America and South America.

History
New drugs have always appeared on illicit drug markets (see Table 1). However, the pace at which such substances emerge has accelerated considerably. The significant increase of NPS in Europe can be seen from reports of the EMCDDA. Whereas, between 2000 and 2005, on average five substances per year were reported, from 2007 to 2010 about 150 NPS were identified through the EMCDDA Early Warning System. The highest number of new NPS in 2010 were 49 substances in 2011, up from 41 substances in 2010 and just 24 substances in 2009.

An overview of NPS
1. Ketamine
Ketamine is used as an anaesthetic in human and veterinary medicine and has been misused as a hallucinogen for almost 30 years. It is often sold as a liquid or whitish powder and as ‘ecstasy’ or ‘amphetamine’. Use has been reported from Asia, America, Europe and Oceania. The substance is controlled in many countries such as China, India and the United States. Overall seizures increased from 3.4 mt in 2005 up to 11.7 mt in 2010 (see Figure 1), with several multi-ton seizures made in China, Canada and India.

2. Piperazines
Piperazines emerged first in Europe, New Zealand, Australia and spread slowly to countries in Asia and Latin America. The most commonly reported piperazine is benzylpiperazine (BZP), others include meta-Chlorophenylpiperazine (mCPP) and 3-Fluoromethylphenylpiperazine (TFMPP). As central nervous stimulants piperazines are frequently sold on the internet and in specialized shops as a smoking mixture. They first appeared on the drug market in 2007 and became very popular among young adults and teenagers in Europe and the United States in a very short time.

3. Synthetic cannabinoids
Synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists, e.g. JWH-018 and JWH-018 mimic the effects of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) found in cannabis and are frequently sold online in the internet and in specialized shops as smoking mixture. They first appeared on the drug market in 2007 and became very popular among young adults and teenagers in Europe and the United States in a very short time.

Challenges of NPS
Although many of the psychoactive substances have been on the market for a long time the diversity of products has increased considerably, as manufacturers of NPS are very adaptive and flexible. The variety, the changing physical forms and constant modifications in labelling makes it difficult for law enforcement and other authorities to identify NPS. Laboratory tests do not always match the active ingredients present and generic terms are used. The Internet is being increasingly used to facilitate distribution of these substances to a global audience.

The world’s new challenge: New Psychoactive Substances

New psychoactive substances through the years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chemical group</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>fenatyl, α-methylfenatyl</td>
<td>phentylamines, DOM, MDMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>tryptamines</td>
<td>DOI, FXY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>piperazines</td>
<td>BZP, mCPP, TFMPP, PC-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>synthetic cannabinoids</td>
<td>JWH-018, JWH-013, 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>synthetic cathinones</td>
<td>mephedrone, MDPV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Ketamine seizures, 2005-2010

Figure 2: Khat seizures, 2000-2010

Figure 3: Summary of NPS reported through the ICE portal 2010-2011
For centuries, Africa has played a role in the global trade in both licit and illicit psychoactive substances.合成 drugs available in the region are mostly amphetamine-type substances.

Increased ATS trafficking to East and South-East Asia. Since 2008, there have been an increasing number of reports of trafficking of methamphetamine from West Africa to Europe. Methamphetamine manufacture reported for the first time. Unlike cocaine or heroin, illicit ATS manufacture does not rely on the cultivation of naturally occurring plants such as coca or opium poppy, and as such, is not limited to certain geographic locations. This leaves the possibility that West Africa could be transformed into a major source of illicit activity. As governments have been strengthening controls over ephedrine and pseudoephedrine in recent years, there has been a shift in trafficking routes to Africa. In Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, authorities have reported rising thefts of methamphetamine precursors. In Kenya 21 thefts amounting to 2,253 kg were reported to the Pharmacy and Poisons Board between September 2009 and December 2011, which could have been used to manufacture over 1,500 kg methamphetamine. While there have been no reports of illicit ATS manufacture from the country, Kenyan couriers have been arrested with methamphetamine in South-East Asia. Such incidents provide indications on potential methamphetamine manufacture, which could be a future trend.

Lack of awareness. Assessing the true ATS situation in West Africa and Africa as a whole remains difficult due to the persistent lack of data from the region. Less than 20% of African countries and territories submit annual reports to UNODC and reported seizures of both ATS and their precursors are scarce. The present information deficit on ATS in the region is principally due to a general lack of awareness of ATS, as law enforcement authorities tend to focus on the interception of ‘traditional’ plant-based drugs. The lack of effective law enforcement systems and border and precursor controls make West Africa an attractive location for the diversion and trafficking of ATS and essential ATS precursor chemicals such as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. Difficult economic and living conditions in many West African countries have led to further expanding the West African involvement in the heroin and cocaine drugs trade, which might also apply to the potential expansion of the illicit ATS trade in the region.

Index of segments

Global SMART segments are arranged based on regional threat. Oceania has among the highest prevalence rates for ATS use in the world, while the number of ATS users are greatest in East Asia. Therefore, the map and corresponding index of segments begins with recent events from Oceania and East Asia and then moves geographically westward. The numbered pins on the map above correspond with the index of segments below.

Note: The boundaries, names and designations used herein do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
New Zealand: Control strategy targets street level dealing of methamphetamine

MANUKAU, New Zealand – 13 June 2012. As a result of Operation Foiled of the New Zealand Police, 311 grams of methamphetamine with a street value of over USD 239,000 were seized in June 2012. Operation Foiled is carried out by 50 police officers of Counties Manukau (South Auckland) Police and targets street level drug dealing across Manukau. Since the end of January to June 2012, a total of 412 grams of methamphetamine has been recovered. The Operation was carried out as part of the government’s Methamphetamine Control Strategy, which was developed in 2009 and is designed to disrupt the supply of methamphetamine and reduce methamphetamine related crime. New Zealand Police work closely with partners like health agencies, and community groups to reduce the impact of drugs and crime.

Australia: record methamphetamine seizure (306 kg)

SYDNEY, Australia – 30 July 2012. 306 kg of crystalline methamphetamine and 252 kg of heroin with a market value of almost USD 524 million, were seized in Sydney during a joint operation by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. This marks the largest seizure of crystalline methamphetamine in AFP history (in 2010/11 404 kg of ATS were seized) and the third largest seizure of heroin. Four nationals from Hong Kong and three Australia-based suspects were arrested. Investigations into the drug syndicate started in August 2011, follow- ing information received from the Drug Enforcement Administration of the United States. On 19 July 2012 two suspect cargo consignments with 3,200 terracotta pots were inspected by Customs and Border Protection officers at Port Botany (South-Eastern Sydney) and 100 of them were found to contain the drugs. The suspects have been charged with offences including smuggling and pos- session of a commercial quantity of methamphetamine which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Joint Australian and Chinese operation dismantles drug syndicate

AUSTRALIA and CHINA – 27 June 2012. The Australian Federal Police and the National Narcotics Control Commission of China have joined forces for the first time to dismantle an alleged transna- tional drug trafficking organization. Authorities in Australia and China have seized a combined total of 3.35 mt of safrole-rich oil, containing 331 kg of safrole. A total of nine persons were arrested in connection with the seizure, six in China and three in Australia. This joint investigation started in April 2011 in Sydney, when Australian Customs and Border Protection officers detected three consignments of 2,800 lt safrole oil hidden in a shipment of shampoo bottles (see segment 4 of Global SMART Update Vol.6). In September 2011, three men were charged in relation with this trafficking attempt. Further investigations by the National Control Commission of China resulted in seizures of 500 kg safrole oil in March and April 2012.

Wastewater analysis in Queensland shows increased methamphetamine and MDMA abuse on weekends

QUEENSLAND, Australia – June 2012. Results of the first wastewater analysis conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology show increased use of methamphetamine and ecstasy during weekends. Scientists estimate that on average 273 mg (2010) methamphetamine was used per 1000 people a day on weekends and 212 mg/day/1000 during weekdays. Ecstasy use was estimated on average at 244 mg/ day/1000 on weekends and 100 mg/day/1000 on weekdays. In this study, wastewater was sampled at the inlet of a sewage treatment plant that receives water from a catchment in Queensland, with a population of over 150,000 people. Samples were collected over a period of 12 days in November 2009 and over a period of 15 days in November 2010, to estimate daily methamphetamine, ecstasy and cocaine use.

Japan: increased control of new psychoactive substances

JAPAN – August 2012. The Japanese Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry has announced the design- nation of four synthetic substances - mephedrone, methylenedioxyprovalerone (MDPV), JWH-018 and cannabicyclohexanol – as “narcotics” under the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law by August 2012. The new psychoactive substances, which are widely sold across Japan, will be made illegal and subjected to the same legal guidelines as traditional narcotics. The Ministry is also working on a regulation to regularly assess new psychoactive substances and re-designate their status where appropriate. This would help to ensure that new substances with slightly different chemical compositions but similar effects to controlled drugs, could be scheduled under the above regulation as well. Authorities in Japan have also reported a number of cases of people injuring others while driving under the influ- ence of the new synthetic substances.

Indonesia: 382,000 ecstasy pills and 30.5 kg crystalline methamphetamine seized

JAKARTA, Indonesia – 3 May 2012. Jakarta Police seized 382,000 ecstasy pills and 30.5 kg of crystal- line methamphetamine during drug raids which took place over two weeks in March and April 2012. The ecstasy pills had an estimated market value of USD 11.8 million and the crystalline metham-phetamine was estimated at USD 4.7 million. Sixteen suspects were arrested in connection with the seizure. The drugs were trafficked in suitcases to Indonesia by sea using fishing boats. In total, more than 1 million ecstasy pills and 123 kg of crystalline methamphetamine were confiscated by the Ja- karta Police between January to April 2012. Indonesia was formerly used as a transit country for ATS, but emerged during the past six years as a manufacturing location for crystalline methamphetamine and ecstasy, with significant seizures each year. In 2010 crystalline methamphetamine was reported to be the primary drug of use in Indonesia.*

Hong Kong Customs seizes 702 kg of pseudoephedrine in first five months of 2012

HONG KONG, China – 30 May 2012. Hong Kong Customs seized 776,000 tablets of pseudoephedrine inside a cargo consignment which was declared as “Pepper Feeds” and imported from Singapore at Hong Kong International Airport. According to Customs, the chemi- cal could have been used to manufacture about 6.6 kg of meth-amphetamine with a retail value of around USD 5.2 million. The tablets were destined for mainland China and were packed in aluminium foil bags covered by bags of pepper in eight carton boxes. From January to May 2012, customs officers intercepted six shipments of pseudoephedrine at Airport Cargo Termi- nals and seized a total of about 702kg of pseudoephedrine tablets which could have been used to manufacturing 34 kg of methamphetamine worth over USD 26.5 million.

Hong Kong Customs seizes 412 kg of ketamine seized

HONG KONG, China – 30 May 2012. More than 412 kg of ketamine with an estimated retail value of about USD 47 million, was seized by Hong Kong Customs from a river trade vessel arriving from Huanjiang (Province Guangdong, South China) destined for Malaysia. A contain- er declared to hold ‘ABS Resin’ contained ketamine in powder form, packed in 23 bags out of a total of 516 bags of goods. The seizure was made during a counter-narcotics operation at the main port facilities which aimed at disrupting transnational drug trafficking activities and strengthening the inspection of suspicious consignments transported by river trade vessels. A total of 70 containers were checked by Customs. Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, drug trafficking carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of USD 5 million.

Japan has also reported a number of cases of people injuring others while driving under the influence of the new synthetic substances.
Pakistan: Possible diversion of 9 mt of ephedrine
Pakistán — 4 April 2012. The Supreme Court in Pakistan is investigating a case of possible diversion of 9 mt of ephedrine, which was uncovered in October 2011. In 2010, two pharmaceutical companies obtained export quotas for ephedrine that exceeded the limits the government had reported to the International Narcotics Control Board by 9 mt. Allegedly only 150 kg were used in manufacture while the rest went missing. Ephedrine is among the most frequently used starting materials in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine. Pakistan currently reports the fourth highest legitimate requirement for ephedrine in the world; behind China, the United States and the Republic of Korea. Countries with such high legitimate requirements can be attractive targets for precursor diversion.

Malaysia: customs seize ketamine in fake cashew nuts
SEPANG, Malaysia — 19 April 2012. An attempt to smuggle ketamine inside fake cashew nuts was uncovered by the Kuala Lumpur International Airport’s Royal Malaysian Customs Department. Ketamine with a gross weight of 9.3 kg valued at USD 116,000 had been put into fake cashew nuts made from plastic, and packed together with genuine cashew nuts. An Indian national arriving from Chennai was detained after his bags were inspected and six packages of food containing the fake cashew nuts were found. The contents tested positive for ketamine, a substance not controlled by the international drug control treaties, but which is widely used in several countries in Asia and often sold as ‘ecstasy’ on these markets. Ketamine seizures in Malaysia were reported at 334 kg in 2010 and 1,071 kg in 2009.*

More than one million methamphetamine pills seized in Thailand
THAILAND — 2 May 2012. National police have seized more than one million methamphetamine pills with a street value of over USD 9.5 million and arrested two men with connections to many other drug trafficking organizations. Two suspects were arrested on charges of possessing illicit drugs and money laundering. Police found 100,000 methamphetamine pills inside the suspects’ car and a further 920,000 in their house, wrapped in plastic packages. The house was being used as a warehouse and distribution point for drugs smuggled from Myanmar, then transported from Northern Thailand to Central Thailand before being sold nationwide. The trafficking group is believed to have connections to more than 100 drug networks. Twenty bank accounts were registered in their names and money from over 100 accounts had been transferred into their accounts. The suspects had allegedly been trafficking drugs for over a year.

World Health Organization convenes 35th Expert Committee on Drug Dependence
HAMMAMET, Tunisia — 4 to 8 June 2012. Substances including Gamma-hydroxybutyric acid, ketamine, 1-(3-chlorophenyl) piperazine (mCPP) and N-benzylpiperazine (BZP) were reviewed at the 35th meeting of the Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD) of the World Health Organization (WHO) which took place from 4 to 8 June 2012 in Hammamet, Tunisia. This was the first meeting of the ECDD since 2006. The Expert Committee carried out a medical and scientific assessment of the dependence and abuse potential of a number of psychoactive substances, to guide WHO in its mandate with regard to changes in the scope of control of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971. The results of the review are expected to be reported to the next session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to be held in March 2013.

Nigeria: 25.4 kg of ephedrine concealed in sandals
LAGOS, Nigeria — 13 April 2012. Officers of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency have foiled an attempt by a businessman to traffic 25.4 kg ephedrine to Mozambique as unaccompanied cargo through the Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos. The ephedrine, in powder form, was concealed inside the soles of 11 pairs of sandals. Ephedrine is a precursor chemical used in the manufacture of methamphetamine, but is also used for its stimulant effect. The seizure might indicate that the ephedrine was intended to be further smuggled to South Africa, where regionally, most illicit ATS laboratories were dismantled.

Benin: Nigerian businessman imprisoned for smuggling 5.3 kg methamphetamine
COTONOU, Benin — 10 May 2012. A Nigerian businessman was reported to have been arrested with 5.3 kg methamphetamine in Benin by the Central Office for Combating Illicit Trafficking in Drugs and Precursors. The country of origin of the methamphetamine was reported to be Nigeria, transiting Benin and were supposed to be further smuggled through Kenya (Nairobi) to its final destination Bangladesh (Dhaka). The suspect claimed having trafficked drugs through Benin several times before. According to the authorities, traffickers are changing their trafficking strategy and attempt to traffic drugs though freight services at the airport. The Government has made efforts to counteract increased drug trafficking by increasing the capacities of police and border control and strengthening the inspection of suspicious consignments.

Hungary: generic ban on new psychoactive substances
BUDAPEST, Hungary — 2 April 2012. The Hungarian Government has issued generic controls over new psychoactive substances (NPS), effective from 2 April 2012. The Government decree (No. 66/2012) introduced a new schedule for NPS, the so called List-C. It lists not only specific compounds, but also groups of compounds in order to prevent attempts at chemical modifications to yield new chemicals not covered under the law. The Government has 12 months to make a risk assessment of the substances on List-C and subsequently decide on either a permanent ban or lifting of the temporary ban. Manufacture, distribution, importation and exportation of these chemicals will be penalized by up to three years in prison. Possession and use are not criminalized. The legislation became necessary due to the rapidly growing trade in NPS and the constantly growing number of drug users requiring treatment.
### Study on use of new psychoactive substance conducted in Spain

**SPAIN — 26 April 2012.** Users of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in Spain are polydrug users according to a study conducted by the Hospital del Mar Research Institute-IMIM-UAB (Barcelona) Spain, the Energy Control (Barcelona) and Puerta Bonita Health Center (Madrid). The cross-sectional structured survey was included in specific drug forums on the internet with a total of 228 Spanish NPS users participating. The most frequently used substances were 2-CH (4-bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine) (79.8 per cent), methylone (40.8 per cent), 2CI (2,5-dimethoxy-4-isodophenethylamine) (39.5 per cent) and mephedrone (33.5 per cent). NPS were frequently combined with other drugs such as cannabis (70.2 per cent) and ethanol (66.2 per cent). Most of them obtained NPS from friends (79.4 per cent) and the internet (41.7 per cent). Respondents (88.6 per cent) stated that they usually search the internet to obtain more information on the various NPS. This is one of a few studies on the use of NPS.

### Ecstasy is the most widely used ATS, according to Guardian/Mixmag survey

**UNITED KINGDOM — 14 March 2012.** Ecstasy (34 per cent) was found to be the fourth most widely used drug after alcohol and tobacco (92 per cent) and cannabis (53 per cent), according to the Guardian/Mixmag drugs survey, one of the largest assessments of current drug use ever conducted. Over 15,500 drug users (mainly from the UK and the US) responded to the drugs survey carried out online in November 2011. Data provided includes use patterns and trends, effects and quality of drugs and their health implications. The survey also provides an insight on new psychoactive substances with 20 per cent indicating to have bought them in 2011. Only 19.5 per cent of UK users reported the use of mephedrone, since it was banned by the British government in 2010, compared to 51 per cent the year before. Synthetic cannabinoids were rated as more harmful than natural cannabis, with a 2.5 per cent of users reporting that they had sought emergency medical help after using the drug.

### Belgium: warning against 4-methylamphetamine (4-MA)

**BELGIUM — 31 May 2012.** Experts warn against 4-methylamphetamine also known as 4-MA, which is suspected to have contributed to the deaths of at least five people in Belgium. The chemical was reported to the Belgian Early Warning System on drugs, which was established as a result of the adoption of the Joint Action on New Synthetic Drugs by the European Union in 1997. The onset effect of 4-MA is slower than that of amphetamine and the effects are believed to be similar to ecstasy and amphetamine. The substance was seized for the first time in 2009, and in August 2011 reportedly led to a death in Belgium. According to the Austrian Check-it initiative which provides information and free testing of synthetic substances to users, 4-MA was firstly registered in Austria in April 2012. The drug was found to contain other substances such as amphetamine or ephedrine and was reportedly sold as “speed”. The drug has also appeared in Netherlands and the United Kingdom, where it has been associated with several fatalities.

### Uruguay: increase control of pharmaceutical preparations containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine

**URUGUAY — March 2012.** A new decree entered into force by the Ministry of Health of Uruguay providing control on the sale of pharmaceutical preparations containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine in order to prevent diversions onto the illicit drug market. Traffickers currently divert large amounts of both drugs in bulk and pharmaceutical preparation for the synthesis of methamphetamine. The decree ensures that the use of these substances are limited to scientific and medical purposes. Import and export authorizations are required for ephedrine and pseudoephedrine and will be issued by the health authority in Uruguay. Prior information on the need for importing and exporting those substances or pharmaceutical products containing those substances is needed by the health authorities.

### Brazil: Federal Police records largest seizure of synthetic drugs

**BRAZIL — 5 July 2012.** The Federal Police seized more than 74,000 ecstasy pills smuggled from Portugal, on two different occasions: 28,000 ecstasy pills were seized at the International Airport of Guarulhos - Sao Paolo, leading to the arrest of a Brazilian national, only days after a seizure of 46,000 ecstasy pills at Rio de Janeiro International Airport also arriving from Portugal (Lisbon). Following a search by the Federal Police, two blocks of ecstasy, 10,000 points of LSD and cannabis were seized in the apartment of the three suspects. This represents the largest seizure of synthetic drugs ever made by the Federal Police at Rio de Janeiro International Airport. The arrests were charged with international drug trafficking and face a penalty of 5 to 25 years imprisonment.
Argentina increases efforts to prevent diversion of ATS precursors
SAN MIGUEL, Argentina – 26 & 27 April 2012. The first national meeting on chemical precursors organized by the Federal Drug Council of Argentina, in cooperation with the Secretariat for the Prevention of Drug Addiction and the Fight against Drug Trafficking, marks the effort by Argentina to actively fight the problem of the expanding amphetamine-type stimulants market in the country. The meeting aimed to members of the judiciary, public prosecutors, security forces, police as well as provincial and national institutions involved in the fight against illicit drugs. The increasing complexity of the market for precursor chemicals and the dynamics that impact the development of the national and regional chemical industry have led Argentina to strengthen controls to prevent possible diversion of substances, materials and precursors into illicit channels.

Ecstasy use in combination with alcohol - a rising trend in Argentina
ARGENTINA – April 2012. Over 65 per cent of students (0.7 per cent of a total of 90,450) in Argentina have used ecstasy in combination with alcohol during the month preceding, informs the latest study on drug abuse carried out by the Argentine Drugs Observatory. The study is conducted every 2 years to estimate the extent of psychoactive substance abuse in adolescents between 13 and 17. Since 2011, lifetime prevalence of ecstasy has been increasing from 0.2 per cent to 1.2 per cent in 2005, to 2.1 per cent in 2007 and 2.6 per cent in 2009. The lifetime prevalence of ecstasy decreased significantly in 2011 and now stands at 2.1 per cent. The study also examined several risk factors such as school, family and social background that are associated with drug use and the perception of students about their lives and their environment, which are essential in designing effective policies.

Guatemala: two ATS laboratories dismantled
SAN MARCOS and SANTA ROSA, Guatemala – 19 March & 5 April 2012. Two clandestine laboratories manufacturing amphetamine-type stimulants were dismantled during two different operations in East and South Guatemala. In March, a methamphetamine laboratory was dismantled by the General Counternarcotics Directorate in coordination with the Public Ministry, in the village Sisaltepeque, Catarina, San Marcos (East Guatemala). Authorities found six plastic barrels that contained approximately 50 kg of a yellow solid, believed to be an intermediate product of methamphetamine. The second laboratory was uncovered in Taxisco, Santa Rosa (South Guatemala) leading to the arrest of a Mexican and a Guatemalan national. Quantities of sodium hydroxide and tartaric acid were also found in the laboratory.

Canada: study examines mortality among methamphetamine users
TORONTO, Canada – 13 May 2012. Individuals with methamphetamine-use disorders have a higher mortality risk than those abusing cannabis, cocaine, or alcohol, but a lower mortality risk than persons with opioid-related disorders. This new study conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, Ontario Cancer Institute Biostatistics Group, the University of Toronto and University of Arizona (United States) is one of the first investigating the mortality rate of methamphetamine users. Almost 830,000 individuals hospitalized in California from 1990 to 2005 with diagnoses of methamphetamine-, alcohol-, opioid-, cannabis-, or cocaine-related disorders were observed for up to 16 years. Age-, sex-, and race-adjusted standardized mortality rates were generated. Given the lack of long-term studies of mortality risk among individuals with drug-related disorders, the current study provides important information for the assessment of the comparative drug-related burden associated with methamphetamine use.

US: President signs legislation that bans new psychoactive substances
WASHINGTON D.C., United States – 9 July 2012. President Obama signed new legislation banning the sale of new psychoactive substances. Numerous chemicals, including MDPV (methyleneoxyppyrovalerone) and mephedrone (4-methylmethcathinone) were added to Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act, which lists drugs that are illegal and cannot be prescribed under any circumstances. The ban prohibits the sale of those chemicals in local and online shops. In addition, not only the compounds currently identified as new psychoactive substances are banned, but also analogues and mimetics that may be produced in the future are outlawed, creating criteria by which similar chemical compounds are controlled. The Senate passed synthetic drug control legislation in May 2012, after the House of Representatives had done so in December 2011 and the temporary emergency ban by the Drug Enforcement Administration in October 2011.

Some 2.5 tons of methylvamine chloride seized in the US
LOS ANGELES, United States – 19 April 2012. U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers seized two shipments containing 2,591 kg of methylvamine chloride which is used as a precursor for methamphetamine. The white powdery chemical was stored in 80 bags at an air cargo consignment facility of Los Angeles International Airport. The chemical could have been used to manufacture methamphetamine with a street value of USD 40 million. The shipments arrived from China on April 19 and 23 and were bound for Mexico. Methylvamine chloride is controlled in the US and has many legitimate industrial applications in pesticides, solvents and pharmaceutical products. Suppliers of these products are subject to regulations and control measures regarding manufacture, importation, use and distribution.

More than 146 mt of chemical precursors seized in West Mexico
MEXICO – 13 May 2012. A joint action by the Tax Administration Service, the Secretariat of the Navy of Mexico and the Attorney General’s Office led to a total seizure of 130 mt of monomethylamine and phenylmethyl acetate, chemicals used in the manufacture of methamphetamine. The seven containers arrived at the port of Lazaro Cardenas, Michoacan (West Mexico), from China and were bound for Honduras. No arrests were made in connection with the precursor chemical seizure. This marks the first attempt in 2012, of precursors being trafficked from Mexico to Honduras. On 17 June another 16 mt seizure of the chemical precursor methylvamine was made at the port of Manzanillo, Colima (West Mexico) onboard a ship from the Republic of Korea. The containers stored about 640 bags of 25 kg each.

US: one of the largest domestic seizures of methamphetamine (341 kg)
SAN JOSE, United States – 1 March 2012. Some 341 kg of methamphetamine with a street value of USD 34 million was seized, making it one of the largest domestic methamphetamine seizures in history, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. The seizure was made in the course of an investigation on a case involving stolen electronic goods. Detectives of the Palo Alto Police Department Investigative Services Division discovered a large quantity of methamphetamine in an apartment in San Jose. A detailed investigation of the apartment revealed that it was being used as a methamphetamine conversion laboratory where methamphetamine was being converted to its crystalline form, “ice”. Three individuals were arrested on state drug violations. All aspects of the investigation are ongoing.
Global SMART accomplishments for 2012

The Global SMART (Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends) Programme improves the capacity of targeted Member States to generate, manage, analyze, report and use information on illicit synthetic drugs. The programme launched formal operations in September 2008 in Bangkok.

Publications
- Global SMART Updates Volume 7 and 8 (English and Spanish);
- Illicit market for ATS, 2012 World Drug Report;
- West Africa – 2012 ATS Situation Report;

Conferences and Meetings
- Side event on new psychoactive substances at the 55th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Vienna, Austria in March 2012; (co-organized with Australia)
- Fourth annual Global SMART Programme Advisory Group Meeting, Vienna, Austria in March 2012;
- Fourth SMART annual regional synthetic drug information workshop in East and South-East Asia, in July 2012.

SMART disseminated information on ATS and new psychoactive substances at:
- Third Operational Working Group Meeting on Operation ICE TRAIL, Teheran, Iran (Islamic Republic of) in January 2012;
- Joint session of the Enforcement Committee and Technical Committee of the World Customs Organization, Brussels, Belgium in March 2012;
- 2012 NIDA International Forum - Second interdisciplinary forum on new and emerging psychoactive substances by the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse and EMCDDA, Palm Springs, United States in June 2012;
- International Forum on Building an Integrated System in Dealing Professionally with Chemical Precursors, Dubai, United Arab Emirates in June 2012.

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If you have comments on this report, or would like to contribute information that should be considered for future reports, please contact the Global SMART Programme at globalsmart@unodc.org. Information on the Global SMART Programme can be found via the internet at www.unodc.org and www.apaic.org or by contacting UNODC at the Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, A-1400, Vienna, Austria.