

Statement of the Executive Director UNODC on International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

26 June 2013

The International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is a suitable day for us all to reflect on the world drug problem.

Based on UNODC's *World Drug Report 2013*, there appears to be a decline in the use of traditional drugs such as heroin and cocaine in some parts of the world, but the use of prescription drugs and new psychoactive substances is growing.

In terms of production, Afghanistan retains its position as the world's leading producer and cultivator of opium; although a poor yield in the country has reduced global opium production by 30 per cent compared to 2011. Myanmar continues to be the second biggest producer of opium after Afghanistan.

Cocaine production is largely unchanged from 2011, but its use continues to fall in the United States, while remaining stable in West and

Central Europe. In Africa, consumption appears to be growing. The same is also true in South America with signs that cocaine is spreading to emerging markets in Asia.

Amphetamine-type stimulant use is widespread with Methamphetamine pills the most predominant form of ATS in East and South-East Asia.

In the area of drug control, there are major challenges ahead of us. They range from the 2014 withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, which will require the concerted support of the international community, to the need to increase our work in Myanmar to assist the government in countering drugs and crime.

The drug trade and organised crime is fuelling economic and political instability in Africa. Both West Africa and the Sahel need the assistance of the international community. We must also ensure that illicit drugs and crime do not hinder sustainable development in these regions and in other parts of the world.

Regarding those people who inject drugs and who live with HIV, there have been some

improvements. However, HIV transmission through injecting drug use continues to be a major concern for the international community. Much more work still needs to be done to meet the objectives set in 2011 by the special session of the UN General Assembly.

Overall, the situation related to drug abuse and illicit trafficking remains stable. However, demand has not been substantially reduced and around 200,000 people continue to die every single year due to illicit drugs.

Although the international drug control conventions are helping to contain illicit drugs, there are distinct challenges regarding their interpretation.

These challenges include the violence generated by illicit drug trafficking, which is so damaging to some nations, in particular, in Central America; the unique problems posed by new, but deadly psychoactive substances; and the fact that some national laws and practices can be vulnerable to human rights' violations.

The real issue, however, is not to amend the conventions, but to implement them according to their original spirit and intention.

The first step towards achieving this goal is to recognize that the conventions were created to protect the health and welfare of mankind.

UNODC promotes a balanced approach to illicit drugs founded on fundamental human rights. This approach must emphasize the importance of science-based prevention and treatment for problem drug users. We also need to convince countries to treat problem drug users as victims and patients who need our support.

Within the United Nations, there is unanimous agreement on a roadmap for the discussion of all these issues. In 2014, a high-level review of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action will be conducted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, followed in 2016, by the UN General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem.

On International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking it is worth remembering that the conventions are a powerful tool in the hands of the

international community, but they need to be used in the right way, if the millions of victims of illicit drugs are to be helped.