



PRESS RELEASE

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Rise in opium cultivation and continued expansion of methamphetamine markets top Asia illicit drug concerns

Bangkok (Thailand) 26 June – Despite an overall ‘stable’ global drug use situation, an increase in South-East Asia’s markets for amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and a continuing rise in opium cultivation pose growing human security and public health challenges, according to a UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report released today.

Afghanistan accounted for 74 per cent of global illicit opium production in 2012 and remains the world’s leading producer and cultivator of opium, while Myanmar is the world’s second largest accounting for 23 per cent of the land used for illicit poppy cultivation and 10 per cent of global opium production, says the [UNODC World Drug Report 2013](#).

Methamphetamine remains the dominant amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS), accounting for 71 per cent of global ATS seizures in 2011. Methamphetamine pills remain the predominant ATS in East and South-East Asia: 122.8 million pills were seized in 2011. Seizures of crystal methamphetamine increased to 8.8 tons, the highest level in the past five years.

“Illicit drugs continue to jeopardize the health and welfare of people throughout the world,” said Mr. Yury Fedotov, UNODC Executive Director. “Drug trafficking, along with many other forms of transnational organized crime, undermines human development. We must break this destructive cycle to promote sustainable economic growth and greater security and stability.”

Seizure data indicates that Afghan opiates are emerging as a competitor to opiates produced and consumed in Southeast Asia – a signal that Myanmar and Lao PDR opiates are insufficient to meet demand from the increasing number of heroin users in China and other parts of Asia – and that drug traffickers are diversifying sources and using new routes and methods including maritime shipment and air couriers that transit logistical hubs in the region.

“Increases in seizures and use of opiates and methamphetamine throughout Southeast Asia – and the diversification of smuggling routes – indicate the drug economy is growing and money flows are increasing to the transnational organized crime groups that states struggle to deal with,” said Mr. Jeremy Douglas, UNODC Regional Representative, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, in Bangkok.



“We need to support Southeast Asia’s rapid regional integration and economic growth by providing states with coordinated regional responses to transnational organized crime, promoting the rule of law and assisting with alternative sustainable livelihoods,” said Mr. Douglas.

While cannabis remains the most widely used illicit substance, the increasing use and number of new psychoactive substances – drugs designed to remain outside the international drug control system – has emerged as a major public health concern because of the lack of scientific research and understanding of their effects, according to the Report.

Globally, synthetic drugs are now more used than cocaine and heroin combined, the Report says, noting that the number of new psychoactive substances increased to 251 by mid-2012, a 50 per cent increase from the 166 reported in 2009. In Asia, new psychoactive substances have been reported in Brunei Darussalam, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The cocaine market seems to be expanding in the emerging economies in Asia. Large seizures in Hong Kong, China, in 2012 may indicate that cocaine traffickers are targeting Asia as a growing market. In 2011, UNODC estimates that Asia accounted for 8 per cent of global cocaine users – a four-fold increase from 2004-2005, when it was 2 per cent. Cocaine seizures – largely driven by Australian quantities – reached new highs in Oceania in 2011.

The *UNODC World Drug Report* is an annual publication that provides an overview of the world’s drug situation in terms of illicit cultivation, production, trafficking, and abuse with the latest data available. It is launched annually on 26 June to mark World Drug Day – the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

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