

Introduction

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. UNODC has approximately 500 staff members worldwide. Its headquarters are in Vienna and it has 21 field offices as well as a liaison office in New York. UNODC relies on voluntary contributions, mainly from governments, for 90 per cent of its budget. The three pillars of the UNODC work programme are:

- Research and analytical work to increase knowledge and understanding of drugs and crime issues and expand the evidence-base for policy and operational decisions;
- Normative work to assist States in the ratification and implementation of the international treaties, the development of domestic legislation on drugs, crime and terrorism, and the provision of secretariat and substantive services to the treaty-based and governing bodies; and
- Field-based technical cooperation projects to enhance the capacity of Member States to counteract illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.

In 1998 the General Assembly gave UNODC the mandate to publish "comprehensive and balanced information about the world drug problem." Since then, the international community has recognized the importance of detailed, factual and objective information to the field of international drug control.

The United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC) has published such assessments annually since 1999. This year UNODC introduces its first two volume edition of the *World Drug Report*, which merges the former *Global Illicit Drug Trends* publication and the World Drug Report. The consolidation of the two reports is designed to increase the breadth of analytical coverage, while maintaining the annual frequency of statistical output. The first volume covers market trends and provides in depth long term trend analysis, the second volume compiles detailed statistics on all of the drug markets. Together they provide the most complete picture yet of the international drug problem.

The aim of the present Report remains the same as previous years: to contribute to annual assessments by presenting supply (production and trafficking) and demand statistics and analysis on the evolution of the global illicit drug problem. However, by presenting a thorough consideration of the status of the world drug situation and through the presentation of long term trends, this year's report goes further than ever in providing an assessment of the world drug situation.

As in previous years, the present Report is based on data obtained primarily from the annual reports questionnaire (ARQ) sent by Governments to UNODC in 2003, supplemented by other sources when necessary and where available. Two of the main limitations herein are: (i) that ARQ reporting is not systematic enough, both in terms of number of countries responding and of content, and (ii) that most countries lack the adequate monitoring systems required to produce reliable, comprehensive and internationally comparable data. National monitoring systems are, however, improving and UNODC has contributed to this process over the last few years. (For more information on data sources and limitations please consult the Methodology section at the end of the report.)