At the twentieth special session of the General Assembly in 1998, States Members agreed to make significant progress towards the control of supply and demand for illicit drugs by the year 2008. They noted that this objective could only be achieved by means of the ‘balanced approach’ (giving demand as much attention as supply), and on the basis of regular assessments of the drug problem. (General Assembly Resolution S-20/2 and S-20/3). The aim of the present report is to contribute to such assessments by presenting supply and demand statistics and analysis on the evolution of the global illicit drug problem.

However, reliable and systematic data to assess the drug problem, and to monitor progress in achieving the goals set by the General Assembly, is not readily available. The present report is based on data obtained primarily from the annual reports questionnaire (ARQ) sent by Governments to UNDCP in 2000, supplemented by other sources when necessary and where available. Two of the main limitations encountered by UNDCP in using ARQ and other sources are: (a) that ARQ reporting is not systematic enough, both in terms of number of countries responding and of content, and (b) that most countries lack the adequate monitoring systems required to produce reliable, comprehensive and internationally comparable data.

The report tries to overcome these limitations by presenting, annually, Estimates of illicit drug Production, Trafficking and Consumption. These statistics form the main body of the report. They are supplemented by a section on Analysis, which focuses on different themes each year. Last year, a chapter in the Analysis section dealt with amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), summarizing the evolution of relevant international drug control activities in that area, and updating trends in their illicit manufacture, trafficking and abuse. This year, the broader issue of Clandestine Synthetic Drugs is addressed as a special theme. It provides an overview of the synthetic drug phenomenon, its intrinsic characteristics, and some of its likely future developments. It complements trend data which can be found in the statistical sections on Estimates. The second special theme which is addressed in the report concentrates on the Main Centres of Illicit Opium Production, and tries to explain why production has reached such high levels in two countries, Afghanistan and Myanmar.

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