



INTERPOL

## 67<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Mid-term Review of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening  
Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to  
Accelerate the Implementation of Our Joint Commitments to Address  
and Counter the World Drug Problem

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### INTERPOL Written Contribution

#### Contents

I.	INTRODUCTION .....	2
II.	RECENT TRENDS .....	4
III.	INTERPOL'S MISSION AND POLICING CAPABILITIES .....	5
IV.	INTERPOL'S GLOBAL DRUGS PROGRAMME .....	6
V.	PROPOSALS FOR THE MID-TERM REVIEW OUTCOME DOCUMENT AND PLEDGE FOR ACTION ...	9

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the Ministerial Declaration on *Strengthening our actions at the national, regional, and international levels to accelerate the implementation of our joint commitments to address and counter the World Drug Problem* outlined 11 challenges related to the world drug problem that the global community must confront to ensure international peace and security.

As the world evolves, so do the threats faced by nations. INTERPOL, as the world's largest international police organization, with 196 Member Countries, plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges and promoting collaboration among law enforcement agencies globally.

The role of INTERPOL in assisting member countries in fulfilling the obligations contained within the Drug Treaties was acknowledged at an early stage. As the 1961 and 1988 Conventions were adopted, the United Nations **Conferences called on State Parties to make best use of INTERPOL's tools and channels in relation to technical assistance and information sharing, to achieve the goals of these Conventions.**

Since then, INTERPOL has been supporting law enforcement worldwide to provide a collective response to the world drug problem; thereby supporting member countries in achieving the commitments made under the Drug Control Conventions.

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### IN FOCUS: INTERPOL IN THE DRUG TREATIES

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- **In 1961, the UN Conference for the Adoption of a Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs** in its **resolution III “Illicit traffickers”** adopted at the same time than the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs “called attention to the *importance of the technical records on international traffickers kept at present by the International Criminal Police Organization - INTERPOL*; and *recommends that these records be completed as far as possible by all parties and be widely used for the circulation of description of the traffickers by that Organization*”. In addition, the UN Conference in its **Resolution I “Technical assistance on narcotic drugs”** welcomed “*the co-operation of the International Criminal Police Organization - INTERPOL in the execution of technical assistance projects*”.
- Later on, the UN Conference which adopted the 1988 Convention against Illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, in its **Resolution I “Exchange of information”** recommended that “*the widest possible use should be made by police authorities of the records and communications system of the International Criminal Police Organization - INTERPOL in achieving the goals of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic In Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*” considering “*the machinery developed by the International Criminal Police Organization - INTERPOL for the timely and efficient exchange of crime investigation information between police authorities on a world-wide basis*”.

Narcotic drug abuse is considered a threat to peace and security, as well as to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Sustainable Development Goals 3 (good health and well-being), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

In this regard, **several resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs have acknowledged INTERPOL's role in countering illicit drug trafficking** and supported increased cooperation between the UN and INTERPOL to effectively address the world drug problem.

This includes *the first UN General Assembly resolution on synthetic drugs ([A/RES/78/131 \(2023\)](#)), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution on Safe handling and disposal of synthetic drugs, their precursors and other chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs ([CND Resolution 66/2 \(2023\)](#)), the UN General Assembly resolution on International cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem ([A/RES/76/188 \(2021\)](#)); and the UN General Assembly resolution on the Cooperation between the United Nations and INTERPOL ([A/RES/77/20 \(2022\)](#))* to name a few.

This written contribution aims to shed light on INTERPOL's perspective regarding the challenges identified in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration. It shall provide substantial insights to inform the preparatory process leading up to 2024 Midterm Review.

In this view, this document will reflect on **five main challenges** as identified in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration:

- 1. MARKETS:** both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying.
- 2. SUPPLY:** the abuse, illicit cultivation and production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as the illicit trafficking in those substances and in precursors, have reached record levels, and that the illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals are on the rise.
- 3. ORGANIZED CRIME:** increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in persons, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and money-laundering and, in some cases, terrorism, including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism, are observed.
- 4. MONEY LAUNDERING:** the value of confiscated proceeds of crime related to money-laundering arising from drug trafficking at the global level remains low; and
- 5. CYBER:** the criminal misuse of information and communications technologies for illicit drug-related activities is increasing.

Further, this contribution will introduce the **INTERPOL's Response Against Illicit Drugs (I-RAID), a six-year Global Drugs Programme** established to assist its membership in tackling drug trafficking and associated criminal activities.

Finally, this contribution shall provide **proposals for the Midterm Review Outcome Document and Member States' Pledge for Action** foreseen at the General Debate of the High-level segment.

## II. RECENT TRENDS

Over the last two years, law enforcement agencies globally saw record seizures of illicit drugs, particularly cocaine and heroin. In 2022, the INTERPOL-coordinated Operation LIONFISH V, which spanned across 22 countries around the world, resulted in a total of 1,357 arrests and 35.5 tons of illicit drugs seized, including 20.2 tons of cocaine and 291 tons of precursor chemicals worth more than 717 million US dollars.

In 2023, Operation TRIGGER IX, demonstrated the **pervasive nature of drug trafficking and its convergence with all other types of illicit trafficking**. Although firearms focused, the operation led to the seizure of more than **203 tons** of drugs and 372 tons of precursor chemicals. This is a prime example of an INTERPOL-coordinated regional operation in the Americas. Another successful example is Operation PANGEA. With 153 participating countries, Operation PANGEA helped seize over 105 million units of counterfeit pharmaceuticals and precursor chemicals over the course of its 14 editions. This led to the creation of **the world's largest database of illicit pharmaceutical seizures**, as well as the analysis of precious strategic and operational intelligence on concealing methods, smuggling routes, procurement trends, and illicit pharmaceutical and chemical precursor manufacturers.

The operation also affirmed findings from the **INTERPOL's 2022 Global Crime Trend Report** on the fact that **the market for synthetic drugs is likely expanding in multiple regions**<sup>1</sup>. Several INTERPOL member countries are also reporting **increasing seizures of fentanyl or other drugs laced with fentanyl**<sup>2</sup>. This is a highly dangerous drug of which trafficking, and consumption is increasing.

**Global cocaine production is on the rise along with heroin and synthetic drugs.** In 2022, the Colombian authorities reported seizures of approximately 671 tons of cocaine worth tens of billions of US dollars on the retail market. Additionally, **Ecuador** seized historic amounts of cocaine totaling 200 tons, along with the Port of Antwerp (Belgium) seizing over 120 tons. In **Southwest Asia**, member countries bordering Afghanistan not only reported record seizures of heroin, but also **methamphetamine and captagon**.

Criminal groups continue to expand their footprint into synthetic drug production. This shift has aided an increase in their profits and expansion into new markets. In **North America**, member countries reported significant seizures of both **methamphetamine and fentanyl**, which is responsible for almost 70% of all fatal overdoses killing 107,000 people in the United States alone. While **Southeast Asia** saw an increase in the production of synthetic drugs to include **ketamine and methamphetamine**.

As international borders become increasingly porous, global abuse and accessibility to drugs have become increasingly widespread. Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) are taking advantage of the situation, destabilizing communities while generating vast profits from the sale of illicit drugs.

Over the years, INTERPOL has gathered more evidence of criminal structures involved in **polycriminal activities**. **Money laundering** as a predicate crime to drug trafficking is increasingly obvious. To optimize their criminal endeavors, criminal networks tend to mutualize their networks, resources and

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<sup>1</sup> INTERPOL Global Crime Trend Report (2022), p. 25

<sup>2</sup> Fentanyl warning following Australia's largest detection of deadly opioid | Australian Federal Police (afp.gov.au)

infrastructures. As such **illegal fishing vessels** are being used to traffic drugs. The same applies to **human trafficking or environmental crime networks** who integrate drug trafficking in their activities. **Illicit firearms and stolen vehicles** are also often used by drug traffickers to perpetrate their trafficking.

Criminal structures operating the current drug scene are as well organized and managed as legitimate multinational companies. Consequently, even when the kingpins are apprehended, the networks remain and adapt with new leaders. Therefore, more **attention needs to be placed on the financial assets of the drug trafficking networks to create serious impact on the structures.**

Furthermore, Drug trafficking organizations use new technologies such as **encrypted communication platforms, advanced GPS tracking and drones** to further their drug business. **Online and social media platforms as well as increased use of postal services to sell illicit narcotics, generate record levels of profits; and sales are being converted into the crypto currency markets.**

### III. INTERPOL'S MISSION AND POLICING CAPABILITIES

INTERPOL is a neutral, intergovernmental organization mandated by its **196 member countries** to **foster international law enforcement cooperation and information exchange globally**. INTERPOL connects law enforcement authorities through a National Central Bureau (NCB) in each member country. As appropriate, INTERPOL also supports governmental and intergovernmental organizations, authorities and services whose mission is to prevent or combat crime – within the limits of the laws existing in the different countries and in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thanks to its **global, secure communication system called I-24/7**, INTERPOL facilitates the exchange of real time information among law enforcement, including through its system of **notices and diffusions**. INTERPOL also manages **19 police databases** containing over 140 million records on wanted individuals, stolen property, weapons, threats, etc. In 2023 alone, these databases were searched by law enforcement across the world over 7.4 billion times.

Coordination of **cross-border operations**, provision of **operational and investigative support, capacity building** to law enforcement, as well as **criminal and threat analysis** are also part of INTERPOL's core functions.

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#### RECENT SUCCESS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION THROUGH INTERPOL'S CHANNELS

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- **INTERPOL RED NOTICE:** A **suspected Albanian drug trafficker** was arrested in Peru on the basis of an INTERPOL Red Notice issued by France in 2022. He was apprehended on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, in Peru at the Jorge Chavez Airport thanks to **the cooperation between France, Peru and the USA** alongside support from INTERPOL.

## IV. INTERPOL'S GLOBAL DRUGS PROGRAMME

To counter drug trafficking sustainably and with maximum impact, INTERPOL has developed a **6-year Global Drugs Programme** which leverages INTERPOL's international policing capabilities, advanced policing tools and expertise **to support member countries to cooperate and address the complex criminal networks contributing to drug trafficking and associated criminal activities**. To attain this objective, the programme adopts a 4-pillar approach:

### **PILLAR 1: Specialized law enforcement operations conducted, leading to increased information sharing and actionable intelligence to member countries**

This pillar aims at fostering international cooperation and information exchange among member countries through the development of intelligence products, such as **operational analysis reports**, as well as offering a coordinated approach to tackle the drug trade and its associated crimes through **INTERPOL-coordinated operations**.

INTERPOL operations and analysis will continue to support member countries to focus on top criminal organizations responsible for the global cocaine trade, including the Balkan and Albanian cartels as well as the heroin, methamphetamine and captagon smuggling organizations across Southwest Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean.

The Global Drug Programme will also help address the significant threat of fentanyl as the global community tries to contain its spread.

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## INTERPOL'S OPERATIONAL AND INVESTIGATIVE SUPPORT TO MEMBER COUNTRIES

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### **POST SEIZURE INVESTIGATIONS:**

- In September 2023, INTERPOL deployed a **support team to Ireland** following the historic seizure of over 2 tons of cocaine. The information collected and subsequently analyzed, further highlighted the expansion of organized crime groups across regions and emphasized the predicate crimes of illicit financial assets and money laundering surrounding the illicit drugs trafficking.
- In March 2023, INTERPOL deployed a **support team to Ecuador**, following the seizure of 8.7 tons of cocaine, to assist with post seizure investigation. The cocaine was concealed in a shipment of bananas destined for Antwerp, Belgium.

## **PILLAR 2: Provision of specialized tools and trainings to enhance the capacity of Member Countries to prevent and counter the illicit trafficking in drugs**

This pillar focuses on training new users and providing refreshers to current users on INTERPOL's tools such as **the RELIEF Database** – *the only global law enforcement database capable of linking drugs seizures at the forensic level through examining the surface of pressed drugs* - and expanding the database to enable case connections to be identified more effectively and rapidly. Moreover, it will strive to build the capacities of member countries in their drug trafficking investigations **through specialized training courses.**

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### IN FOCUS: THE RELIEF DATABASE

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The RELIEF database is a high-tech forensic tool developed by Czech Republic and handed over to INTERPOL for the shared benefit of all its 196 member countries. This new tool allows the comparative analysis of the tool-marks, logos and chemical composition of drug packages for law enforcement to uncover the routes and origin of compressed drug deliveries and shipments.

The RELIEF database comes as a clear demonstration of how law enforcement can leverage new technologies to tackle illicit drug trafficking. It also exemplifies the power of international cooperation - and how one country can use INTERPOL to empower others.

In the last two years, INTERPOL doubled the size of the RELIEF Database which now includes 39 countries. Over that period, the database successfully matched over 253 cases.

## **Pillar 3: Facilitating international cooperation and synergies between partners in the fight against drug trafficking**

This pillar aims at increasing synergies between the Global Drug Programme's activities and results and those conducted by partners, such as through an annual Global Conference. It will seek to build stronger partnerships with global stakeholders, including EUROPOL, the United Nations, the European Union, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors (CARICC), the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), CARICOM, FRONTEX, AFRIPOL, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), MAOC-N, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

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## PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES INVOLVING INTERPOL

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- Project MAYAG, funded by the **Republic of Korea** and implemented by INTERPOL, brings a diverse range of stakeholders into operational activities, including **countries in Asia and the Middle East** which are central in the fight against synthetics drugs trafficking and chemical precursors diversion. This allows INTERPOL to gather a wide range of intelligence on drug trafficking in different areas of the world.
- Projects CRIMJUST and AIRCOP funded by **the European Union** and implemented by INTERPOL in collaboration with **UNODC**, provide an even wider range of stakeholders to support law enforcement efforts against drug trafficking.
- INTERPOL is also an active member of the **Global Coalition against Synthetic Drugs** which aims at combining the efforts of the international community to prevent the production and trafficking of illicit synthetic drugs, identify emerging drug trends and use patterns, and respond to their public health impacts. INTERPOL is planning annual global law enforcement operations in the frame of the Global Coalition over the next years.

### **Pillar 4: Targeting the proceeds of crime through intelligence sharing and global partnerships**

INTERPOL works with member countries to identify and target the organizations responsible for **drug money laundering** which includes both the re-investment of illegal money into additional criminal activity and the profits generated from the sale of illicit drugs. The INTERPOL Drugs Unit partners with INTERPOL's Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Center to target the proceeds of crime and address the intelligence gap through the use of cutting-edge investigative techniques.

INTERPOL established a Financial Crimes and Anti-Corruption Centre in 2022 to serve as global law enforcement hub to collect information and intelligence as well as provide operational support to law enforcement worldwide on financial crimes and corruption matters.

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### TARGETING THE PROCEEDS OF CRIME RELATED TO MONEY-LAUNDERING ARISING FROM DRUG TRAFFICKING THROUGH THE USE OF INTERPOL'S CHANNELS

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On 26 December 2023, Diego Nicolás Maset Alba, a reputed drug kingpin and one of South America's most wanted fugitives, was arrested in Brazil as part of a regional police operation involving INTERPOL National Central Bureaus (NCBs) in Brasilia, La Paz, Asuncion and Montevideo. The suspect had been avoiding arrest for many years by using multiple false identities. He is thought to be a central figure in the trafficking of drugs from South America to Europe and is also linked to several high-profile killings. He was the subject of an INTERPOL Red Notice requested by Paraguay.

This arrest is part of "Operation A Ultranza PY", one of **Paraguay's most extensive operations against organized crime and money laundering** and involving the seizure of assets worth over USD 100 million.



## V. PROPOSALS FOR THE MID-TERM REVIEW OUTCOME DOCUMENT AND PLEDGE FOR ACTION

INTERPOL as the largest intergovernmental police organization, is mandated by 196 member countries to facilitate international law enforcement cooperation and the sharing of critical data on crimes and criminals. For 100 years, it has built invaluable and sustainable cooperation among law enforcement agencies worldwide that has led to countless numbers of criminal networks being disrupted and dismantled.

INTERPOL acknowledges that crime cannot be fought alone. The Organization sees in the 67th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs an opportunity to continue to empower law enforcement agencies of its 196 Member countries with INTERPOL's existing international policing channels and capabilities, advanced policing tools and data to assist them in effectively addressing the complex nature of drug trafficking and the criminal networks behind it.

As such, Member States may elect to consider the following recommendations when drawing up the High-Level Outcome Document to be adopted at the occasion of the 2024 Midterm Review and in their Pledge for Action:

- 1. To call on fostering international law enforcement cooperation through the increased use of INTERPOL's policing tools and secure communication channels to exchange real time information in relation to the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in narcotic drugs.**
2. To foster greater usage of INTERPOL's RELIEF database to enable law enforcement to identify the origin and routes of compressed drug deliveries and shipments through an automated comparative analysis of the tool-marks, logos and chemical compositions of drug packages.
3. To continue to engage in INTERPOL Global and Regional Operations to tackle the illicit trafficking in drugs and use these platforms to strengthen international police cooperation.
4. To encourage Member States, as part of their ongoing investigations, to share intelligence via INTERPOL's channels; and further, to contribute to INTERPOL's analytical files and databases with a view to identify new trends, threats, and criminal organizations involved in the illicit trafficking in drugs.
5. To provide financial support to INTERPOL's Global Drug Programme to assist member countries in combatting drug trafficking globally through advanced policing tools and expertise.