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Commission on Narcotic Drugs**Sixty-eighth session**

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the implementation at the national, regional and international levels of all commitments, as reflected in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, to address and counter the world drug problem**Summary of the second annual open-ended intergovernmental expert group meeting on enhancing and strengthening international and regional cooperation and domestic efforts to address the global synthetic drug problem******I. Introduction**

1. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) hosted the second annual open-ended intergovernmental expert group meeting on enhancing and strengthening international, regional and domestic efforts to address the global synthetic drug problem. The meeting was hosted at the UNODC headquarters in Vienna, Austria on 27 and 28 January 2025.
2. The objective of the meeting was to provide experts from Member States with a platform to engage in a focused technical dialogue that fosters collaboration and the exchange of experiences and best practices in addressing the global synthetic drug problem.
3. The present document presents a summary of the presentations and interventions delivered during the meeting.

* [E/CN.7/2025/1](#).

** This document has not been edited.



II. Organization of the meeting

A. Agenda

4. The agenda for the meeting was structured around four sessions. Each session focused on a sphere of action under the UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy:

(a) Multilateralism: Facilitating science-informed multilateral processes for the identification of strategic, effective, and targeted policy directions and operational activities;

(b) Counternarcotics Interventions: Supporting international operations to disrupt trafficking in synthetic drugs;

(c) Early Warning: Providing a predictive model for emerging threats and increasing the preparedness of Member States to formulate effective responses to prevent crises before they happen;

(d) Health Responses: Promoting and facilitating access to scientific evidence-based quality drug prevention, treatment, and care services, and to ensure access and availability of controlled medicines while preventing their diversion.

5. Member States were provided with a provisional agenda, featuring key priority areas to inform the preparation of interventions and guide discussion within each session.

B. Attendance

6. The meeting was attended by 163 representatives from 67 States: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Tajikistan, Togo, Tunisia, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

III. Summary of the proceedings

A. Opening

7. Chief of the Drugs, Laboratory and Scientific Services Branch (DLSSB), UNODC; and Coordinator of the Synthetic Drug Strategy, Laboratory and Scientific Services (LSS), DLSSB, UNODC delivered opening remarks.

8. The remarks encouraged experts to use the meeting to have an open dialogue on the growing threat of synthetic drugs across the globe, emphasizing UNODC's commitment to facilitating international, regional, and national responses that integrate science, innovation, and evidence-based interventions to the challenges posed by synthetic drugs.

9. The remarks highlighted the importance of leveraging the framework of the UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy, which includes a wide range of technical assistance and capacity building activities, practical resources and guidance provided in the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs, and the launch of several new initiatives, such as the LEADERS fellowship for women in forensic science, capacity building addressing the dismantling of clandestine laboratories and drug profiling,

International Network for Legislation on Drugs (INLOD), Justices United against Synthetics Trafficking (JUST), and Financial Institutions Against Drugs (FIAD).

B. Multilateralism

10. The first session was entitled “Multilateralism and international cooperation: Facilitating science-informed multilateral processes for the identification of strategic, effective and targeted policy directions and operational activities.”

1. Presentation

11. **Drug Policy Officer, DLSSB, UNODC** presented on the importance of addressing synthetic drugs through strong legal and regulatory frameworks, grounded in international conventions, and enhanced international cooperation.

12. The presentation highlighted UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy’s launch of INLOD, a platform for policymakers, legislators, and parliamentarians to strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks. Initial priorities include creating guidance on legislative options, a handbook for assessing national legislation against international conventions and resolutions and fostering collaboration to address emerging threats. INLOD also aims to prepare the next generation of drug policy experts by providing opportunities for engagement and knowledge-sharing.

13. The presentation noted that UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy is conducting a review of national legislation updates from the past five years, focusing on the implementation of international scheduling decisions. This review will identify trends, challenges, and best practices, with tailored support offered to Member States. The presentations added that additional information on resources and guidance on legal and regulatory frameworks are also available in the legal module of the UN Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs.

2. Interventions

14. Interventions were delivered by representatives from: Ghana, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, United States, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, France, Norway, Colombia, Morocco, Togo, Brazil, Algeria, Mexico, Italy, Türkiye, Panama, Peru, and Serbia.

15. **Ghana** emphasized its commitment to addressing synthetic drugs, highlighting challenges such as limited data, weak enforcement, inadequate health services, and rising methamphetamine trafficking. It underscored the importance of international cooperation and credited UNODC for facilitating best practices and technical assistance. Ghana has adopted measures like electronic prescription systems and trend analysis to inform policy. Active in international networks such as the African Union, Ghana’s engagement has shaped its Narcotics Control Commission Act of 2020. Ghana reaffirmed its dedication to multilateral collaboration and learning from other Member States.

16. **The United Arab Emirates** outlined its comprehensive national strategy to address synthetic drugs, focusing on drug use prevention, dismantling criminal networks, and coordinating efforts. The United Arab Emirates emphasized its commitment to scientific research, highlighting the work of the United Arab Emirates Centre for Bio Research and a new project analysing emerging synthetic drugs, which revealed significant variations in composition and potency. Advanced treatment centres in the United Arab Emirates continually adapt programmes to address the effects of synthetic drugs, and a national committee affiliated with the Ministry of Health oversees technical assessments for substance scheduling under national drug laws. The United Arab Emirates reaffirmed its commitment to multilateral collaboration, engaging in international coalitions, sharing information, and adapting strategies to address evolving drug trends. Expressing appreciation for the dialogue,

the United Arab Emirates concluded with a call for continued cooperation to address shared challenges.

17. **Singapore** highlighted its approach to addressing synthetic drugs, emphasizing laws targeting substances with psychoactive effects while ensuring access for medical, forensic, and scientific purposes through a balanced regulatory framework. It underscored the importance of precursor control in deterring illicit manufacturing. Singapore actively exchanges information with foreign counterparts and competent authorities on precursor trade and emerging substances. Singapore acknowledged the collective efforts of stakeholders and Member States in tackling the global synthetic drug threat. Singapore concluded by stressing the importance of shared efforts and sustained international cooperation to combat the transnational challenges of synthetic drugs.

18. **The United States** highlighted the need for robust domestic measures, such as emergency or temporary scheduling, to address the rapidly evolving synthetic drug threat and stressed the importance of expeditiously implementing international scheduling decisions to mitigate public health risks. The United States underscored the role of international and regional organizations in identifying emerging substances and emphasized balancing control measures with ensuring access for legitimate purposes. Drawing from experience, the United States described its proactive approach of conducting research and collaborating with international partners, such as Canada, to gather data on new substances. This approach was successfully applied in 2019 to a synthetic opioid, which was initially controlled domestically before being recommended for international regulation. Following its international scheduling, law enforcement seizures and toxicology cases involving the substance significantly declined, demonstrating the effectiveness of global collaboration and timely action.

19. **The United Kingdom** emphasized the importance of a multilateral approach to addressing synthetic drugs, engaging widely with international partners and organizations such as UNODC and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) to monitor trends and identify emerging substances. Committed to its obligations under international drug conventions, the United Kingdom integrates international scheduling decisions into its domestic drug control framework, guided by the independent Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. Addressing the growing challenge of synthetic opioids, particularly the nitizine class, the United Kingdom recently implemented a generic control on these substances and expressed interest in collaborating with international partners to share best practices on this rapidly evolving issue.

20. **The Russian Federation** highlighted its comprehensive approach to addressing new psychotropic substances, including analysing poisoning and overdose cases, law enforcement seizures, and leveraging international search systems. Efforts are underway to implement oversight measures for these substances before they enter Russian drug markets, resulting in control measures for over 100 substances and their precursors over the past seven years, with plans to regulate 80 more. The Russian Federation emphasized challenges in controlling precursor chemicals that become accessible abroad, noting the difficulty in investigating such cases and the importance of international collaboration to address these issues. The Russian Federation also stressed its robust healthcare response, featuring a nationwide rehabilitation system offering free prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services for individuals with drug addiction. Additionally, the Russian Federation pointed to regional efforts within BRICS, where discussions focused on the growth and trafficking of synthetic drugs, improved production technologies, and the need for better control of precursors and drug lab equipment. This collective position was reflected in the joint statement from the BRICS counternarcotics working group.

21. **France** highlighted its monitoring systems for identifying new psychotropic substances, which involve ground-level seizures by agents and subsequent analysis by customs laboratories. A dedicated department oversees the supervision and circulation of precursors, working to prevent their diversion for illicit purposes,

including the production of new psychoactive substances. France emphasized its active participation in international networks, particularly the European Union's Early Warning System, which facilitates early identification of emerging substances across Member States. On a global level, France noted its engagement in the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats.

22. **Norway** emphasized its comprehensive approach to addressing synthetic drug use, focusing on evidence-based prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and international cooperation in line with the United Nations' strategies and initiatives. Norway highlighted its collaboration with various organizations, which has significantly shaped policy, clinical practice, and research initiatives. Through government-funded partnerships, Norway is conducting randomized trials on substitution treatment for non-opioid dependencies, including benzodiazepines. These efforts aim to set new clinical practice standards both domestically and globally.

23. **Colombia** emphasized the importance of aligning international drug control systems with public health objectives, expressing concern that the current system disproportionately focuses on criminalization rather than addressing the public health challenges posed by synthetic drugs. Colombia called for the UNODC and the World Health Organization (WHO) to take a more proactive role in scheduling and classifying substances in a way that reflects public health needs. Colombia highlighted the role of civil society in implementing drug strategies, citing the country's extensive experience in involving civil society in drug impact analysis and programme implementation. Colombia also emphasized the need for drug control measures to be coordinated with the broader United Nations system and focused on human rights, including the rights of women, children, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descended communities.

24. **Morocco** outlined its robust legal framework for drug control, emphasizing the alignment of domestic laws with international drug control treaties. The country is updating its 2002 law on the importation, trade, and use of scheduled substances to better align with current international standards. Morocco also highlighted the Ministry of Health's role in regulating the import and export of scheduled substances, including cannabis, and ensuring compliance with international conventions. Morocco's National Drugs Committee, established in 1977, oversees the implementation of drug control measures to combat illicit trafficking and production. Morocco requires permits for the importation of psychoactive medications and chemical precursors and applies these measures to substances like tramadol and ketamine, ensuring their import/export is authorized by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

25. **Togo** highlighted its commitment to international drug control conventions and its domestic legal framework. Togo faces significant challenges, particularly the trafficking of tramadol and amphetamine-based substances, as well as the manufacturing of methamphetamines in the West African sub-region. Togo noted that porous borders and the presence of illicit labs complicate efforts to control drug trafficking. Togo emphasized the need for real-time information sharing among origin, transit, and destination countries to effectively combat drug trafficking. It also stressed the importance of regional cooperation to address these issues.

26. **Brazil** shared its concerns about the increasing presence of synthetic drugs in the country. While plant-based drugs like marijuana and cocaine remain the most used, synthetic drugs such as stimulants (MDMA, ecstasy), amphetamines, and synthetic cannabinoids have seen a troubling rise. Brazil also noted the rapid spread of synthetic opioids like nitazenes. Brazil is grappling with the challenge of adapting its legal framework to keep pace with the fast-evolving nature of synthetic drug development, which creates gaps for illicit markets to exploit. Brazil emphasized the need for collective international action to tackle the growing threat of synthetic drugs, ensuring a safer future for all.

27. **Algeria** expressed its respect for international conventions and treaties addressing synthetic drugs. Algeria has a laboratory dedicated to closely monitoring new developments and shares information with entities such as UNODC. Algeria highlighted concerns about prevalent substances, including tramadol.

28. **Mexico** emphasized the challenge of adapting national legislation to address the rapid emergence of new substances, noting the importance of the CND considering and adopting the methodology to group drugs together. Mexico highlighted the need for real-time access to information, which would allow authorities to effectively monitor the movement of substances and precursors.

29. **Italy** highlighted its focus on combating illicit assets linked to drug trafficking, emphasizing the G7's role in this effort approach. Italy has prioritized detecting and confiscating proceeds from drug trafficking, examining key trends in organized crime, and identifying synthetic drugs as a significant threat. Despite this, Italy's experience differs from the global and European trend, as seizures of synthetic drugs have been declining, and traditional drugs like cannabis and cocaine account for most drug seizures. Italy maintains a global approach to drug control, involving law enforcement, health authorities, and judicial bodies, and has established a national early warning system for better data sharing and coordination.

30. **Türkiye** shared its approach to countering synthetic drugs, focusing on the legal framework for New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). Since 2015, Türkiye has implemented a "generic classification" system that ensures NPS are regulated under specific codes before entering the country. This system classifies synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones, and similar substances by their molecular formulas, making them illegal even if their names or molecular structures change. From 2008 to 2024, 1,045 NPS have been classified, with synthetic cannabinoids representing nearly a third of all cases. Additionally, Türkiye has increased penalties for drug trafficking involving synthetic drugs. Türkiye is committed to strengthening its efforts to counter synthetic drugs and is open to international cooperation.

31. **Panama** expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in meeting. While Panama explained that there is not a significant market for synthetic substances within the country itself, it is increasingly becoming a transit point, particularly for methamphetamines and ecstasy, often found in courier packages. Panama emphasized the importance of multilateralism to counter trafficking of synthetic drugs and highlighted the challenges of differing regulations across regions. Panama called for the standardization of legislation, procedures, and lists of synthetic substances and precursors, while also advocating for flexibility in information exchange to support early detection and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

32. **Peru** reported an increase in synthetic drug seizures, including ketamine and fentanyl, despite the limited domestic consumption of these substances. While Peru prioritizes controlling drugs like cocaine, it is actively addressing the emerging threat of synthetic opioids and new psychoactive substances. Peru is also involved in regional initiatives to monitor precursor chemicals and is a member of the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats. Additionally, in June 2023, Peru signed a cooperation agreement with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction to strengthen early warning systems and share data on new substances. Peru remains committed to countering synthetic drugs through national and international collaboration.

33. **Serbia** expressed appreciation for the support and guidance provided by UNODC and emphasized the growing focus on synthetic drug within its national strategy. Serbia highlighted strong cooperation with neighbouring countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and Montenegro. Serbia also noted its collaboration with European bodies on new drugs and the importance of their expertise in shaping national strategies. Serbia is currently working on a strategy to address new synthetic drugs, supported by evidence-based research from its partnerships with the national forensic laboratories.

C. Counternarcotics interventions

34. The second session was titled “Strengthening counternarcotic capacity: supporting international operations to disrupt trafficking in synthetic drugs.”

1. Presentation

35. **Scientific Affairs Officer, LSS, DLSSB, UNODC** presented on the tools developed by LSS, particularly manuals and guidelines to address the safe handling and disposal of chemicals used in the manufacture of synthetic drugs. Among the tools highlighted in the presentation was the Clandestine Laboratory Investigation Platform (CLIP), an interactive application designed to support law enforcement and forensic personnel in the investigation and understanding of the clandestine manufacture of substances under international control. CLIP consolidates information from UNODC’s scientific manuals and guidelines addressing manufacture, hazards, and disposal.

2. Interventions

36. Interventions were delivered by representatives from Kazakhstan, Brazil, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Mexico, Ghana, Colombia, United States, France, Japan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Russian Federation, Morocco, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Togo, and China.

37. **Kazakhstan** emphasized the challenges posed by increasing drug-related crimes and synthetic drug production, noting the detection of 95 clandestine laboratories and the use of innovative technologies, such as drones and wastewater analysis, to map synthetic drug activity. Kazakhstan highlighted its collaboration with UNODC, particularly in the establishment of a precursor traffic monitoring centre to enhance its capabilities in identifying and disrupting illicit precursor transactions. Kazakhstan also highlighted the importance of partnerships with legal precursor users to differentiate between licit and illicit transactions.

38. **Brazil** raised concerns about the emergence of highly potent synthetic opioids, nitazines, in drug seizures and overdoses. Brazil emphasized the need for international cooperation to address this threat, including expanding access to reversal agents like naloxone. Brazil acknowledged the importance of robust enforcement measures and reiterated its willingness to collaborate globally. Brazil urged the inclusion of nitazines in international discussions and requested continued support from the UNODC on this topic.

39. **The United Kingdom** highlighted its nationally coordinated operational response to synthetic opioids, including nitazines and fentanyl, involving law enforcement, health partners, and academic experts. The United Kingdom reported advancements in legislative measures, improved health and safety protocols, and drug profiling capabilities. The United Kingdom acknowledged UNODC’s efforts and called for strengthened international collaboration, particularly on tackling the online promotion of synthetic drugs.

40. **South Africa** reaffirmed its commitment to combating illicit drug production, trafficking, and abuse through enhanced domestic, regional, and international cooperation. It commended UNODC programmes, such as the Container Control Programme and AIRCOP, for their contributions to capacity-building. South Africa stressed the importance of information exchange, police cooperation, and judicial collaboration, highlighting a trilateral initiative with Tanzania and Mozambique that has yielded significant drug seizures along trafficking routes.

41. **Mexico** underscored the role of UNODC in training law enforcement officers, citing a recent training delivered by LSS, which provided specialized protective equipment and enhanced understanding of the risks associated with handling synthetic drugs. Mexico called for expanded access to such training and equipment for agents working in high-risk areas like the Pacific port of Manzanillo. Mexico also advocated

for private sector engagement to address the licit production of precursors and emphasized early detection to prevent the proliferation of synthetic drugs.

42. **Ghana** expressed concern over weak border controls and the trafficking of synthetic drugs into the country. The country highlighted its use of international platforms to monitor precursor chemicals and dismantle clandestine laboratories. Ghana acknowledged gaps in training, safety protocols, and inter-agency collaboration but emphasized its efforts to foster partnerships through stakeholder engagement and public-private partnerships. Ghana thanked UNODC for its ongoing support in addressing these challenges.

43. **Colombia** emphasized the importance of technical capacity and training to address emerging synthetic drug challenges. Colombia operates an early warning system through its National Drugs Observatory, which coordinates seven public institutions, including public health, academia, and law enforcement. Colombia highlighted its use of state-of-the-art forensic technology in its Anti-Drugs Chemical Research Laboratory. International collaboration, including participation in the Esmeralda Plus programme and the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats, has strengthened its forensic and enforcement capacities.

44. **The United States** highlighted the need for harmonized regulatory approaches to facilitate joint investigations and the importance of “Know Your Customer” principles in industries vulnerable to precursor misuse, such as chemical and logistics sectors. The United States commended the use of international tools for real-time data sharing and global coordination on emerging threats. The United States called for strengthened public-private partnerships to prevent the exploitation of supply chains by traffickers.

45. **France** emphasized its dismantling of clandestine laboratories and the scheduling of the nitazine family in 2024. France commended UNODC’s initiatives and highlighted its national catch-all clause that enables the seizure of unscheduled precursors. France stressed the importance of partnerships with the private sector, overseen by a dedicated national mission, and the role of collaboration between law enforcement, customs, and scientists in addressing synthetic drugs. Collaborative research with universities on synthetic substances was also noted.

46. **Japan** highlighted its use of advanced data analysis and capacity-building efforts to disrupt synthetic drug trafficking and production, despite limited domestic manufacturing. Japan collaborates across agencies, including police, customs, and health ministries, and works closely with private sector stakeholders, such as logistics and telecommunications companies, to intercept drugs during transport. Japan underscored its commitment to strengthening both domestic and international cooperation and emphasized learning from global experiences.

47. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** acknowledged UNODC’s role in addressing synthetic drug threats and emphasized its extensive border management efforts along the Balkan route and eastern borders to counter methamphetamine trafficking from neighbouring regions. Despite sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran has enhanced its law enforcement capabilities. The Islamic Republic of Iran called on the international community and UNODC to enhance support for regional initiatives to counter synthetic drug manufacturing and trafficking.

48. **The Russian Federation** reported on the dismantling of clandestine laboratories. The Russian Federation emphasized the increasing prevalence of synthetic drugs, such as methadone, which is often mixed with other substances, leading to overdoses. The Russian Federation noted the importance of health-sector collaboration, forensic technologies, and preventive measures to address synthetic drug-related challenges.

49. **Morocco** reiterated its adherence to international drug conventions and highlighted its integrated policy to reduce drug supply and demand. While no clandestine laboratories have been detected, Morocco’s law enforcement agencies have seized over 6.5 million psychotropic tablets between 2020 and 2023. Morocco

acknowledged its collaboration with UNODC, including participation in interdiction programmes and the Global Coalition against Synthetic Drug Threats, and called for increased capacity-building and international cooperation to combat synthetic drug trafficking.

50. **Singapore** outlined its proactive approach to counter synthetic drugs through stringent anti-drug legislation, audits of precursor chemical traders, and strong border controls. Singapore emphasized its comprehensive preventive drug education programmes, which engage students at all education levels through curriculum integration, advocacy projects, and student-led initiatives. Collaboration with stakeholders and targeted outreach campaigns were highlighted as key strategies to raise awareness of the harms associated with synthetic drugs.

51. **The United Arab Emirates** reported that while no clandestine laboratories have been detected domestically, measures are in place to monitor precursors and prevent their diversion to illicit markets. The United Arab Emirates highlighted its proactive collaboration with customs and border control agencies to intercept equipment and precursors that could be used for synthetic drug production. The United Arab Emirates acknowledged the importance of international cooperation and expertise-sharing in addressing synthetic drug challenges.

52. **Togo** expressed concerns about the inability to fully identify seized substances due to limited laboratory capacities. Togo called for technical assistance from UNODC and the broader international community to analyse such substances and facilitate precise identification, which would aid law enforcement and judicial processes. Togo emphasized the need for stronger scientific mechanisms and international collaboration to overcome challenges related to unidentified substances.

53. **Panama** shared experiences with the detection of controlled substances in transit, such as fentanyl, brought into the country by passengers or packages. Panama underscored the role of regulatory laboratories under the Ministry of Health in analysing synthetic drugs. Panama sought international assistance to address gaps in detecting, regulating, and preventing the entry of synthetic drugs.

54. **Türkiye** highlighted the complexities of methamphetamine production, noting the adaptability of production methods using various chemicals, medicines, or plant derivatives. Türkiye stressed the need for scientific research to trace the origins of production methods and determine effective strategies for combating methamphetamine manufacturing. Türkiye emphasized the value of enhanced scientific collaboration to address these challenges.

55. **China** reaffirmed its commitment to supporting international cooperation on synthetic drugs. Despite the timing of the meeting during the Lunar New Year, China emphasized the importance of collective efforts to tackle drug-related issues and pledged ongoing support for UNODC's initiatives.

D. Early warning

56. The third session was titled “Early Warning on emerging synthetic drug threats: Providing a predictive model for emerging threats and increasing the preparedness of Member States to formulate effective responses to prevent crises before they happen”.

1. Presentations

57. **Scientific Affairs Officer (Early Warning), LSS, DLSSB, UNODC** presented on early warning systems, emphasizing their role in monitoring emerging synthetic drug threats through a multidisciplinary network.

58. The presentation highlighted the importance of forensic and toxicology laboratories in collecting and sharing real-time data on drug detections from post-mortem investigations, emergency department cases, and drug samples. Through initiatives like the International Collaborative Exercises (ICE) programme, UNODC

supports laboratories worldwide in strengthening analytical capacities, ensuring high-quality drug identification, and improving data reporting. The presentation underscored the need for continuous improvements in laboratory capabilities, including advanced detection techniques and inter-laboratory quality assurance, to keep pace with the evolving drug landscape.

59. The presentation showcased the UNODC Early EWA and its public and restricted-access portals, which offer real-time data to Member States for evidence-informed responses, including enhanced surveillance, laboratory capacity building, public health alerts, antidote distribution, clinical training, and regulatory measures. The presentation urged countries to actively contribute data to the EWA to strengthen global drug monitoring efforts and improve collective responses to synthetic drug threats.

2. Interventions

60. Interventions were delivered by representatives from the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye, Brazil, Canada, the United States, Ghana, the United Kingdom, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Colombia, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Oman, Kazakhstan, Italy.

61. **The United Arab Emirates** highlighted its experience with early warning systems through its National Observatory for Drug Control, led by the Ministry of the Interior. This system integrates reliable national and international data sources, including notifications from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other institutions. The United Arab Emirates emphasized the importance of forensic testing at certified national laboratories, ensuring timely detection and response to new synthetic substances. A notable example was the early identification of “kush”, a drug containing cannabis, hashish, synthetic cannabinoids, and hashish analogues, which was detected through national and international alerts. The United Arab Emirates stressed the role of international cooperation in strengthening its early warning system and expressed readiness to share its expertise with other Member States. The United Arab Emirates also highlighted its recent focus on advancing wastewater analysis and drug profiling as part of their strategy to monitor drug consumption trends.

62. **Türkiye** highlighted the efforts of the Gendarmerie Forensic Department in countering synthetic drugs through scientific research, chemical profiling, and international data sharing. The department analyses drug samples to determine their origin, aligning with the 1961 Single Convention and national legislation. Through the Turkish Drug Addiction Monitoring Centre, findings on new psychoactive substances are also shared with relevant authorities. Türkiye emphasized the importance of impurity profiling, or chemical fingerprinting, in tracing production methods and trafficking routes. Türkiye reaffirmed its commitment to international cooperation in tackling synthetic drug challenges.

63. **Brazil** shared its experience in developing an early warning system, which was initially introduced in 2021 as a pilot project and later institutionalized in 2023 by the Ministry of Justice. The system aims to enhance the detection of new psychoactive substances and emerging drug-related threats while optimizing the sharing of information. It is designed to be accessible to public institutions, including health authorities, to help prevent public health risks. The system is managed by a technical committee coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, with representatives from various institutions like the federal police. Substances detected through the system are incorporated into Brazil’s National Drug Scheduling Framework, which has expanded to include new psychoactive substances.

64. **Canada** highlighted its active participation in early warning systems as a key element in addressing synthetic drugs. Canada engages in various regional, national, and international early warning networks, including collaboration with UNODC. In November, Canada launched the Canadian Drug and Substance Watch, a new surveillance tool designed to monitor, predict, and respond to new psychoactive substances. This platform integrates multiple data sources, including law enforcement

seizures, online monitoring, and wastewater surveillance, to provide a comprehensive picture of the illegal drug supply across Canada. The dashboard is publicly available, helping raise awareness and inform public health and safety responses.

65. **The United States** emphasized the importance of using international and regional early warning systems, along with integrating data from law enforcement and public health to identify trends and coordinate responses. The focus is on real-time reporting and leveraging novel testing strategies to better understand emerging substances. Best practices in the United States include gathering data on individuals who overdose, analysing the substances involved, and examining the circumstances surrounding the overdoses. Comprehensive post-mortem toxicology testing is conducted for all suspected fatal overdoses to determine the substances causing the deaths.

66. **Ghana** highlighted its participation in the UNODC ICE programme, where the Ghana Police Forensic Lab and the Ghana Standards Authority receive unknown drug test samples for analysis each year. Section 107 of the Ghana Narcotics Control Act mandates the establishment of a forensic lab for drug testing in relation to investigations and prosecutions. The Commission is also tasked with training officers in forensic drug testing. Additionally, Ghana is seeking sponsorship from strategic partners to support these efforts.

67. **The United Kingdom** shared updates on its enhanced early warning system, which includes improved surveillance of drug harms across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Key initiatives include collaboration with coroners and toxicology departments for quicker reporting on drug-related deaths, as well as a new Sentinel surveillance system for opioid users. The United Kingdom also tracks naloxone usage and ensures rapid forensic analysis of synthetic opioid cases within 48 hours. Additionally, the United Kingdom is expanding wastewater analysis for synthetic substances and collaborates with local partners on public health alerts. Lastly, the United Kingdom continuously monitors drug precursor chemicals and will take action to control those with potential risks for misuse or diversion.

68. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** discussed the rising demand for new psychoactive substances, attributed to a decline in traditional drug production. The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasized the need for information sharing and coordinated actions among national agencies to address these substances effectively. The Islamic Republic of Iran highlighted the importance of having a robust legislative framework for monitoring and controlling new substances, and encouraged the support for international early warning systems, particularly the UNODC EWA. The Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its commitment to controlling drugs under international conventions and monitoring the diversion of chemical precursors.

69. **France** outlined its early warning system, managed by the French Office for Drugs and Drug Dependence. Key initiatives include the synthesis programme, which deploys field collectors to monitor drug use and identify new psychoactive substances, and the drug signalling system, which issues alerts on emerging substances. France also operates a trend monitoring programme across eight cities to track psychotropic substance use, feeding data into the regional European networks. These efforts are supported by the coordination of multiple actors, including the Prime Minister's office, to ensure effective data management and policy implementation.

70. **Colombia** shared its experience with early warning systems, highlighting its 2013 initiative aimed at mitigating the impact of emerging substances. Colombia's system focuses on early detection, risk assessment, and generating reliable information. A key lesson learned has been the importance of intersectoral cooperation among various institutions, including scientific research centres, universities, and public entities, to provide a comprehensive view of new substances. Colombia also emphasized the role of civil society in substance analysis. Additionally, Colombia noted that strengthening laboratory capacities and enhancing coordination with regional networks are vital for improving response capabilities in drug control. Colombia continues to invest in science and technology but

acknowledged the need for further infrastructure improvements for analysis and protection.

71. **The Russian Federation** outlined its network of expert criminalistic and toxicological laboratories, which cover all regions of the country. These laboratories aim to meet modern standards for detecting synthetic drugs and their metabolites. The Russian Federation has maintained a sustainable early warning system for psychoactive substances, which includes medical information collection from high-risk professions, periodic medical investigations for young people, and reviews of workers' health. Additionally, the system incorporates intersectoral analysis of overdose cases, including fatal outcomes, and is supported by national scientific centres. The Russian Federation also has outreach campaigns that target civil society, to raise awareness about drug use and overdose prevention.

72. **Saudi Arabia** highlighted its drug control laboratory, established in 2009, which serves as both a reference point and a research facility for analysing synthetic drugs. In 2017, Saudi Arabia implemented an early warning system to detect and monitor substances such as pregabalin, which were diverted from medical use and found in the possession of cannabis users. Saudi Arabia also tracks the rise of new substances, such as "bonanza", and collaborates with healthcare professionals to assess potential addiction risks. Saudi Arabia has a national scheduling system, as well as a local schedule for substances of emerging concern. Additionally, Saudi Arabia utilizes a national electronic prescription system to track and prevent the diversion of controlled substances.

73. **Algeria** shared that while synthetic drug issues are not a significant concern at the moment, the country has learned from the experiences of others. Algeria has adopted a strategy for 2023–2026 to address synthetic drugs, including legislation to criminalize their use. The country's Customs Authority plays a key role in preventing drug trafficking, and security agencies work proactively to prevent local drug production. Algeria is enhancing its forensic laboratory capabilities with the latest technologies for drug detection. To address the rise of drug promotion online, Algeria has involved its cybercrime agency to monitor and counter these activities.

74. **Oman** highlighted its focus on developing toxicology and forensic laboratories to international standards, equipping them with the latest technologies to analyse synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals. Oman has prioritized training staff to collaborate with international organizations to further build capacity. Oman emphasized the importance of data collection and scientific analysis in shaping evidence-based drug policies. Oman also employs predictive intelligence methods for early detection and response to emerging synthetic drug trends. Recently, Oman identified a new addiction pattern involving the misuse of eye drops to enhance the effects of Lyrica. Oman continues to work closely with international partners to improve early detection systems and is committed to enhancing global cooperation in countering synthetic drugs.

75. **Kazakhstan** shared its approach to early warning and drug laboratories, noting that its methods align closely with international practices. The country has recently updated its equipment, which is now being used across all regions to analyse drug precursors and perform wastewater analysis. Kazakhstan also utilizes analytical and targeting centres for drug-related data.

76. **Italy** shared its experience in building a national early warning system for drugs, which has been in place since 2009. The system focuses on monitoring the emergence and spread of new substances, identifying associated risks, and supporting regulatory actions. It promotes rapid information exchange through an online platform that allows collaborative centres to share data within the country. Key organizations involved include the Ministry of Health, law enforcement, universities, and healthcare institutions.

E. Health responses

77. The fourth session was titled “Promote science informed health responses: Promoting and facilitating access to scientific evidence-based quality drug prevention, treatment and care services and to ensure access and availability of controlled medicines while preventing their diversion”.

1. Presentation

78. **Chief of the Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Section (PTRS), DLSSB, UNODC** presented on strategies to address stigma and opioid overdose prevention. The presentation emphasized the need for non-stigmatizing attitudes to improve access to healthcare, highlighting strategies such as education, facilitated contact, quality health services, and policy development.

79. On opioid overdose prevention, the presentation underscored the effectiveness of opioid agonist therapy (OAT) and naloxone distribution, noting that UNODC-WHO’s “Stop Overdose Safely” (SOS) initiative successfully trained 14,000 individuals across Central Asia and Ukraine.

80. The presentation concluded by reaffirming UNODC’s commitment to supporting Member States in expanding stigma reduction initiatives, overdose prevention programmes, and access to evidence-based treatment.

2. Interventions

81. Interventions were delivered by the United States, Norway, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, Colombia, South Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Singapore, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Oman, Kazakhstan, Dominican Republic, Ghana.

82. The **United States** urged Member States to strengthen evidence-based treatment and recovery services, ensure addiction practitioner training in line with international standards, and address barriers to care. The United States highlighted investments in Naloxone distribution, continuity of care for co-occurring conditions, and community-based prevention strategies. It emphasized economic support measures, including housing and health insurance, and advocated for early childhood education and positive parenting programmes to prevent substance use.

83. **Norway** presented its governmental proposal for the substance use field, which prioritizes prevention, harm reduction, and treatment. Key initiatives include a national overdose prevention plan, a take-home Naloxone programme, OAT and a pilot heroin-assisted treatment. Norway also emphasized ongoing research into medication-assisted treatment for stimulant and benzodiazepine dependence and welcomed international collaboration in these areas. Norway specifically highlighted multicentre studies on the impact of extended-release naltrexone, which has yielded positive results, prompting discussion on its potential integration into the national treatment system.

84. **The Russian Federation** outlined its comprehensive drug rehabilitation model, which includes medical, psychological, and social rehabilitation. The national prevention and treatment framework, approved in 2024, ensures standardized, evidence-based care across all regions. The Russian Federation highlighted its rehabilitation programmes for mothers and children, noting over 40,000 families have benefited. It emphasized the role of NGOs, social workers, and research centres in expanding treatment access.

85. **The United Kingdom** reaffirmed its commitment to a stigma-free drug treatment and recovery system. The United Kingdom is piloting an anti-stigma programme in healthcare and expanding Naloxone access, enabling police officers to administer the life-saving drug. The United Kingdom emphasized multi-sector collaboration, including work with clinicians, academic experts, and policymakers to ensure long-term support for people with substance use disorders.

86. **Colombia** endorsed evidence-based harm reduction and highlighted its comprehensive drug strategy, which includes syringe programmes, opioid substitution therapy, and mobile health units. Colombia operates drug consumption rooms, among the first in Latin America, and emphasized gender-sensitive policies, such as alternatives to imprisonment for women involved in minor drug offenses. It underscored the importance of international cooperation, particularly in seized asset reinvestment for drug treatment programmes. Colombia reiterated the need for seized asset reinvestment in drug treatment and harm reduction, emphasizing its success in funding public and civil society initiatives.

87. **South Africa** reaffirmed its human rights-based approach and commitment to non-stigmatization in substance use treatment. It is implementing universal prevention and treatment curricula, embedding gender-sensitive and LGBTQ-inclusive services, and expanding specialized programmes for women with substance use disorders.

88. **Morocco** outlined its national addiction strategy, which integrates prevention, harm reduction, and treatment within its mental health framework. It operates opioid substitution therapy, syringe exchange programmes, and psychosocial support services. Morocco has expanded treatment centres, with several specialized facilities and addiction treatment units in prisons. It continues to strengthen health professional training and overdose prevention initiatives.

89. **Algeria** emphasized its preventive approach, prioritizing public awareness campaigns, social media monitoring, treatment for pregnant women and newborns, and strict penalties for drug promotion.

90. **Singapore** reaffirmed its abstinence-based approach, opposing harm reduction. It focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration, including mandatory treatment for drug users without criminal records and post-treatment supervision. Singapore invests in preventive drug education in schools and engages the community in reintegration efforts.

91. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** detailed its comprehensive treatment and harm reduction programmes, including opioid substitution therapy, needle exchange programmes, and mobile health services. The Islamic Republic of Iran operates 7,200 treatment clinics, integrating psychiatric and addiction services. The UNODC-designated regional treatment centre in the Islamic Republic of Iran facilitates international knowledge exchange.

92. **Oman** highlighted its National Drug Strategy, which includes youth prevention campaigns, an anonymous electronic treatment platform, and rehabilitation programmes supported by UNODC. Oman provides integrated health services, including private sector partnerships for rehabilitation and reintegration.

93. **Kazakhstan** promotes non-stigmatizing attitudes through public campaigns and media engagement. It collaborates with NGOs and UNODC to expand rehabilitation centres, anonymous support groups, and vocational training for people in recovery. Kazakhstan called for increased international cooperation in education, treatment standardization, and funding for NGOs.

94. **Dominican Republic** highlighted its state-funded drug prevention and treatment programmes, emphasizing that seized drug assets are reinvested into prevention and rehabilitation efforts.

95. **Ghana** outlined its stigma reduction strategy, which includes public education campaigns, legal reforms, and training for healthcare professionals. It has introduced harm reduction services, such as needle exchange and opioid substitution therapy, with support from international partners. Ghana emphasized the importance of regional and international collaboration to address the synthetic drug crisis.

96. **Colombia** reiterated the need for seized asset reinvestment in drug treatment and harm reduction, emphasizing its success in funding public and civil society initiatives.

IV. Closing of the meeting

97. Participants and presenters were thanked for their attendance and valuable contributions.

98. Participants were notified that a summary of the meeting would be submitted as a Conference Room Paper for Session 68 of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

99. Participants were informed that recordings and presentations of the meeting would be made accessible on the UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy's website (<https://syntheticdrugs.unodc.org/> and <https://syntheticdrugs.unodc.org/syntheticdrugs/en/egm2025.html>), and that live recordings of all four sessions are available on United Nations Web TV (<https://webtv.un.org/>) in all six official United Nations languages.
