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Current situation with respect to regional and subregional cooperation in addressing and countering the world drug problem

Country report: Türkiye***

I. Fight against drug trafficking in Türkiye

Türkiye is located on the Balkan route, which continues to be the most important route in terms of trafficking of opiates originating from Afghanistan. It is also situated in the reverse direction of the Balkan route used for trafficking of synthetic drugs and precursors from Europe. Türkiye thus continues to be affected by intensive flows of trafficking of drugs and precursors.

Türkiye has also been affected by cocaine trafficking flows both as a target and as a transit country coming from South America since 2018. Therefore, there has been a significant increase in the seizure of annual amounts of cocaine since then. In 2021, the amount of cocaine seizures reached a record level of 2.8 tons, marking almost a 45 per cent increase compared to the previous year. In addition, the number of cocaine seizures slightly decreased in 2022, with 2.3 tons of cocaine seized by national law enforcement agencies.

Historically, Türkiye has always been a key country in terms of seizure of heroin trafficking originating from Afghanistan. However, a sharp decrease in the amount of heroin seizures was observed in 2022, and 8 tons of heroin were seized by all national law enforcement agencies, marking a 64 per cent decrease compared to the previous year.

Türkiye has always been an important country in the seizure of precursors of heroin, particularly acetic anhydride originating from Central and Western Europe as well. According to the INCB 2022 Precursors Report, in 2021, the amount of acetic anhydride seized in Türkiye accounted for more than 60 per cent of the amount of the globally seized substance. 35.253 litres were thus seized in 2021, marking a 3-fold increase compared to the previous year.

On the other hand, the amount of acetic anhydride seizures sharply decreased, with 13,373 litres of acetic anhydride seized in 2022. Furthermore, there has been an

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increase in the amount and variety of precursors as well as alternative chemicals used in the production of illicit drugs in Türkiye in recent years.

Seizures at ports and airports in Türkiye as part of ongoing investigations suggest that Türkiye is beginning to be used as a transit country in trafficking of other precursors, as is the case with acetic anhydride. Through a controlled delivery operation in 2021, approximately 4.3 tons of methyl alpha-phenyl acetoacetate (MAPA) and benzyl methyl ketone (BMK-P2P), the precursors for the production of amphetamine and methamphetamine were seized in Istanbul Airport en route from China to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In another controlled delivery operation, 1.1 tons of BMK was seized in Istanbul Airport, en route from China to North Macedonia.

Turkish authorities, in addition to fundamental precursors, seize alternative, designer, and masking agent substances that are not internationally regulated. For example, more than 21 tons of acetyl chloride and 4 tons of benzyl chloride were seized in a container onboard a cargo ship that had arrived in Aliaga Port in Izmir from China. In recent years, there has been an increase in the seizures of acetyl chloride at the global level, especially of shipments targeting heroin producing regions.

As has been globally witnessed, Türkiye has also been exposed to intensive methamphetamine trafficking. Since 2019, the amount of methamphetamine seizures thus started to increase.

1,042 kg and 4,162 kg methamphetamine were seized in 2019 and 2020, respectively. Significant increases continued in the following years and reached a record level of more than 16 tons. Methamphetamine was mostly seized in Istanbul as well as in Turkish provinces bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although for the moment Türkiye appears to be a target country of methamphetamine trafficking, there have been no significant indicators demonstrating that the Balkan route is being used to traffic methamphetamine to Europe via Türkiye.

As in most parts of the world, cannabis is still the most preferred drug among drug users in Türkiye. 65 tons and 63.2 tons of cannabis products (excluding skunk) were seized in 2021 and 2022, respectively. In addition, 8.6 tons of skunk were seized in 2022.

Türkiye continues to be a final destination for “ecstasy” trafficking originating from Europe, particularly from the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Belgium. 8.454,308 and 5 million “ecstasy” pills were seized in 2021 and 2022, respectively, marking a 60 per cent decrease.

Between 2015 and 2022, 60 international operations (controlled delivery and judicial cooperation) were conducted by the Türkiye National Police-Counter Narcotics Department in cooperation with 23 countries. Through these operations, 61 tons of cannabis products, 3.13 tons of heroin, 7.3 tons of cocaine, 11 kg of opium, 504,100 “ecstasy” tablets, 1 kg of methamphetamine and 9 million captagon tablets were seized.

As in the past, Türkiye has remained a key country in terms of Captagon trafficking en route to the Middle East and Gulf countries. After a sharp decrease in 2020, the amount of Captagon seizures started to significantly increase and reached a record level of around 24 million tablets. Given the large amount of Captagon seizures by Greek and Italian authorities in the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas in recent years, the traffickers are estimated to start using alternative routes for Captagon trafficking.

With a view to introducing a new vision and understanding in law enforcement training, Counter-Narcotics Training Academy (NEA) was established under Türkiye National Police (TNP) Counter Narcotics Department (CND) in 2018. NEA contributes, not only to the training of the staff of TNP Counter Narcotics Department, but also to the staff of other national and international law enforcement agencies in the field of fight against drugs. 19.115 national law enforcement officers have so far been trained under 489 national training programmes. Ever since its establishment,
598 law enforcement officers from 44 countries have also been trained through 40 training programmes.

PKK/KCK, a designated terrorist organization by the European Union, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, among others, continues to be involved in drug trafficking to finance its illegal activities. As drug trafficking continues to be a big concern and a global threat, PKK/KCK terrorist organization’s key role in drug trafficking should also be acknowledged by all countries.

A total of 695 operations were thus conducted against PKK/KCK’s illicit drug activities from 1980 to 2021. Through these operations; 351 tons of cannabis products, 5,452 kg of heroin, 71 kg of opium, 4,315 kg of morphine, 9.4 kg of cocaine, 140.698 “ecstasy” tablets, 1,962 captagon tablets, 28.348 litres of acetic anhydride and 400,899,259 cannabis plants were seized and 2,701 suspects were detained.

Türkiye Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (TUBİM), which operates under CND department, has been established as a national focal point for the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), tasked with monitoring drug use and the supply and demand for drugs, as well as reporting the data to EMCDDA, other institutions and organizations such as UNODC and INCB. TUBİM is also responsible for the preparation of the Annual Türkiye Drug Report, which covers all types of data on the fight against drugs and drug abuse.

The National Drug Policy and Action Plan for the 2018–2023 period is currently in effect, and the Ministry of Health is in charge of maintaining its secretariat as well as coordinating many drug-related initiatives.

The Early Warning System (EWS) National Working Group was established under TUBİM and managed by TUBİM to identify and assess new drugs. If the Working Group of the EWS deems it necessary, work is undertaken to bring any addictive substance under legal control in accordance with Law 2313 on Control of Drugs.

From 2008 to 2022, a total of 1,021 substances were included in the provisions of Article 19 of the Law on Control of Drugs No. 2313. 432 of these substances were directly included in the Law through Generic Classification, while 599 of them were included in the Law by individual listings.