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Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East

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Current situation with respect to regional and subregional cooperation

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Report of the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an analysis of the situation concerning drugs, crime and terrorism in the Near and Middle East and describes the activities conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in that region since the fifty-fourth session of the Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East, held in September 2019.

2. According to the *World Drug Report 2019*, the world's single largest heroin trafficking pathway continues to be the Balkan route, which sees drugs smuggled from, inter alia, Afghanistan through Iran (Islamic Republic of), Turkey and the Balkan countries and on to various destinations in Western and Central Europe. Seizures made by countries along the Balkan route accounted for 47 per cent of the global quantities of heroin and morphine seized outside Afghanistan in 2017. Furthermore, at the global level, the amount of heroin seized remained relatively stable, at between 72 and 78 tons, in the period 2008–2013, but has increased since then, reaching almost 102 tons in 2017. Since 2006, the six countries seizing the largest amounts (Afghanistan, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan, Turkey and the United States of America) accounted for between 63 and 84 per cent of the amounts seized globally. The amounts seized in those countries heavily influence global trends.

3. The Near and Middle East has reported high levels of amphetamine seizures in recent years. Reports continue to refer predominantly to tablets bearing the “captagon” logo. The nature of the psychoactive ingredients in such tablets is not always clear, but reports suggest that amphetamine trafficked from South-Eastern Europe is the main ingredient in “captagon” tablets found in the consumer markets of

* Available only in Arabic, English and Russian, which are the working languages of the subsidiary body.

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the Middle East (notably Saudi Arabia), frequently alongside caffeine. Laboratories may also exist in countries along this route, possibly carrying out the conversion into tablet form. Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey serve as important transit points. Moreover, Turkey is a prominent transit country for heroin. In North Africa, large seizures of cannabis herb from Morocco have been reported.

4. In the Near and Middle East, UNODC promotes integrated strategies to address trafficking in and consumption of illicit drugs, in particular opiates originating in Afghanistan, but also amphetamine-type stimulants and tramadol, which are affecting the whole region. In addition to strengthening national capacities and promoting regional cooperation, UNODC aims in particular to link initiatives and platforms for regional and subregional cooperation in order to address trafficking in heroin from Afghanistan and precursor chemicals and impede the emerging sea-based drug-trafficking routes towards the European market.

II. Regional and subregional cooperation

5. Regional cooperation continues to be recognized as the most viable way to effectively tackle illicit drug cultivation, trafficking and use, and the related political, security, development and socioeconomic harm in Afghanistan, Western and Central Asia and beyond. The UNODC Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries provides a harmonized and integrated approach to strengthening the implementation of the interregional drug control approach and the “Networking the Networks” initiative. The interventions under the Regional Programme are carried out at the regional and interregional levels, while taking into account and aligning efforts with the Programme for Central Asia (2015–2020) and the country programmes for Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan.

6. The record levels of production and cultivation create multiple challenges both inside the producing countries and outside, including increased insurgency, the funding of terrorist groups and the availability of more high-quality, low-cost heroin in consumer markets. Moreover, an expanding illicit economy has permeated rural societies in Afghanistan, increased the opium dependency of communities, further constrained the development of the licit economy and further fuelled corruption.

7. Since its inception in 2007, the Triangular Initiative has served as a cornerstone of the regional approach to drug control. It is supported by the Paris Pact initiative, the UNODC Country Offices in Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan and the Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, which encompass a range of programmes designed, inter alia, to reduce poppy cultivation, trafficking and drug abuse.

8. The Triangular Initiative is aimed at putting in place strategic and tactical responses for combating trafficking in opiate and illicit precursors to and from Afghanistan through confidence-building measures, information exchange and operational activities among Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. Regional cooperation mechanisms under the initiative address, inter alia: the enhancement of the regional responses through information-sharing; planning and conducting drug-interdiction operations; and the establishment of border liaison offices. UNODC provides technical support for the Initiative and builds the operational capacity of regional counterparts in counter-narcotics authorities by supporting the placement of permanent liaison officers at the Joint Planning Cell established in Tehran in 2009; assists the countries in establishing border liaison offices; and brings together the three Member States at senior officials meetings and ministerial meetings every year.

9. The regional working groups on precursors, forensics and law enforcement training established under the framework of the Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries facilitated the regional exchange of information on illicit drugs and precursors. The following operations were conducted: Operation Reflex (for the identification and interception of new psychoactive substances), Operation

Substitute (for countering trafficking in precursor chemicals) and counter-narcotics Operations AKT-DLO (Afghanistan-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Drug Liaison Officers, under the Afghanistan-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan initiative) and TI-LO (Triangular Initiative Liaison Officers, under the framework of the Triangular Initiative). Furthermore, information-sharing under the framework of the precursor case meetings facilitated the conduct of regional and international backtracking investigations that yielded significant results, including seizures. Regional workshops enabled countries to discuss emerging threats and good practices in responding to drug trafficking, illicit financial flows, trafficking in persons and the increasing use of the Internet for criminal purposes. The operational capacities of law enforcement agencies and forensic laboratories were strengthened through training and the provision of equipment. An inter-agency asset recovery network for Western and Central Asia was established as a result of the regional workshops on corruption and asset recovery supported by the Regional Programme. In addition, the Programme continued to conduct specialized training for counter-narcotics officers in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

10. Countries continued to share their experiences on drug prevention and treatment and HIV prevention among vulnerable members of society under the framework of the Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, with a view to strengthening networks and mutual support in that area. The Family and School Together programme and the Strengthening Families Programme for drug use prevention, aimed at protecting children across the region and strengthening the capacity of families and schools to address potential risks, were further developed and expanded. As a result of support provided by the Regional Programme, countries increased their capacity to deliver scientific evidence-based drug use disorder treatment and care services.

11. The Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries continued to cooperate with relevant organizations, agencies and frameworks, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), relevant United Nations agencies and major bilateral projects. The One UNODC Concerted Approach Interconnecting Europe with West and Central Asia coordinated closely with both the Paris Pact initiative and the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, to which UNODC is an official observer. UNODC activities build synergies between the two initiatives, both of which play an important role in addressing the drug problem. On 22 July 2019, UNODC and the Government of Afghanistan organized the Joint Regional Conference on Counter-Terrorism and Narcotics under the framework of the counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism confidence-building measures of the Istanbul Process, in Nur-Sultan. Member States discussed mechanisms for regional cooperation and coordination and prioritized activities under the confidence-building measures aimed at countering illicit drug trafficking, financial flows and the financing of terrorism.

12. The Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries also supports countries with the implementation of evidence-based interventions to counter the production of, trafficking in and illicit use of controlled substances, including by conducting research and technical studies on interlinkages among the drug problem, socioeconomic factors and wider concerns about human security, and by providing training to relevant authorities to strengthen their capacity to collect and analyse data.

III. Paris Pact initiative

13. Comprising 58 countries and 23 organizations, the Paris Pact initiative is a partnership responsible for defining counter-narcotics priorities and implementing

measures to combat opiate trafficking along the major routes, in line with the Vienna Declaration¹ and based on the principle of common and shared responsibility.

14. The Paris Pact global programme, established by UNODC on behalf of the partnership, facilitates the intergovernmental process of dialogue of the initiative on opiates at the expert and policy levels. The fourth phase of the programme is currently under way.

15. A meeting of the expert working group of the Paris Pact initiative on preventing the diversion of precursor chemicals, hosted by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, took place in Shanghai from 26 to 28 November 2019. Leading practitioners from Paris Pact partner countries and organizations reviewed existing gaps and challenges, as well as prospective actions in the areas related to precursors. Participants in the meeting continued to take stock of the Paris Pact recommendations adopted under pillar III of the Vienna Declaration since the beginning of phase IV, focusing on the identification and implementation of the priority recommendations related to each thematic area of the Declaration. Relevant regional and international organizations were called upon to play an active role in the coordination, review and implementation of the identified priority recommendations.

16. The network of research and liaison officers, serving as the primary points of contact in the field for the Paris Pact, continued to submit reports, which reflected major developments in areas relevant to the Pact in line with the four pillars of the Vienna Declaration, and to facilitate the implementation of other UNODC programmes covering a variety of cross-cutting issues. Assistance was also provided to Member States on the completion of the UNODC global surveys.

17. To strengthen national, regional and international data on drug trafficking, the Paris Pact initiative research and liaison officers located in UNODC offices in countries along drug trafficking routes in Western and Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe continued to contribute to the content of the Drugs Monitoring Platform.

IV. Cooperation in Afghanistan

18. In 2019, the law enforcement authorities of Afghanistan conducted a total of 3,661 counter-narcotics operations, leading to the seizure of 2,990 kg of heroin, 6,903 kg of morphine, 33,611 kg of opium, 1,251 kg of methamphetamine, 609,224 kg of hashish, 37,168 kg of cannabis, 197,698 kg of poppy seeds, 48,221 MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) K-tablets, 176,993 kg of solid precursor chemicals and 83,003 l of liquid precursor chemicals. A total of 95 heroin manufacturing laboratories and 1 methamphetamine laboratory were dismantled, while 30 drug stockpiles were destroyed.

19. UNODC supported, mentored and equipped the mobile detection teams of the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan in the Provinces of Badakhshan, Baghlan, Herat, Kabul, Nangarhar and Nimroz. They are now being used as an effective tool in executing intelligence-led operations. In 2019, the teams seized a total of 331 kg of heroin, 2,722 kg of opium, 3,574 kg of hashish, 94 kg of methamphetamine, 2,862 MDMA K-tablets, 103 l of liquid precursor chemicals and 185 kg of solid precursor chemicals. Those cases led to the arrest of 633 suspects.

20. UNODC provided support and mentorship to enhance the capacity and capability of counterparts in analysing narcotics and precursor samples for referral to judicial institutes for prosecution. In 2019, The Forensic Laboratory of the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan analysed a total of 8,254 samples relating to 3,556 cases.

¹ The Vienna Declaration is the outcome document of the Third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact Partners on Combating Illicit Traffic in Opiates Originating in Afghanistan, held on 16 February 2012.

21. Regular support and mentorship were also provided by UNODC to the Precursor Control Unit of the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan in the Provinces of Badakhshan, Balkh, Farah, Faryab, Herat, Hilmand, Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Nimroz, Paktiya and Takhar. The provision of specialized trainings and equipment enabled the Unit to conduct intelligence-led operations and backtracking investigations. In 2019, the Unit actively participated in 30 counter-narcotics operations in coordination with the intelligence units of the Counter-Narcotics Police. As a result, 19 suspects were arrested, 13 vehicles seized and 28 drug manufacturing laboratories dismantled. The following precursor chemicals were seized during the operations: acetic anhydride (1,525 l), sulphuric acid (45,075 l), hydrochloric acid (1,380 l), ammonium chloride (27,320 kg), carbon (205 kg), sodium hydroxide (500 kg), calcium oxide (13 kg), sodium carbonate (6 kg), iodine (600 kg), pseudoephedrine (40 kg) and ephedrine (510 kg).

22. UNODC established airport interdiction units at Hamid Karzai International Airport and Kandahar International Airport that are now operational and used as an effective tool to identify and arrest drug swallows and smugglers operating through air routes to international destinations. The unit at Hamid Karzai International Airport was also successful in conducting investigations and operations outside the airport, targeting criminal networks and government employees involved in cases at the airport, and actively participating in controlled deliveries organized by the intelligence units of the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan.

23. In 2019, the following was achieved by UNODC-supported units:

(a) The airport interdiction unit at Hamid Karzai International Airport conducted 150 operations targeting drug swallows and smugglers intending to traffic controlled substances to international destinations, mainly New Delhi, with a few attempts targeting Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. These operations resulted in the arrest of 185 male and 10 female drug swallows and smugglers and the seizure of 203 kg of heroin, 17 kg of methamphetamine, 25 kg of hashish and one firearm (a pistol). The unit also confiscated \$541,660 worth of cash in various currencies and seized 989 g of raw gold. Furthermore, the unit conducted follow-up investigations into those cases, resulting in three operations taking place outside the airport. During those operations, the unit arrested three members of criminal networks, three police officers and one member of the National Directorate for Security;

(b) The airport interdiction unit at Kandahar International Airport conducted 107 operations targeting drug swallows and smugglers intending to smuggle controlled substances to international destinations, mainly New Delhi. Those operations resulted in the arrest of 157 drug swallows and smugglers and the seizure of 85 kg of heroin, 3 kg of methamphetamine and 6 l of chemicals.

24. UNODC supported the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan in establishing a canine unit in Kabul under the trilateral cooperation among Japan, the Russian Federation and UNODC, which will enhance the capability of the Counter-Narcotics Police to conduct operations.

25. The UNODC country programme for Afghanistan for the period 2016–2019 increased assistance at the provincial level; supported the Government in creating sustainable alternative livelihoods for opium poppy farmers and in expanding health care, drug demand reduction and HIV prevention efforts; and enhanced the capacity of the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan to conduct related research and analysis.

26. Since 2017, the UNODC Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism has been working together with Afghanistan to enhance its anti-money-laundering and combating financing of terrorism capabilities.

27. UNODC has a comprehensive programme designed to strengthen the country's vital anti-money-laundering and combating financing of terrorism framework,

focusing, at the request of the Government, on the areas of greatest risk, including: (a) investigating and disrupting financing networks of terrorist and organized crime groups; (b) detecting, investigating and prosecuting money-laundering, corruption and other economic crimes; (c) combating the illegal flow of cash out of and into the country; and (d) improving the supervision of banks and money or value transfer services.

28. UNODC continued to assist the Government in addressing the priorities identified in its recent national risk assessment and will assist the country as it demonstrates the effectiveness of its risk-based anti-money-laundering and combating financing of terrorism regime, in particular under the country's forthcoming fourth round of mutual evaluation of the Financial Action Task Force, in 2023.

29. In addition, UNODC supported the revision of the National Alternative Livelihood Policy, with the number of ministries signatories to the Policy increasing from 6 to 13. Support was also provided to the Ministry of Public Health in the development of drug and HIV-related strategies, policies and guidelines, such as the national drug demand reduction policy for the period 2019–2023, the national strategic plan for the control of AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and hepatitis for the period 2021–2025 and psychosocial and recovery management guidelines and protocols.

V. Cooperation in Pakistan

30. The country programme for Pakistan for the period 2016–2020 has a total budget of \$77 million and is composed of three subprogrammes: (a) countering illicit trafficking and improving border management; (b) criminal justice and legal reforms; and (c) drug demand reduction, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. Another UNODC project, entitled “Pakistan's Action to Counter-Terrorism”, is being implemented with the support of the European Union. Through the country programme, UNODC provides and facilitates platforms for the Government of Pakistan to organize various regional and international forums and participate in other multilateral cooperation initiatives. The UNODC Country Office in Pakistan works closely with the Government and the national law enforcement agencies, as well as the foreign law enforcement community in Islamabad, to promote the rule of law in the country. The Country Office actively supports efforts to enhance the technical and operational capacities of the country's law enforcement officials at the international level, in particular in the areas of countering illicit trafficking and improving border management; criminal justice and legal reforms; and drug demand reduction, HIV prevention and the treatment and rehabilitation of people living with HIV.

31. In November 2019, the UNODC Country Office in Pakistan supported the High-level Conference between Afghanistan and Pakistan entitled “Facilitating trade while interdicting unwanted flows”, hosted in Tokyo by the Government of Japan. The aim of the Conference was to promote mutual trust, confidence and operational cooperation among the counterpart ministries and law enforcement agencies of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Senior officials from the two countries discussed three thematic areas: (a) trafficking in drugs and precursor chemicals; (b) trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants; and (c) the smuggling of commercial goods and contraband items, analysing current and emerging challenges, sharing good practices and taking stock of the recommendations stemming from the eight technical workshops facilitated by the Country Office between 2013 and 2018. Participants recommended an action plan promoting regional cooperation against various transnational criminal elements and their nexus, which generated an illegal economy that could potentially fuel instability and terrorism. A draft joint statement was agreed and submitted for adoption to the respective national authorities.

32. In collaboration with the Ministries of Narcotics Control, National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, and Federal Education and Professional Training, UNODC is building capacity among professionals working in the field of

drug use disorder treatment and drug prevention with regard to the scientific and evidence-based universal treatment and universal prevention curricula.

33. In collaboration with the Ministry of Narcotics Control and provincial health departments, UNODC is implementing a pilot project on drug use disorder treatment interventions in rural settings, with a view to improving access to drug treatment services. The pilot project is focused on strengthening both the capacity and mobilization of community resources and the participation of communities in the continuum of care in rural settings.

VI. Cooperation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

34. According to the annual report for 2019 of the Drug Control Headquarters of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2,319 urban, rural and border areas operations were conducted, leading to the dismantling of 1,886 criminal groups; the seizure of 17.4 tons of heroin, 18.2 tons of morphine, 656 tons of opium, 74 tons of hashish, 13.6 tons of amphetamine-type stimulants and 800 firearms and weapons of various types; and 250,000 arrests. The seizure figures illustrate the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in combating the flow of drugs and the transit of heroin and morphine to other destinations.

35. The UNODC Country Partnership Programme in the Islamic Republic of Iran (2015–2019) supported law enforcement mechanisms and operational capacities aimed at promoting drugs and precursors control capacities, including through the provision of equipment, the conduct of specialized law enforcement training activities and the provision of drug samples. Moreover, UNODC facilitated active engagement of the Islamic Republic of Iran in drug control forums and events at the regional and international levels.

36. According to the annual report for 2019 of the Drug Control Headquarters, drug prevention and cultural activities were conducted for various social groups and in different settings, including families, school and university students and workers. A total of 252 drop-in centres, 399 outreach teams, 90 shelters and 13 mobile teams provided harm reduction and HIV treatment and care services to drug users in the country.

37. On 14 October 2019, a memorandum of understanding was signed between UNODC and the Drug Control Headquarters, by which the Iranian National Centre for Addiction Studies in Tehran was officially designated as the regional capacity-building and research centre for evidence-based drug dependence treatment and care.

38. Furthermore, UNODC introduced for the first time the Strong Families Programme to the Iranian authorities and civil society, including non-governmental organizations. Under the Programme, six training workshops and training-of-trainers sessions were held for 67 managers, supervisors, evaluators, data collectors and experts from several government agencies and civil society organizations. Family skills training was also provided to 152 Iranian and Afghan families living in the country.

VII. Cooperation in Central Asia

39. On 2 and 3 May 2019, Uzbekistan hosted in Tashkent the eleventh ministerial meeting of the States parties to the memorandum of understanding on subregional drug control cooperation, to discuss drug control in the region and beyond and to identify priorities for cooperation in addressing drug abuse, drug trafficking and related transnational organized crime. The Declaration on Strengthening of Cooperation in Countering the Illicit Trafficking of Drugs and Precursors, and the Abuse of Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was adopted to further strengthen the joint commitment to addressing drug trafficking and drug abuse. In the Declaration,

Member States expressed concern about the high levels of illicit cultivation and production of opiates in Afghanistan, which posed a threat both to the region and to countries beyond, and required enhanced regional cooperation and taking comprehensive measures to counter the trafficking in opiates originating in Afghanistan and their precursors at the regional and international levels.

40. The States parties also welcomed in the Declaration the achievements of the UNODC regional initiatives implemented in partnership with the Central Asian States. The UNODC Programme for Central Asia (2015–2020) represents the overarching strategic framework under which UNODC provides support to the countries in the region in implementing a balanced, comprehensive and evidence-based approach to the drug problem. In close cooperation with national drug control agencies, UNODC supports amendments to national legislation on drug control, national operational capacities on drug law enforcement and capacities of competent authorities in maintaining the legal turnover of controlled narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors under the ratified United Nations conventions. The Programme has four subprogrammes under the following thematic areas: (a) countering transnational organized crime and illicit drug trafficking and preventing terrorism; (b) criminal justice, crime prevention and integrity; (c) drug prevention, treatment and reintegration and HIV prevention; and (d) research and trend analysis. UNODC is working on the development of the next cycle of the Programme, for 2021–2025, in consultation with national stakeholders.

41. UNODC initiatives strengthen both national inter-agency coordination and regional cross-border cooperation by establishing port control units, border outposts and inter-agency mobile teams in Central Asian States. The UNODC-supported Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors serves as the information and coordination platform for countering trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors.

42. UNODC continued its support to the Government of Uzbekistan in strengthening the inter-agency mobile teams established in 2018. The establishment of those teams resulted in significantly increased inter-agency cooperation and coordination in countering drug trafficking and allowed for more effective joint operations among relevant agencies. In the coming years, UNODC plans to increase the number of team offices from 6 to 13, to cover all regions of Uzbekistan. The teams will also start to address money-laundering, illicit financial flows and the financing of terrorism.

43. Through the initiative on drug law enforcement systems for criminal intelligence collection, analysis and exchange and pilot intelligence-led policing, UNODC enhances the skills and knowledge of law enforcement officers with regard to intelligence gathering and information management to support ongoing investigations by creating and providing analytical reports. In 2019, the intelligence-led policing concept was introduced in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and enabled law enforcement officers and analysts to draw on their respective strengths and share intelligence products to identify hotspots, repeated offenders, threats and risks. Intelligence-led policing complements community policing, which is aimed at building trust in the police and developing communication between the police and the public.

44. In 2019, UNODC delivered technical assistance on different aspects of countering the production of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances by promoting regional cooperation in addressing the problem caused by those substances and the use of the darknet for drug trafficking.

45. As part of the “Support for drugs control in Kyrgyzstan” initiative implemented within the Programme for Central Asia (2015–2020), UNODC initiated the deployment of drug liaison officers in neighbouring countries, which strengthened cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of Kyrgyzstan and neighbouring countries, leading to joint counter-narcotics operations. A total of 16,279 kg of drugs

were seized by the law enforcement agencies of Kyrgyzstan in 2018, including 66.58 kg of heroin, 187 kg of hashish and 10,420 kg of cannabis. UNODC support in enhancing intensive operative and analytical work of the counter-narcotics officers resulted in two major operations in 2019: on 4 August, 44.8 kg of heroin destined for the European Union were seized in the Jalal-Abad region; and on 10 August, more than 13 kg of heroin were seized in Bishkek.

46. UNODC support in strengthening the institutional and operational capacity of the Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan led to the seizure of 292 kg of drugs in 2019, including 142 kg of hashish and cannabis, 76 kg of opium and 67 kg of heroin. Three joint international operations were conducted, (one in cooperation with Afghanistan and two with the Russian Federation), resulting in the seizure of 53 kg of heroin.

47. The Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre is a regional multilateral platform designed to counter drug trafficking and transnational organized crime in the region. At the global level, UNODC supported intelligence-sharing and cooperation between the Centre and neighbouring regions through the Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, the South-East European Law Enforcement Centre, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, among others.

48. In 2019, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre facilitated and participated in a number of regional counter-narcotics operations, such as Operation Kanal of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and Operations Pautina, Reflex and Substitute of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The operations were successfully implemented by the competent national authorities and resulted in the seizure of controlled substances, precursors and firearms and the detention of members of transnational drug trafficking groups. Their implementation allowed the Centre to improve institutional links with the two aforementioned organizations and to use their capacity in the implementation of operational initiatives actively. In the field of intelligence analysis, the Centre continued to exchange operative information with the competent authorities of Member States and national, regional and international counterparts.

49. UNODC continued its support for the 15 operational border liaison offices in the region, which have been operating in geographically remote units of border control police in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan since 2010, through capacity-building and the provision of technical assistance and expert advice. All capacity development activities were aimed at enhancing cross-border communication and intelligence-sharing to enable countries to detect and intercept smuggling, including that of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals, while facilitating legitimate international trade. UNODC is working on establishing four additional border liaison offices, two of which are to be located on the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and two on the border between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The activities within the border cooperation component of the Programme for Central Asia (2015–2020) facilitated the conduct of a series of joint operations to counter drug trafficking and violations of other customs and border regulations, which resulted in seizures of more than 22,750 kg of cannabis, 54.5 kg of narcotic drugs, 3,060 packs of counterfeit cigarettes, one firearm, 148 units of service cartridge and 1,645 l of precursor chemicals.

50. UNODC facilitated the establishment of the Interregional Network of Customs Authorities and Port Control Units between Afghanistan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan under the framework of the global Container Control Programme, which aims at strengthening technical cooperation among Member States in the region in combating drug trafficking and other criminal activities, while facilitating legitimate trade.

51. In 2019, UNODC facilitated regional cooperation and action on the prevention of drug use in the region and supported policy and decision makers in gaining knowledge and skills for the development of comprehensive evidence-based

prevention programmes. UNODC developed the capacities of the regional drug prevention professionals by introducing the *International Standards on Drug Use Prevention* and evidence-based cost-effective family skills training programmes, such as the Strengthening Families Programme for children of 10 to 14 years of age (SFP 10–14) and the Strong Families Programme. In 2019, SFP 10–14 was successfully implemented in the five countries of the region, reaching some 44,000 family members through more than 1,700 facilitators.

VIII. Cooperation in Turkey

52. The partnership between UNODC and Turkey continued to play an important role in South-Eastern Europe and in Western and Central Asia.

53. Turkey remains an important transit country between Europe and the Middle East. It also represents a large consumer market. Located on the Balkan route, it is a key transit point for illicit drugs, such as heroin transported from Afghanistan to Europe, sometimes in exchange for acetic anhydride or synthetic drugs. Although traditional trafficking methods by land, sea and air dominate in Turkey, an increase in the use of postal packages has been noticed, in particular for new psychoactive substances. Cannabis products, originating primarily in Morocco and the Western Balkans, are the most frequently seized drugs in Turkey. Domestic cannabis cultivation has also been reported, but it is rarely trafficked outside the country.² Authorities in Turkey continued to seize large amounts of opiates and hashish in the country, and the Government remains committed to upholding its international drug control obligations.

54. The Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organized Crime provides advanced training to law enforcement professionals from Turkey and its neighbouring States, including the personnel of their national law enforcement agencies and those from South-Eastern Europe and Western and Central Asia. The Academy is also a significant contributor to the training projects led by international organizations and institutions, including UNODC, OSCE, the International Secretariat of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Economic Cooperation Organization. In 2019, Turkey announced the operationalization of the Counter-Narcotics Training Academy, which provides training at the national, regional and international levels. The Academy builds the capacity in all relevant institutions of qualified personnel with technical knowledge and equipment to counter drug-related crime.

55. Turkey supported the work of UNODC in South-Eastern Europe with regular capacity-building activities taking place in the Academy premises in Ankara, as well as through the participation by national experts in UNODC activities in the South-Eastern European region and wider coordination and partnership at the regional and international levels.

56. A national anti-drug strategy for the period 2018–2023 was adopted in Turkey in 2018. The strategy and action plan were developed and endorsed in conjunction with a range of key stakeholders and are based on the two pillars of “drug supply reduction” and “drug demand reduction” and the two transversal themes of “coordination and communication” and “monitoring and evaluation”. In addition to overall aims and objectives for the strategy, key actions are defined for each pillar, alongside the parties responsible for implementation, targets and indicators.³

57. Turkey continued its engagement in the Western Balkans and actively supported regional cooperation through bilateral agreements and strategic partnerships. Turkey

² European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, “Turkey: country drug report 2019” (June 2019).

³ Ibid.

also continued to support the stability of the region through the South-East European Cooperation Process.

IX. Cooperation in the Arab States

58. In the Middle East and North Africa, UNODC continued to implement activities under the framework of the Regional Programme for the Arab States to Prevent and Combat Crime, Terrorism and Health Threats and Strengthen Criminal Justice Systems in line with International Human Rights Standards (2016–2021). Cooperation between UNODC and the six Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the General Secretariat of the Council also continued to be enhanced through the UNODC strategic partnership, endorsed in conjunction with the Regional Programme and informed by the specific challenges, available resources and common institutional characteristics of the six countries.

59. In close partnership with the League of Arab States and the 18 Arab countries covered under the Regional Programme, UNODC organized the fourth annual Meeting of the Steering and Follow-up Committee of the Regional Programme. The meeting was held in Cairo in November 2019 and attended by representatives of the ministries of foreign affairs, health, interior and justice. Participants reviewed achievements and explored ways to facilitate further cooperation, especially in the area of countering organized crime, including combating drug trafficking and enhancing drug use prevention and treatment. During the meeting, Member States renewed their commitment to their partnership with UNODC and agreed upon a set of priorities, including: (a) to continue to strengthen legislative frameworks and regional mechanisms to address the challenges posed by transnational organized crime; (b) to support the implementation of initiatives aimed at securing land, air and sea borders from all forms of trafficking; and (c) to support front-line investigators active at borders and central authorities by enhancing their technical and operational capacities with a view to dismantling illicit drug trafficking networks and facilitating the regional exchange of information. Member States also committed themselves to encouraging the systematic collection and analysis of data related to cases of trafficking in drugs, arms and precursors in order to better identify new trends and guide regional efforts to prevent those threats.

60. In August 2019, UNODC launched a new project, in cooperation with the European Union and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, to support integrated border management in Jordan. UNODC will focus on: (a) enhancing the operational capacities of front-line agencies at land, air and sea borders to detect and identify suspicious passengers and cargo; (b) enhancing the capacities of border and central investigation agencies in terms of specialized investigation techniques and criminal intelligence analysis; and (c) increasing and strengthening inter-agency cooperation at the national level and regional and international cooperation. In this context, UNODC, together with the International Centre, conducted an assessment of: (a) the institutional capacities of agencies operating at border crossing points; (b) available training material; and (c) available services to facilitate trade and the movement of cargo and passengers at each border crossing point. Following the assessment, UNODC and the Centre produced a comprehensive report, including an analysis of the results and needs and recommendations, including on the way forward. Building on the results of the report, UNODC, together with the national authorities, identified priority border crossing points to be supported under the project and developed a workplan of activities to be implemented during 2020.

61. UNODC provided Jordan with six precursor identification kits and six drug identification kits for the port control unit at the port of Aqabah, the air cargo control unit at Queen Alia International Airport and the border control unit at the Karamah land border. UNODC also delivered technical capacity-building to officers at the units with a specific focus on cargo profiling and selection as well as the inspection of counterfeit and falsified medicines. Important seizures of illicit drugs were made in Jordan as a result of the assistance provided. In addition, UNODC continued to

enhance capacities in several other Middle Eastern and North African countries, namely, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen, to counter trafficking and fiscal evasion and to prevent the use of their ports for criminal activities, including terrorism.

62. UNODC provided strategic advice and delivered capacity-building assistance to national customs, police, military and port authorities, private sector actors and the port control units on, inter alia: (a) risk analysis; (b) cargo profiling, selection and inspection, with a focus on concealments; (c) chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive materials and weapons, and counterfeit medicines and goods; and (d) strategic trade and export control. UNODC also supported the newly established port control units by refurbishing their offices and procuring furniture, computing equipment and basic search and inspection tools, as well as drug and chemical test kits. Exchange visits were carried out between countries to share knowledge and good practices and to enhance international cooperation. The training events organized in 2019 with a focus on mentoring and terrorism prevention were facilitated by three trainers from different customs agencies of the Middle East and North Africa Region. UNODC support resulted in significant seizures of illicit drugs and medicines and strategic and counterfeit goods, the adjudication of commercial fraud cases in Jordan and the seizure of “captagon” precursors in Lebanon.

63. In 2019, UNODC also started supporting the Yemen Coast Guard. A training course on vessel boarding, search and seizure, including in relation to weapons of mass destruction and chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons, was implemented in July 2019 for 15 officials from various units within the Coast Guard. A strengthened Coast Guard will be empowered to exert control over the country’s territorial waters by better responding to transnational crime, such as trafficking in firearms, drugs and persons, the smuggling of migrants, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and piracy, thereby increasing socioeconomic and political stability.

64. Furthermore, UNODC continued to support countries in better detecting and intercepting suspicious and high-risk passengers and suspicious cargo in order to counter criminal activities, including drug trafficking. In 2019, the first Joint Airport Interdiction Task Force in the Middle East and North Africa Region became fully operational at Queen Alia International Airport, in Amman. The Task Force consists of officers from immigration, customs, the general intelligence service, the borders and residency department and the police and its specialized units (anti-narcotics and counter-terrorism), as well as the INTERPOL National Central Bureau. The Queen Alia International Airport Joint Airport Interdiction Task Force supported cooperation between law enforcement agencies and to promote a common intelligence-based approach, thereby optimizing the respective competencies and mandates of the agencies, which results in more effective border control.

65. Accordingly, UNODC trained 197 front-line officers at international airports in Algeria, Jordan, Iraq and Morocco by means of a series of national training activities, regional workshops, study visits and joint operations on tools and techniques for the identification of suspicious passengers, including through: (a) the analysis of data provided by airlines; (b) profiling and behavioural detection; and (c) search and interviewing techniques.

66. To further strengthen the exchange of trends, threats and good practices, UNODC organized, in cooperation with the World Customs Organization and INTERPOL, a workshop on the detection and interdiction of cash couriers in June 2019. The workshop brought together airport front-line officers and representatives from the financial investigation units of Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and the State of Palestine to discuss the illicit transportation of funds and its exploitation for criminal purposes at international airports in the Middle East and North Africa Region, and means of detection and prevention, including the information exchange required among financial investigation units to facilitate investigation, prosecution and adjudication.

67. UNODC presented its integrated border control and management initiative, including at airports, to Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In Oman, UNODC continued to provide support to the Royal Oman Police, in particular its Directorate General of Customs and Directorate General of Narcotics Control.

68. UNODC conducted three partnership-building missions to Iraq between July 2018 and February 2019, focusing on support in the areas of border control, criminal information analysis, forensics, anti-corruption efforts, crime prevention and criminal justice, drug use and HIV prevention, treatment and care. A series of recommendations for possible interventions were identified. In March, UNODC opened a programme office in Iraq, and it is now in the process of launching a comprehensive capacity-building approach for Iraqi law enforcement agencies and forensic entities to enable the country to counter the growing challenges posed by organized criminal groups, illicit trafficking (in particular drug trafficking) and the links between organized crime and the financing of terrorism. Activities are initiated as part of the programme dedicated to supporting Iraq in disrupting terrorist and organized criminal operations.

69. Following the identification of the drug problem as the second highest national security threat after terrorism, Iraq launched in April 2019 a nationwide awareness-raising campaign entitled “No to drugs”.

70. In line with the goals of the strategic partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, UNODC empowered national experts from some of its member States (in particular Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates) to share their experience and knowledge of drug control strategy development. UNODC also continued to engage closely with national committees for addressing the drug problem across the region, in particular in Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, to support greater awareness of the nature of drug use disorders as preventable and treatable chronic relapsing disorders and to promote a health-centred approach for drug control policies and strategies implemented in the region. In addition, the Office participated in national conferences jointly organized with the national committees of Oman and the United Arab Emirates to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, and held, together with the Ministry of Interior of Bahrain, a regional conference on drug-related matters, in September 2019.

71. Under the framework of its long-standing partnership with the Dubai Police General Headquarters, UNODC co-hosted the fourteenth annual Hemaya International Forum and Exhibition on Drug Issues in April 2019, under the theme “Learn to protect”. The conference focused on: (a) the relationship between law enforcement bodies and educational institutions and the mechanisms needed for consolidating sustainable partnerships; and (b) the social responsibility of governmental and private institutions for supporting security and education to address and prevent drug abuse.

72. UNODC further continued its consultations with Naif Arab University for Security Sciences to develop capacity-building programmes to be delivered under the framework of the memorandum of understanding signed on 24 May 2019. Under the framework, UNODC signed a funding agreement with the University on 16 December 2019 aimed at supporting the training strategy of the University for developing the capacities of the institutions of Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Arab States specialized in crime prevention and criminal justice matters, including by addressing security-related challenges caused by drug trafficking.

X. Cooperation in India

73. With a view to strengthening regional cooperation to counter drug trafficking, the UNODC Regional Office for South Asia convened in October 2019 a high-level regional workshop in Manipur, India, for more than 125 senior drug law enforcement officers and policymakers from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, to foster collective action and adopt recommendations to counter trafficking

in opiates and amphetamines in South Asia. The key recommendations from the workshop were presented to the Government of India in the form of a funding proposal. For the past few years, the Government of India has funded the UNODC South Asia regional drug law enforcement project, which has delivered effective capacity-building to law enforcement and forensic officers in South Asia.

74. To address the growing rate of trafficking in tramadol, UNODC held in New Delhi in May 2019 a trilateral meeting for high-level decision makers from the anti-narcotics agencies and food and drug administrations of Ghana, India and Nigeria, with a view to strengthening cooperation, coordination and intelligence-sharing to counter tramadol trafficking. This was followed by a debriefing meeting in Nigeria in July to discuss and share intelligence-led cases related to imports of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine from India to West Africa.

75. In October 2019, with a view to fostering collective action to strengthen HIV and tuberculosis interventions in prisons and other closed settings, UNODC, in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the National AIDS Control Organization of India, held a high-level national workshop for more than 100 representatives of government, the prison administration, law enforcement agencies and civil society from across 22 States in India. Key recommendations presented to the Government included: (a) expanding the coverage of tuberculosis screening and treatment in prisons; (b) holding regular coordination meetings between prison and health departments to bridge programme and service delivery gaps; (c) incorporating prisoners' health data as an integral part of public health data; (d) providing specialized and targeted health services to women in detention; and (e) addressing prison overcrowding through, inter alia, alternatives to imprisonment.

76. A meeting of the expert working group of the Paris Pact initiative on detecting and blocking financial flows linked to trafficking in opiates originating in Afghanistan was held in New Delhi on 27 and 28 June 2019. Representatives of financial intelligence services, counter-narcotics agencies and customs authorities from 15 countries, six international organizations and UNODC discussed new trends and challenges related to illicit financial flows and trafficking in opiates. Participants highlighted the need to consolidate their efforts in strengthening the exchange of good practices for identifying shadow financial transactions.

77. In February 2020, the Narcotics Control Bureau of India hosted the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation Conference on Combating Drug Trafficking. UNODC steered one technical session, showcasing initiatives by the Regional Office for South Asia with a presentation on capacity-building in darknet, courier and postal interdictions. The outcome declaration of the Conference emphasized that the Government of India stood ready to continue cooperation with UNODC in developing national capacity to counter drug trafficking.

78. To further foster regional cooperation, UNODC facilitated, together with the Government of India, a four-day intensive specialized training for the officers of 15 law enforcement, drug administration and forensic laboratories of Bhutan. These trained officers are expected to disseminate the specialized knowledge that they have received in investigation, intelligence-sharing, testing and prosecution.

79. UNODC also supported several initiatives by the Government of India, including the twelfth South Asia Conference, convened by the Ministry of Defence on 28 and 29 January 2020; the sixth Regional Customs Enforcement Meeting, convened by the Department of Revenue on 4 and 5 December 2019; and the National Conference convened by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University of Social Sciences.

80. In line with the international drug control conventions and existing national legislation and policies, India adopted the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction for the period 2018–2023 to address drug and substance abuse. The National Action Plan encompasses a multipronged strategy with a focus on

preventive education, awareness-raising, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent users, in addition to training and capacity-building for service providers, through collaboration between the Government and non-governmental organizations.
