

Central Asia and South Caucasus lie between Asia and Europe and also **traverse** the Caspian Sea and Black sea region. It also falls on the northern routes of trafficking of opiates that originates of Afghanistan. Central Asia shares 2600 kms of borders with Afghanistan and that increasing the vulnerabilities of trafficking of opiates from Afghanistan.

In the year of 2018, nearly 20 tons of marihuana were seized in Central Asian countries along with that nearly 2,5 tons of hashish, 1,8 tons of opium and 0,5 tons of heroin were seized. While heroin seizures and opium seizures have decreased over the period of time in the region, it is no complete reason to say that these are not actually found in the region because the recent seizures indicate that the Northern route continues to be active, the traffickers are finding a new routes especially on a new trade and transit corridors that are opening up in the region as evidenced by the recent seizures of 670 kgs of heroin that had transited the Central Asian countries in the region.

In the last 2 years, nearly 58 new psychoactive substances have emerged in the markets along with that synthetic cannabinoids, psychoactive substances are also reaching the markets. It is evidenced in the low threshold clinics are operating for injecting drug users that polydrug use is common. We also find the combination of new psychoactive substances and prescription drugs that are cocktailed for injecting purposes.

Given the geographical location of this Region, it is extremely important to strengthen the national capacities of Ministries of Interior, of Customs, the Border Services in each of the countries. But also it is equally important to foster the culture of greater the cross border cooperation through intelligence sharing agreements but also to make sure that these efforts are reflected in overall development agenda of the country.

I would like to really emphasize that if we would like Central Asia and South Caucasus to continue to be on a board of peace security in development, we need to mainstream these issues on the overall development agenda of the country as well as to foster the greater regional cooperation between the countries. So we can make sure that our young people, families and communities are always safe. Thank you.