

# Preface

Illicit drugs have profound effects on individuals and societies worldwide. For individuals, drugs jeopardize health, livelihood and security. At the national level, their osmotic relationship with crime can make them both cause and consequence of conflict, weak governance and underdevelopment. Poor countries are particularly vulnerable and need help, as they lack the resources to break out of the vicious circle. The global dimension of the drug problem is equally important: illicit drug markets know no borders and their transnational nature puts them beyond the reach of any single government, rich or poor.

While the cross-border dimension of drug trafficking has long been understood and translated into a highly developed system of international cooperation, in recent years the opening of world markets has accentuated this trait. More than ever, a multilateral and coordinated response is needed. In the United Nations Millennium Declaration, Member States resolved to redouble efforts to provide such a response. A year ago, governments reaffirmed their commitment, made at the special session of the UN General Assembly (UNGASS) in 1998, to make significant progress in countering the world drug problem by the year 2008. They noted that the "shared responsibility" (namely, the involvement of countries of origin as well as of destination), could only be achieved by means of a "balanced approach" (giving demand as much attention as supply), balancing preventive measures and law enforcement interventions.

This year's *World Drug Report* shows that though Member States have made significant progress in some areas, there are others where effective measures are still needed. Drug abuse remains at an unacceptable level.

There is no easy road to a world less tormented by illicit drugs. If we want to end the suffering, however, we can together do a lot more than at present:

- *First*, the drug problem must be tackled in the broader context of human security and sustainable development. It will take more than counter-narcotics operations (necessary as they may be) to contain the drug problem - the whole of society must be involved.
- *Secondly*, responses to the drugs and crime nexus must become more integrated. Criminals expropriate huge sums of money from poor farmers and poor addicts alike. The United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC) recently merged the drugs and crime programmes within one internal structure and the new UN conventions against transnational organized crime and corruption offer unique prospects of progress on the drug control front as well.
- *Thirdly*, drug control programmes must better attune themselves to the dynamics of drug markets: a better understanding of underlying trends, more robust data, increased research and a deeper scientific approach to the problem are all required.

I hope that readers will find this 2004 edition of the *World Drug Report* a useful contribution.



Antonio Maria Costa  
Executive Director

United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime*