



INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD



# Report 2022

## Press material

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes remains inequitable and, in many locations, inadequate. To support Member States in improving the situation, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) has published a special supplement to the INCB 2022 Annual Report, entitled *No Patient Left Behind: Progress in Ensuring Adequate Access to Internationally Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes*. The supplement reviews the situation based on information reported to INCB by Member States and civil society, identifies obstacles and makes recommendations, including on ensuring availability during emergency situations.



The thematic chapter of the 2022 Annual Report presents the Board's analysis of the trend towards legalization of the non-medical use of cannabis. It analyses the various policy approaches from the perspective of the drug control conventions. INCB notes that the legalization of the non-medical and non-scientific supply and use of cannabis breaches the provisions of the conventions. The convention-based system offers significant flexibility for States to protect young people, improve public health, avoid unnecessary incarceration and address illicit markets and related organized crime. Central to the conventions is the principle of proportionality and establishing better prevention and treatment programmes as well as addressing organized crime through social prevention and law enforcement. Evidence suggests that cannabis legalization has not been successful in dissuading young people from using cannabis, and illicit markets persist. INCB is particularly concerned about the expanding cannabis industry, which markets cannabis-based products in ways that appeal to young people, and about the playing down of harms associated with using high-potency cannabis products.

The report also analyses the global surge in illicit cocaine production and trafficking and the growing threat posed to public health by increased availability and higher levels of purity.

INCB remains concerned about the large-scale opium poppy cultivation and opium production in Afghanistan, where there is an urgent need to improve prevention and treatment for all people who use drugs, in particular women. INCB draws attention to the importance of ensuring the provision of mental health treatment and support, including during emergencies.

The INCB 2022 Precursors Report contains recommendations aimed at improving the control of chemicals used in illicit drug manufacture and addressing the proliferation of non-scheduled designer precursor chemicals.

Following up on the recommendations contained in the Board's 2022 publications will contribute not only to improved implementation of the drug control conventions but also towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, INCB supports Governments through INCB Learning, the Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Programme, and other INCB systems,





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such as the Pre-Export Notification Online (PEN Online) tool, for the exchange of information among countries. As the international community seeks to put the 2030 Agenda back on track following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and amid humanitarian emergencies, the implementation of the drug control conventions is central to safeguarding health and well-being.

**Jagjit Pavadia**

President

International Narcotics Control Board



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## **LEGALIZED NON-MEDICAL USE OF CANNABIS LEADS TO HIGHER CONSUMPTION, MORE HEALTH CONCERNS AND DOES NOT REDUCE CRIMINAL ACTIVITY**

Legalizing cannabis seems to result in higher consumption especially among young people and a lower perception of the risk involved and does not reduce criminal activity, according to the INCB annual report.

Evidence from jurisdictions where cannabis has been legalized for recreational use show a higher consumption of cannabis and an increase in adverse health effects, psychotic disorders and a negative impact on road safety.

About 4 per cent of the global population, roughly 209 million people, use cannabis (figures from 2020) making it the world's most widely used illicit drug. Cannabis cultivation has shown an upward trend over the past decade, and the number of people who use it has risen by 23 per cent. Cannabis use varies widely by region and is highest in North America, Oceania and West Africa.

### **Questions on the classification of cannabis**

Some Governments are unsure if cannabis and cannabis-related substances should still be classified as harmful and whether the controls laid out in the drug control conventions are still relevant regarding cannabis use. These Governments are looking for alternative solutions including the legalization of non-medical use of cannabis.

### **Legalization approaches vary greatly among countries**

The variety of different legislative models from country to country makes it difficult to evaluate the impact of the changes in cannabis legalization on society. Evidence is still limited, and data submitted is often too recent to draw meaningful conclusions.

The trend to formally legalize cannabis for non-medical supply and use first began in the Americas and is now taking hold in Europe and other regions. While the number of countries where cannabis is legal is still small, more Governments are considering taking this path. For example, in June 2022, the Government of Luxembourg released a draft law that would allow adults to grow up to four cannabis plants at home for recreational purposes. In October 2022, the German Government outlined a law that would regulate the controlled distribution of cannabis to adults for recreational use in licensed shops. In Italy, on the other hand, a proposal for a referendum to legalize personal cultivation of cannabis and other psychoactive plants was rejected by the Constitutional Court in February 2022.

### **Cannabis legalization results in higher consumption**

Estimated data show that the most important effect of cannabis legalization is the likelihood of increased use, particularly among younger people. Data collected in the United States has shown that adolescents and young adults consume significantly more cannabis in states where cannabis has been





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legalized compared to states where recreational use is illegal. For ages 12 and older, the numbers rose from 16.5 per cent to 24.5 per cent in those states.

## Perception of risk lowered by increased availability of cannabis

There is evidence that the increased availability of cannabis products in States where consumption is legal has lowered the perception of risk among the population. New forms of cannabis products, such as edibles or vaping products marketed in flashy packaging, have increased the trend. This has contributed to a trivialization of the impacts of cannabis use in the public eye, particularly among younger people.

This normalizing trend has reduced the perception that using cannabis products can have damaging effects on health and on decision-making processes. However, data have shown that habitual use of cannabis has negative health effects, particularly on the cognitive development of young people, impacting their educational outcomes and social behaviours.

## More medical emergencies and car accidents in legalizing states

Increased use and the higher potency of some cannabis products are having negative health effects and pose health risks for people of all ages. In all jurisdictions where cannabis was legalized, data show that cannabis-related health problems have increased. Between 2000 and 2018, global admissions related to cannabis dependence and withdrawal increased 8-fold. Admissions for cannabis-related psychotic disorders have also quadrupled worldwide. In Colorado (United States), emergency department visits and hospitalizations due to excessive cannabis use rose considerably after legalization was implemented. Hospital visits for injuries from accidents related to cannabis also increased by 30 per cent.

Investigations on the impact of cannabis legalization on road safety found a significant increase in fatal crashes in Washington State and Colorado (United States) after legal cannabis dispensaries were opened. Statistical evidence from Colorado shows that the percentage of drivers under the influence of cannabis in all traffic fatalities was nearly twice as high in 2020 as in 2013. The frequency of collision insurance claims also increased considerably after legalization was implemented in Colorado, Oregon and Washington compared with neighbouring states.

## Government objectives for legalizing cannabis not achieved

The main objective for legalizing cannabis for Governments is to reduce criminal activities but this has not been achieved and illegal markets continue to operate. The data show that illegal markets for cannabis supply have persisted in all legalizing jurisdictions reaching 40 per cent in Canada, nearly 50 per cent in Uruguay and 75 per cent in California.

Generating tax income has been another important goal for Governments who promoted the legalization of cannabis. Although tax income from cannabis sales has increased year on year in Canada and the United States, tax revenue has been lower than expected, making up only 1 per cent of the budget



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in legalizing states. INCB concludes that the goal pursued by some Governments to use cannabis as a means of increasing tax revenue has not been achieved through legalization.

## Expanding cannabis industry

Cannabis legalization has created a new economic market with a large potential for growth and investment opportunities. Large corporations aiming to broaden their commercial profits are expanding into the cannabis industry and have lobbied for lifting controls on cannabis. Many corporations are looking to expand into the medical and adult cannabis market emerging around the world. In the United States, the legal supply of cannabis products is one of the fastest growing industries, generating \$25 billion in sales in 2021 – a 43 per cent increase on 2020.

## Decriminalization and depenalization are different concepts from legalization

INCB is clear that the legalization of cannabis for non-medical use is a violation of the drug conventions although there is a certain flexibility in the conventions when it comes to decriminalization and depenalization as alternative routes for cannabis offences. Some States have already shifted their policies regarding the prosecution of drug-related offences and removed criminal sanctions or reduced them to minor offences for non-medical use of cannabis for personal use. INCB emphasizes that the concepts of “decriminalization” and “depenalization” are different from policies that explicitly permit legalization or the creation of a “regulated market”. National legal frameworks permitting the non-medical use of cannabis violate the drug control conventions stipulating that any kind of drug use must be limited to medical and scientific purposes.

## Further INCB conclusions

INCB reminds Member States that the conventions are binding and that the legalization of cannabis for non-medical use would be a violation of the agreement.

INCB points out that the conventions have a certain flexibility when it comes to decriminalization or depenalization as alternative routes for cannabis offences.

INCB emphasizes that there is little in the way of reliable data available about the impact of cannabis legalization to draw meaningful conclusions. The variety of State models also makes it difficult to transfer data sets from one country to another and predict successes and failures of legalization frameworks.

INCB notes that the effects of cannabis use on individuals and societies should be studied further before long-term binding decisions are made.

The Board encourages an open discussion about the impacts of legalizing cannabis among all parties to the 1961 Convention and continues to engage with Governments to assist them in implementing the conventions. This includes furthering the objectives of the conventions within the flexibility provided through balanced and proportionate approaches founded on respect for human rights and the promotion of health and welfare.





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## **NO PATIENT LEFT BEHIND: PROGRESS IN ENSURING ADEQUATE ACCESS TO INTERNATIONALLY CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES FOR MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES**

### Supplement to the INCB Annual Report 2022

INCB is issuing a special report entitled *No Patient Left Behind: Progress in Ensuring Adequate Access to Internationally Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes*, as a supplement to its 2022 Annual Report. The supplement reviews the situation based on information reported to INCB by Governments and civil society. The review ties in with the initiative of the Chair of the sixty-fifth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) to scale up the implementation of international drug policy commitments on improving availability of and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

### Regional differences in the availability of opioid analgesics, including morphine, persist

Data show that many countries continue to have difficulties procuring enough opioid analgesics to treat pain. For psychotropic substances, the situation is less clear, but limited access and availability, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, seem to be an issue.

Regional disparities also exist for many countries attempting to buy medications containing morphine, although enough opiate raw materials are reported to be available.

Since a large proportion of the available morphine is being used for the production of codeine, for example used in cough medicine, only a small amount is left to be used directly for other medical purposes, such as pain relief or palliative care.

Data reported show that the limited amount of morphine used directly for pain relief is mostly used in high-income countries. This is confirmed by the data of the World Health Organization (WHO) on the availability of oral morphine in public primary care facilities, showing considerable differences in usage between different income groups.

### Regional disparities in levels of consumption of anti-epileptic drugs and medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Some key trends about regional disparities in the consumption of several psychotropic substances have emerged. For example, the consumption of anti-epileptic drugs, including clonazepam and phenobarbital, is low in Africa, Asia and Oceania relative to the Americas and Europe despite these substances being among the most traded psychotropic substances.

Similarly, there are significant regional disparities in the consumption of methylphenidate despite reports suggesting that prevalence levels of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are not so different between regions.







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## Only a small number of countries use controlled substances for the treatment of opioid dependence

Scientific evidence indicates that opioid agonist therapy programmes are effective in treating opioid dependencies. Yet, the use of methadone and buprenorphine to treat opioid dependence is concentrated in a limited number of countries, most of which are in Western and Central Europe. In other countries with widespread drug use by injection, buprenorphine, methadone and other opioid agonist therapies are limited or not present at all. INCB urges Governments and medical authorities to use methadone and buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid dependence, given their therapeutic effectiveness.

## Delivery of controlled medicines during emergency situations remains problematic

At a time of increasing global need for controlled substances during emergency situations, countries face challenges in the timely receipt and delivery of these substances. This is due in part to the additional administrative requirements for the international movement of controlled substances.

Controlled substances included in humanitarian emergency health kits, such as morphine, diazepam and phenobarbital, are vital for pain management, palliative care, surgical care and anaesthesia and the treatment of mental health and neurological conditions of people facing various emergencies, including those resulting from protracted conflicts and climate change.

Lessons learnt from Belgium, Brazil and Lebanon, which had adopted various measures to facilitate access to medical supplies, highlight the importance of timely emergency legislation, relevant legislative change, and coordinated communication in expediting access to controlled substances for humanitarian assistance.

## Global supply chain of medicines improved somewhat since COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges to the economies and public health systems of all countries since the beginning of 2020. The lockdowns, border closures and social distancing measures disrupted the global supply chain of medicines because key starting materials and active pharmaceutical ingredients could not be manufactured in some major economies. Logistical challenges resulting from border closures and social distancing policies caused prolonged delays.

Analysing data from Governments and civil society organizations, INCB found that some progress was made in improving global supply chains in 2022. There are still important areas requiring action, not only by Member States but also by the international community.

## Growing threat from surging illicit cocaine production and trafficking

A changing criminal landscape in the parts of the world affected by illicit coca bush cultivation led to an unprecedented increase in cultivation, cocaine manufacture and the trafficking of cocaine. Due to



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specialization by manufacturers and traffickers at the different stages of the cocaine supply chain, larger quantities of a purer product have become available at cheaper prices for the end consumers.

INCB recommends a coordinated response targeting each element of the cocaine supply chain through evidence-based interventions relating to coca bush cultivation and effective precursor control such as partnerships between Governments and private shipping and logistic companies to address trafficking and to disrupt illicit financial flows stemming from cocaine trafficking.

## Action needed to ensure that people with mental health challenges have access to adequate treatment and medications, including in emergency situations

INCB finds that people with mental health conditions do not have access to necessary services, such as treatment and medications, and that inadequate investment means the needs of the affected population group are not being met.

Based on data from the World Health Organization (WHO), at least three quarters of the world's population with mental, neurological and substance use disorders live in low- and middle-income countries. Mental health services for these populations are scarce and often difficult to access.

The high number of humanitarian crises resulting from armed conflict, climate change or public health emergencies have had a major impact on people's mental health in all parts of the world. Some groups, such as health and other front-line workers, elderly people, women, children, people with drug use disorders and those with pre-existing mental health conditions, have been particularly affected.

At the same time, INCB is concerned about an overprescription of psychotropic substances to treat mental, neurological and substance use disorders in some countries. Unsupervised self-medication by people with mental health challenges because of a lack of access to professional services is another concern.

INCB reminds Governments that people living with mental health challenges need suitable access to adequate treatment and necessary medications to alleviate their conditions. INCB encourages Governments to include evidence-based mental health treatment and support services in their national health-care systems and ensure that these services continue to be provided during emergency situations.





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## REPORT ON PRECURSORS FOR 2022

### Three new chemical precursors under international control

At its sixty-fifth session in March 2022, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs included three new substances in Table I of the 1988 Convention. The chemicals 4 AP1, 1-boc-4AP and norfentanyl are used in the illicit manufacture of the highly potent opioid fentanyl. The international control of the three substances entered into force on 23 November 2022, bringing the total number of substances scheduled under Tables I and II of the 1988 Convention to 33.

### Countries report a high number of seizures of non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors

Sixty-seven countries in all five continents have now reported seizures of substances not included in the two tables of the 1988 Convention, indicating increased global trafficking of non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors. Non-scheduled chemicals are used in the illicit manufacture of all classes of drugs except for cannabis. In the last eight years, 10 new substances, some of them designer precursors without any known legitimate uses, were added to Tables I and II of the 1988 Convention.

INCB, concerned about the global spread of non-scheduled chemicals, supports Governments in addressing this challenge, including through the work of the Board under articles 12 and 13 of the 1988 Convention.

### Seizures of methamphetamine precursors continue to decline, despite increased availability of methamphetamine

Seizures of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, substances used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine, continued to decline. At the same time, the quantity of methamphetamine seized has increased, indicating that alternative precursors, including designer precursors, are used to manufacture methamphetamine illicitly. This trend is well established in Europe and is becoming increasingly significant in other parts of the world, as data reported to INCB suggest.

### Drug trafficking organizations move cocaine processing to Europe

The discovery of 15 cocaine processing laboratories indicates that drug trafficking organizations are using new and sophisticated methods to smuggle cocaine base. Of the 15 laboratories, six were located in Europe, pointing to the trend that trafficking organizations are moving processing to this region. Generally, the laboratories that were discovered were set up to recover cocaine base hidden in carrier materials, which is then refined into cocaine hydrochloride with very high levels of purity.





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## Heroin supply is not mirrored by seizures of its main precursor

Global seizures of acetic anhydride, used in the illicit manufacture of heroin, continued to decline, notably in countries that previously reported seizures of sizeable amounts of the substance. In 2021, Türkiye accounted for more than 60 per cent of global seizures of the substance. At the same time, trafficking in acetyl chloride, a possible replacement of acetic anhydride that emerged in 2018, continued to be of concern to the Board.

## The Internet and its trade platforms are exploited by the illicit drug industry

Internet platforms continue to be exploited by drug traffickers to find and purchase the chemical precursors and equipment used to illicitly manufacture drugs. This development goes hand in hand with vendors who are using the Internet to illegally supply drug precursors. Monitoring the Internet and investigating suspicious online postings relating to precursors is essential to counter illegal sales of precursors and to investigate criminal networks. This was found in India following the INCB Operation Acronym conducted in 2021.

## Enhanced approach to precursor control needed to address the evolution of illicit drug manufacture

The speed with which the illicit drug industry circumvents international controls on scheduled substances and the need for secure and uninterrupted trade by the legitimate chemical industry call for an enhanced approach to precursor control. To assist Governments, INCB has created a set of tools and services aimed at advancing knowledge at national and international levels. In 2022, INCB published the document “Proliferation of non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors: Options for Global Action”. It provides a guide to Governments in their efforts to address the diversion of non-scheduled chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and implement resolution 65/3 of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

In October 2022, INCB launched its new PEN Online Light platform to extend, on a voluntary basis, to non-scheduled substances the pre-export notification system in use for scheduled precursors.





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## REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### Africa

**Trafficking in cocaine, cannabis and tramadol in Africa.** Available seizure data suggest that cocaine trafficking remains a major challenge for countries in North and West Africa. The same is true of the trafficking and use of cannabis and tramadol for many countries in Africa.

**The lack of official data on drug seizures and drug use prevalence hinders the ability of countries in the region to address their respective drug challenges.** It also hinders the ability of the international community to provide support.

**Africa is among the regions with the lowest levels of availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes.** Determining levels of consumption of psychotropic substances for Africa is difficult as only a quarter of the countries have provided INCB with consumption data on any psychotropic substance for the past several years.

### Americas

#### Central America and the Caribbean

**Seizures of large amounts of cocaine reported by several countries in the region** indicate surges in drug trafficking following the easing of mobility restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**New psychoactive substances were detected in eight countries and territories in Central America and the Caribbean.** Information on legal responses by countries to their emergence in the region remains limited.

**There is a continued lack of recent epidemiological surveys on the prevalence of drug use in most countries in Central America and the Caribbean.** This hampers the tailoring of responses to the drug use problem.

**Determining levels of consumption of psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes in the region remains a challenge.** Only a third of the countries and territories have provided consumption data on any psychotropic substance for the past few years.

#### North America

**The drug overdose epidemic in North America has worsened in Canada and the United States.** The illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic opioids in North America have worsened the region's opioid epidemic and drug overdose crisis. This has resulted in an increase in deaths. In Canada, the supply of increasingly toxic drugs has exacerbated the already existing overdose crisis. More deaths have been caused by higher levels of toxicity in opioids or stimulants. Despite measures adopted to mitigate the negative consequences of drug use, such as increased availability of and access to naloxone, a higher number of overdose deaths has been recorded.





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**In North American jurisdictions, the regulations for the non-medical use of cannabis continue to evolve in a manner inconsistent with the provisions of the drug control conventions.** While cannabis remains a controlled substance at the federal level in the United States, there is a growing gap with the state-level regulations for the non-medical use of cannabis. Information available on the use of cannabis after states introduced legalization measures is inadequate, particularly for adolescents.

## South America

**Drug trafficking organizations in the Amazon region in Brazil and Peru were observed to have expanded their influence and diversified their activities to include environmental crimes.** This development has been linked to an increase in murder rates targeting indigenous populations and environmentalists.

**Rising violence was reported in Ecuador because the country emerged as a storage and distribution centre along cocaine trafficking routes.** This has led to increased transatlantic trafficking of cocaine.

**Coca cultivation and potential cocaine production reached a historical high in Colombia in 2021,** with 204,000 hectares and 1,400 tons yield, respectively.

## Asia

### East and South-East Asia

**Illicit manufacture, trafficking and use of methamphetamine in East and South-East Asia continue to pose a serious threat to peace, stability and public health in the countries of the region.** With illicit markets continuing to expand, record amounts of the substance are being seized, especially in tablet form, throughout the region.

While record seizures of methamphetamine were reported, very small amounts of the precursors required for its illicit manufacture were seized in the region. Organized criminal groups appear to be increasingly using non-scheduled chemicals as alternatives for the manufacture of methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs.

Criminal groups have adapted to border and travel restrictions. While trafficking by air has gone down significantly, courier trafficking and related exploitation of online platforms has increased.

**East and South-East Asia is of particular concern regarding the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes.** It is among the regions with the lowest amounts available of the most widely used opioid analgesics.

**INCB notes with concern public reports on the continued use of the death penalty for drug offences in several countries of the region.** It also reiterates that extrajudicial killings as a response to drug-related activities violate the international drug control conventions.







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## South Asia

**During the reporting period, countries in South Asia made significant seizures of methamphetamine, in both tablet and crystalline form, that had been trafficked from South-East Asia.**

**Countries in South Asia continue to report high levels of non-medical use of opioids** affecting a large portion of the population. The estimated number of people who use opioids is higher in South Asia than in any other region.

**There is insufficient availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical use in South Asia.** INCB emphasizes that internationally controlled substances for medical purposes must be sufficiently available.

**INCB reiterates its call to all Governments in South Asia to develop mechanisms for improving the collection of information on the extent of drug use in the region.** The aim is to develop drug use prevention strategies and provide treatment facilities to people who need it based on evidence and to tailor approaches to each country's needs and capacities.

## West Asia

**Afghanistan remains by far the largest source of illicit opium in the world, accounting for an estimated 86 per cent of the global production of illicit opium in 2021.** Opium produced in Afghanistan has continued to supply markets in neighbouring countries and in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and South Asia while a smaller proportion was destined for markets in North America and Oceania. **The substantial increase in methamphetamine production in Afghanistan is a major cause for concern,** as a trend has been observed since 2012 that continued up to 2021. INCB calls upon the international community to continue to support drug control efforts in **Afghanistan** to protect public health. The Board stresses the importance of strengthening Afghanistan's capacities in providing treatment and rehabilitation services to people who use drugs, particularly women.

**Central Asian States continue to face increased trafficking and misuse of psychotropic substances and the emergence of new psychoactive substances.** Central Asian States continued to face major challenges relating to the increased use of and trafficking in psychotropic substances, including synthetic drugs. Countries in West Asia also observed an increase in the use of postal services, the Internet, and social networks and messaging platforms for the marketing of illicit drugs.

## Europe

**Europe remains an important region for illicit drug manufacture, trafficking and consumption of illegal drugs. Most illicit activities related to drugs have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels resulting in greater availability and lower prices for illicit drugs. The potency of these drugs has also increased.** Cocaine trafficking, mainly arriving through maritime shipping containers from South America, has been increasing over the past years. The region is also becoming a transit region for traffickers shipping cocaine to countries outside Europe.





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**Drug consumption patterns have become increasingly complex in the region. Drug problems are more often associated with medicinal products, non-controlled NPS and substances such as GBL, GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) and ketamine in some countries.** Together with an ageing population of people who use opioids and growing economic and mental distress experienced by vulnerable groups, this calls for closer monitoring and additional targeted drug prevention and treatment.

**The Board is concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and calls for unimpeded access to medications, including those containing internationally controlled substances.** Governments are encouraged to apply simplified control procedures for the export and transportation of such medicines to affected areas. The continued conflict may also exacerbate substance use due to heightened psychological stress, which is more likely to be experienced by those fleeing the conflict. Similarly, instability caused by the war may also have an impact on drug trafficking in terms of creating potential for illicit drug manufacture and changes to trafficking routes.

## Oceania

**Increased use of drugs, in particular methamphetamine, and the activity of organized criminal groups are challenging many communities in the Pacific region.** This is a spillover effect of growing drug trafficking through Pacific Island States, which continue to be used as transit areas for drug trafficking to Australia and New Zealand.

**Non-parties to the three international drug control conventions remain concentrated in Oceania.** This makes the region highly vulnerable to large-scale drug and precursor trafficking and related risks, such as money-laundering, local drug use and local illicit production of drugs.

**Trafficking in fentanyl and other dangerous opioids is expanding to markets in Oceania.** A record seizure of fentanyl was made in Australia. Emerging non-medical synthetic opioids have been detected in New Zealand.

**In some countries of the region, there is insufficient availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes.** Australia and New Zealand report much higher levels of consumption of opioid analgesics than other Pacific Island States.







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## INCB INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT MEMBER STATES

### INCB Learning

INCB Learning is the Board's initiative to deliver capacity-building support to Governments in implementing the provisions of the three international drug control treaties and the Sustainable Development Goals. The initiative includes five e-modules for online learning (in English and other languages) as well as virtual and in-person training and seminars.

In 2022, INCB Learning conducted virtual training seminars for 30 officials from 10 countries in Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, and South America.

In 2022, a new e-module to help Governments ensure adequate availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes was developed.

As of 1 November 2022, 1,259 officials from 145 countries and territories have enrolled in INCB Learning e-modules, and more than half (54 per cent) were women. The Board encourages Governments to register officials from their competent national authorities for the e-modules and to provide feedback to INCB on areas in which further training is needed.

### INCB Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Programme

The GRIDS Programme, including the real-time communication platform IONICS, promotes the sharing of information by law enforcement authorities to prevent dangerous substances from reaching consumer markets. In 2022, a significant increase in real-time exchanges of trafficking information among law enforcement and regulatory authorities was recorded on the IONICS platform. Exchanges on new psychoactive substances (NPS) and dangerous non-medical synthetic opioids including emerging synthetic non-fentanyl opioids, such as dangerous nitazene group substances led directly to investigations and helped law enforcement dismantle organized crime groups in several countries.

Over the past year, the INCB GRIDS Programme convened 30 training events for more than 600 front-line officers. The training was led by regional technical officers based in Egypt, India, Mexico, Nigeria and Thailand and focused on the safe handling and seizure of opioids, and information exchanges using the IONICS and GRIDS platforms.

Targeted operational action within the framework of INCB cooperation agreements with the Oceania Customs Organization, the Universal Postal Union, the World Customs Organization and most recently CARICOM IMPACS, enhance international efforts to identify NPS trafficking hubs. An example of this is the 2021/22 Operation GAPZ, which involved law and regulatory enforcement focal points under the INCB Project Ion and the OPIOIDS Project and resulted in seizures.





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## INCB precursor control programme

### Engaging the chemical industry is key to addressing an evolving illicit drug market

Rapidly changing trends in drug and precursor trafficking require flexible, active responses and the engagement of the industry through public-private partnerships. INCB and 12 Governments are testing an innovative approach to strengthen industry participation in addressing the challenges in international precursor control and preventing the infiltration by criminal drug operators of licit chemical markets.

### INCB and Member States cooperate in tracking illicit drug manufacturing equipment

Governments increasingly recognize the need to track illicit drug manufacturing equipment and enhance the operational use of article 13 of the 1988 Convention. The Board has developed guidance materials and practical tools and encouraged government cooperation to prevent and investigate cases of diversion and trafficking of equipment used in illicit drug manufacture. In October 2022, INCB met with Member States on the subject and launched the Board's first technical report on equipment and article 13.





## INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) is the independent monitoring body for the implementation of the United Nations international drug control conventions. It was established in 1968 in accordance with the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1954. It had predecessors under the former drug control treaties as far back as the time of the League of Nations.

Based on its activities, INCB publishes an annual report that is submitted to the United Nations Economic and Social Council through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The report provides a comprehensive survey of the drug control situation in various parts of the world. As an impartial body, INCB tries to identify and predict dangerous trends and suggests necessary measures to be taken.