



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
30 June 2021

Original: English

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## Seventy-sixth session

Item 111 of the preliminary list\*

## International drug control

### International cooperation against the world drug problem

#### Report of the Secretary-General

##### *Summary*

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/198](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-sixth session a report on the implementation of that resolution. The report provides an overview of the world drug situation and the implementation of the mandates relating to international drug control, taking into account the Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of Our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem, adopted at the ministerial segment of the sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The report also provides information on action taken by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and its subsidiary bodies and support provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in close cooperation with other United Nations entities and relevant stakeholders, to assist States in addressing and countering the world drug problem, including the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

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\* [A/76/50](#).



## I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/198](#), provides an overview of the current world drug situation and work undertaken in assisting States in addressing and countering the world drug problem by implementing the international drug control conventions, as well as all international drug policy commitments stemming from the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, the Joint Ministerial Statement of the 2014 high-level review by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the implementation by Member States of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem and the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”, which was reaffirmed in the Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of Our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem.

2. In the light of the unprecedented challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, joint efforts to address and counter the world drug problem are more crucial than ever to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, thereby addressing key issues in line with the principle of common and shared responsibility. As the world drug problem is multifaceted and closely intertwined with all aspects of sustainable development, cooperation within the United Nations system and with other stakeholders is key to advancing peace and security, development and human rights.

3. The United Nations is committed to supporting States in developing and implementing truly balanced, comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based, human rights-based, development-oriented and sustainable responses to the world drug problem. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [75/198](#), the present report includes a section on collaboration and coordination across the United Nations system.

## II. Extent of the world drug problem

4. According to the *World Drug Report 2020*, both the range of drugs and drug markets have continued to expand and diversify. In 2018, about 269 million people worldwide, or 5.4 per cent of the global population aged 15–64, had used drugs at least once in the previous year and about 36 million people who use drugs suffered from drug use disorders. The highest prevalence rates of drug use are found among the youth population.

5. Opioids continued to cause the most harm, accounting for two thirds of the deaths attributed to drug use disorders. People who inject drugs – some 11 million worldwide in 2018 – face the greatest health risks: almost half live with hepatitis C and one in eight lives with HIV.

6. While the headline figures for drug users have changed little in recent years, this stability masks ongoing changes in drug markets. The amount of cocaine manufactured globally has doubled since 2013, to an estimated 1,723 tons of pure cocaine in 2018, and the amount of opium produced stabilized at a high level (7,620 tons) in 2019. Drugs such as heroin and cocaine, which have long been available, coexist with a growing number of new psychoactive substances, and the non-medical use of prescription drugs appears to have increased over the past two decades. The use of substances of unclear origin supplied through illicit channels, sold as purported medicines but destined for non-medical use, is also on the increase. The range of available substances and combinations has never been greater.

7. The non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids is of increasing concern for both law enforcement authorities and public health professionals in various parts of the world. Different pharmaceutical opioids are misused in different regions. In North America, illicitly sourced fentanyl, mixed with heroin or other drugs, is driving an unprecedented number of overdose deaths. In West and North Africa and the Near and Middle East, the non-medical use of tramadol, a pharmaceutical opioid that is not under international control, remains of great concern.

8. East and South-East Asia and North America remain the main regions for methamphetamine trafficking. In North America, the availability of methamphetamine increased between 2013 and 2017. Qualitative assessments, the increases in consumption and manufacturing capacity and the increases in the amounts seized all point to a growing market for methamphetamine in East and South-East Asia and Oceania, where the use of crystalline methamphetamine has become a key concern.

9. The COVID-19 pandemic and mobility restrictions have affected all aspects of the illegal drug markets, from production and trafficking to consumption. Limited availability of precursors has been reported in some regions, while in others, there have been issues related to access by producers to illicit markets, but these limitations have been short lived. Drug trafficking by air has been disrupted, but large shipments of drugs seem to have continued to be smuggled by sea. There are signs of an increase in the demand for cannabis and the non-medical use of benzodiazepines, while drugs that are often consumed in a social context, such as cocaine and 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA, commonly known as “ecstasy”), seem to have been used less during the pandemic and related lockdowns.

### **III. International cooperation against the world drug problem**

#### **A. Follow-up to the implementation of international commitments to address and counter the world drug problem, including follow-up to the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly: action taken by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and its subsidiary bodies**

10. In follow-up to the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs focused on accelerating the implementation of all commitments made over the past decade. In line with the multi-year workplan adopted in June 2019, the Commission continued, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, to hold its annual thematic discussions on how the different challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019 could be addressed.

11. Those thematic discussions, convened from 19 to 21 October 2020, brought together national practitioners and policymakers from over 100 States, United Nations entities, other intergovernmental and international organizations and civil society experts. Held in a hybrid format, the discussions enabled an interactive and inclusive exchange of good practices and lessons learned in addressing the following challenges: (a) drug treatment and health services continuing to fall short of meeting needs and deaths related to drug use increasing; (b) the rate of transmission of HIV, hepatitis C and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use, including injecting drug use in some States, remaining high; (c) the adverse health consequences of and risks associated with new psychoactive substances reaching alarming levels; and (d) the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and palliative care, remaining low to non-existent in many parts of the world. The outcome of the discussions was reflected in a summary by the Chair (E/CN.7/2021/CRP.1). The meeting was webcast, and over 20,000 visits to the live stream were recorded during the three-day meeting.

12. At its reconvened sixty-third session, in December 2020, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs took action on the World Health Organization (WHO) scheduling recommendations on cannabis and cannabis-related substances. The Commission decided, by 27 votes to 25, with 1 abstention, to delete cannabis and cannabis resin from Schedule IV of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol. Cannabis and cannabis resin remain in Schedule I of that Convention and are thus still subject to all control measures foreseen under it. All the other recommendations from WHO were rejected by the Commission. Detailed voting results, including the vote of each Commission member, can be found in the report on the reconvened session ([E/2020/28/Add.1-E/CN.7/2020/15/Add.1](#)).

13. At its sixty-fourth session, in April 2021, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs decided to include isotonitazene in Schedule I of the 1961 Convention as amended. The Commission also decided to include CUMYL-PEGACLONE, MDMB-4en-PINACA, 3-methoxyphencyclidine and diphenidine in Schedule II of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971. The Commission further decided to include clonazepam, diclazepam and flubromazepam in Schedule IV of the 1971 Convention.

14. Also at its sixty-fourth session, the Commission adopted the following five resolutions, which cover a broad range of issues: (a) resolution 64/1, entitled “Statement of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the implementation of Member States’ joint commitments to address and counter all aspects of the world drug problem”; (b) resolution 64/2, entitled “Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences”; (c) resolution 64/3, entitled “Promoting scientific evidence-based, quality, affordable and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services”; (d) resolution 64/4, entitled “Improving data collection on, and responses to, the harmful effects of the non-medical use of pharmaceuticals containing narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or new psychoactive substances”; and (e) resolution 64/5, entitled “Facilitating access to comprehensive, scientific evidence-based drug demand reduction services and related measures, including for people impacted by social marginalization”.

15. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, namely the meetings of heads of national drug law enforcement agencies and the Subcommittee on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East, were held in a scaled-down, online format as an extraordinary session on 1 and 2 October 2020. The meeting brought together over 400 practitioners from over 70 States and provided an opportunity to discuss addressing and countering the world drug problem in the light of the pandemic. A separate discussion within each of the subsidiary bodies was also held. Information on the extraordinary session is consolidated in a procedural report by the Secretariat, which was made available to the Commission at its sixty-fourth session ([E/CN.7/2021/7](#)).

## **B. Collaboration and coordination across the United Nations system**

16. The multifaceted nature of the world drug problem requires comprehensive responses and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) cooperates closely with other United Nations entities, inter alia, in the framework of the United Nations system coordination task team on the implementation of the United Nations system common position on drug-related matters and in the context of thematic programmes.

17. In the reporting period, the UNODC-led United Nations system coordination task team conducted online meetings to discuss how to focus its attention on strategic communication to United Nations resident coordinators to encourage a coordinated approach to the drug problem in line with the common position by supporting States

in the implementation of international drug policy commitments through effective inter-agency collaboration. The task team also developed a joint document to serve as guidelines for the United Nations country teams to conduct a common country analysis and develop country strategies.

18. To ensure a comprehensive overview of joint and individual activities undertaken by United Nations entities in support of the practical implementation of policy commitments, in 2017, UNODC created a matrix of United Nations initiatives and encouraged entities to update the information contained therein on an annual basis. In the first half of 2021, new initiatives were reported by the Department of Global Communications of the Secretariat, UNODC, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (see chap. IV below).

19. Experts from WHO, UNAIDS, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), OHCHR and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) contributed, along with national experts and representatives of other intergovernmental and international organizations, as well as civil society organizations, to the thematic discussions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs held in 2020. The Department of Global Communications produced regular news coverage across its multilingual, multimedia news platforms to highlight the range of issues, trends and developments pertaining to the work by the United Nations to counter the world drug problem and, through its United Nations information centres, mobilized local media to raise the awareness of audiences about the world drug problem. During the period under review, United Nations news teams covered several key events and report launches, including the launch of the research brief entitled *COVID-19 and the Drug Supply Chain: From Production and Trafficking to Use*.

20. At its sixty-fourth session, the Commission considered a conference room paper on inter-agency cooperation and coordination of efforts in addressing and countering the world drug problem (E/CN.7/2021/CRP.3) and heard a briefing on the work of the United Nations system coordination task team under the agenda item entitled “Inter-agency cooperation and coordination of efforts in addressing and countering the world drug problem”.

## **IV. Support for States in thematic areas**

### **A. Demand reduction and related measures, including prevention and treatment, as well as other health-related issues**

#### **1. Prevention of drug abuse**

21. During the reporting period, UNODC continued to assist States in increasing their capacities to reduce vulnerability to drug use and dependence and to other risky behaviours. UNODC supported 21 States in establishing and expanding evidence-based drug prevention interventions, including family skills training and life skills education in schools. Training on the prevention of drug use, youth violence and child maltreatment was provided to 900 facilitators, teachers and trainers, who in turn reached 5,000 children and caregivers, including refugees. Further, newly developed materials on parenting (available in 40 languages), aiming to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and support parents during the pandemic and protect youth and children, reached more than 4 million people. Together with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and WHO, materials were developed for people in crowded communities, refugees and other displaced populations. In that context, the Children Immunization Application was launched and updated to include UNODC materials on parenting during the pandemic for refugees in Jordan.

22. UNODC Youth Initiative and Drug Abuse Prevention Centre grants allowed 4,500 youth to deliver evidence-based prevention training and to support their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Youth Forum 2021 was held in an

online format that brought together 62 youth from 41 States. They developed a statement that was presented during the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Participants in the informal scientific network meeting held shortly before the sixty-fourth session of the Commission delivered a statement with suggestions on addressing the drug use situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, including by expanding health services for people who use drugs and people with drug use disorders and by adapting drug prevention treatment, care and rehabilitation interventions.

23. UNODC continued to support States in improving their drug use prevention, treatment, care and rehabilitation systems. In 2020, a total of 133 decision makers from Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mexico and Ukraine were trained on the nature of drug use and drug use disorders and the prevention and treatment of them, based on scientific, human rights and gender considerations. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, only one training session, in Mexico, was held in person; the other sessions were conducted in an online format. Since the inception of the training sessions, in 2017, a total of 1,044 professionals have enhanced their knowledge.

## **2. Treatment of drug use disorders, rehabilitation, recovery and social reintegration; prevention, treatment and care of HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and other blood-borne infectious diseases**

24. In March 2021, UNAIDS adopted the *End Inequalities: End AIDS – Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026*, which is a new approach to using the inequalities lens to close the gaps that are preventing progress towards ending AIDS. The strategy is aimed at reducing the inequalities that drive the AIDS epidemic and prioritizing people who are not yet accessing life-saving HIV services. It sets out evidence-based priority actions and bold targets to get every country and every community on track to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. As a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, UNODC contributed to the development of the strategy, in particular, in relation to HIV and AIDS among people who use drugs and people in prison settings.

25. During the reporting period, UNODC capacity-building and training reached 10,000 professionals and service providers, as well as 67,000 people with drug use disorders. It included focused capacity-building for specialized services for children, women and pregnant women and pilots of “Treatnet Family”, which was developed for professionals working with adolescents with substance use disorders and their families to teach elements of family therapy. Feasibility studies on delivering elements of family therapy in community settings were completed in Indonesia and Viet Nam in December 2020 and results from the study in Indonesia were published in scientific journals.

26. UNODC continued to support the implementation of HIV prevention, treatment and care services and built capacity in 24 high-priority States for HIV and drug use and in 35 high-priority States for HIV in prisons.

27. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC, in collaboration with civil society organizations and partner United Nations agencies, disseminated technical guidance documents and infographics on prevention and care in relation to HIV, tuberculosis, viral hepatitis and COVID-19 for people who use drugs and people in prison, translated and adapted to the national context of all UNODC high-priority States. UNODC also provided five thematic capacity-building webinars for service providers, decision makers and policymakers on implementing innovative methods for the delivery of a comprehensive package of HIV, prevention, treatment and care services, including specific measures aimed at ensuring continuity of care amid pandemic-related constraints.

28. Prior to the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, UNODC, in cooperation with the International AIDS Society, WHO, UNAIDS and the International Network of People who Use Drugs, organized an online multi-stakeholder consultation on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of

HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for people who use drugs, including people in prisons.

29. UNODC provided protective equipment to treatment services in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Kenya, Senegal and States in Central Asia, and published recommendations about treatment, care and rehabilitation for people with drug use disorders in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the Office provided technical assistance related to COVID-19, by means of online workshops, to professionals working with people who use drugs. A workshop was conducted with the Ministry of Health of Ecuador to develop a protocol for the continued functioning of specialized treatment centres for persons with alcohol and drug use disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to guarantee access to services. Furthermore, UNODC launched a questionnaire on the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of treatment services, on measures to adapt to the health crisis and on measures taken that had proved useful for service continuity.

30. UNODC studied the use of new psychoactive substances and stimulant drugs in six States of Eastern Europe and Central Asia to develop a comprehensive HIV response, including HIV testing and antiretroviral treatment.

31. UNODC, WHO and partners developed a technical brief entitled "Addressing the specific needs of women who use drugs: prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, hepatitis B and C and syphilis". The brief covered topics such as measures for monitoring epidemiological trends in mother-to-child transmission in prisons and the availability of service provision to prevent such transmission.

## **B. Ensuring the availability of and access to controlled substances exclusively for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion**

32. UNODC continued to work with WHO, the Union for International Cancer Control, INCB, IAEA and civil society partners to ensure access to controlled medicines for medical and scientific purposes for those in need, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, while preventing the diversion of those substances. The UNODC/WHO/Union for International Cancer Control joint global programme on access to controlled drugs for medical purposes while preventing non-medical use, continued to provide technical guidance at the international level through active participation in three different webinar series coordinated by civil society and weekly partner meetings with the non-communicable disease community to ensure that the needs of patients requiring essential controlled medicines were met.

33. In August 2020, UNODC, WHO and INCB released a joint statement urging States to ensure that the procurement and supply of controlled medicines in States met the needs of patients. It continued to be critical to ensure access to controlled medicines such as sedatives and analgesics for intubation protocols for the treatment of patients with COVID-19 and for non-COVID-19 patients who required controlled medicines for the management of pain and palliative care, surgical care and anaesthesia and mental health and neurological conditions, and for the treatment of drug use disorders. Moreover, UNODC contributed to seven INCB meetings and provided training for competent national authorities.

34. UNODC and over 40 United Nations agencies, the World Bank and regional development banks continued to be actively involved in the work of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, led by WHO. Issues related to pain management for cancer patients, in particular cervical cancer, continued to be a strong focus.

35. UNODC continued to provide technical assistance by means of online meetings with key partners in Nigeria and Panama. The Office also started the implementation of the second phase of interventions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a strong emphasis on capacity-building for health-care workers to assess pain, diagnose

the medical needs of patients and prescribe medication within the guidelines of the highest-quality medical care, including use of essential controlled medicines, when required.

## **C. Supply reduction and related measures; effective law enforcement; responses to drug-related crime, countering money-laundering and promoting judicial cooperation**

### **1. Prevention of drug-related crime**

36. UNODC promotes evidence-based crime and violence prevention practices and supports States in designing, implementing and assessing related policies and programmes that are aimed at addressing root causes and strengthening protective factors. Within that context, the Office continued to engage at-risk youth in both face-to-face and online activities through the “Line Up, Live Up” programme and other sports-based interventions. In 2020 and 2021, the activities, which are aimed at building life skills, provide opportunities for youth participation and promote healthy development and well-being, reached over 21,700 young people from Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as the State of Palestine. In addition, UNODC created safe public spaces for young people’s positive engagement and development through the provision of sports equipment to schools and sports and community centres.

37. Based on the “Line Up, Live Up” curriculum, UNODC provided training to over 1,100 teachers and coaches on how to incorporate individual and social skills training into sports and educational programmes and how to inform and discuss with youth the risks of engaging with drugs and violent behaviour. The teachers and coaches subsequently trained more than 14,000 boys and girls in schools and other community settings in 12 States.

### **2. Countering illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances**

38. UNODC continued to provide, upon request, legislative assistance to States on the implementation of the international drug control conventions or advice on the development of national drug control strategies through the UNODC network of field offices. During the reporting period, UNODC provided legislative advice to Afghanistan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and Nigeria, and policy advice on drug control matters or technical assistance in the development of national drug control strategies to Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ethiopia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mexico, Nigeria and Thailand.

39. UNODC continued to develop and maintain the knowledge management portal known as Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC), which hosts databases containing legal resources relevant to drug trafficking, among other forms of crime. These include databases of legislation, national strategies and bibliographical abstracts.

40. In addition, UNODC continued to maintain the Drug Control Repository. The Repository hosts a compendium of legal resources on the implementation of the international drug control conventions, including almost 1,000 legislative entries on drug control matters from 174 States and 870 legislative entries dealing with drug-related offences from 154 States, as well as additional relevant information on the national and international modalities of the drug control regime.

41. Through the UNODC and World Customs Organization Container Control Programme, UNODC continued to support States in establishing port control units and air cargo control units at seaports, dry ports, land borders, railway terminals and airports. Training was provided to front-line law enforcement officers on profiling and inspecting cargo containers suspected of containing illicit goods. During the reporting period, over 865 tons of various drugs were seized during Container Control Programme operations.



42. As part of the global programme on strengthening criminal justice cooperation along trafficking routes (CRIMJUST), implemented in partnership with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and Transparency International, UNODC supported 20 States from Latin America and Africa along the cocaine trafficking route to enhance criminal investigation and international criminal justice cooperation concerning transnational drug investigations. In 2020, CRIMJUST delivered 11 training sessions to 310 prosecutors and 21 judges. CRIMJUST also delivered 90 capacity-building activities to 1,668 law enforcement officers relating to drug production and trafficking, money-laundering and related crimes. UNODC organized interregional investigative case forums between Belgium and Bolivia (Plurinational State of), which led to information exchange and a mutual legal assistance request, resulting in the prosecution of 17 suspects in Belgium and 5 in the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

43. During the reporting period, through its Global Maritime Crime Programme, UNODC continued to assist States in disrupting drug flows at the points of detection, interdiction, investigation and prosecution. Satellite imagery and artificial intelligence-based systems were used to identify suspect vessels. To ensure safe and effective interdictions at sea, UNODC delivered training on captured vessels of the same types as those operating in the Indian Ocean, off West Africa and in the Gulf of Aden.

44. In 2020, 14 judicial cooperation requests related to drug trafficking were facilitated by UNODC as a result of collaboration between the Judicial Cooperation Network for Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus and the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre.

### **3. Addressing links with other forms of organized crime, including money-laundering, corruption and other criminal activities**

45. Through its Global Firearms Programme, UNODC supported States to effectively deal with illicit firearms as a critical link in anti-drug trafficking responses, including in countering the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. In line with the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Programme's integrated five-pillar approach provides for legislative and policy development, preventive and security measures, criminal justice responses, international cooperation and information exchange and monitoring of illicit firearms flows and emerging threats.

46. In the reporting period, two joint UNODC-INTERPOL operations were conducted to strengthen the criminal justice chain to prevent and counter illicit firearms trafficking and related crimes, especially their links to drug trafficking. In Operation Trigger VI, almost 4,000 suspects across Latin America were arrested and some 200,000 illicit firearms, parts, components, ammunition and explosives were recovered, 27 cocaine labs were dismantled and 21 tons of cocaine, marijuana and precursor chemicals were seized. Under Operation KAFO II, 260 front-line officers from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and the Niger disrupted the trafficking networks used to supply terrorists across West Africa and the Sahel and seized 50 firearms, over 6,000 rounds of ammunition and almost 1.5 tons of drugs. Pre-operational training delivered jointly by INTERPOL and UNODC ensured that officers and prosecutors had the skills needed to detect, identify, investigate and prosecute firearms crime in a holistic manner.

47. In 2020, UNODC, through its Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism, continued to provide States with tailor-made technical assistance and training, delivered in an online format from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The capacity-building included assistance to address drug trafficking as a predicate crime of money-laundering. During the

reporting period, the 13 UNODC anti-money-laundering eLearning modules were widely used by recipient States.

48. UNODC continued to support the inter-agency networks for asset recovery of Southern Africa, Asia and the Pacific, West Africa, and West and Central Asia. These informal networks support the asset recovery process, from the starting point of the investigation involving the tracing of assets, to freezing and seizure, management and, finally, forfeiture and confiscation, including any necessary asset-sharing between jurisdictions.

49. Through the Global Programme on Cybercrime, UNODC continued to support States, in particular those located in South-East Asia, Southern Africa and Latin America, to disrupt and investigate online drug trafficking by building law enforcement capacity to conduct investigations relating to the darknet, the clearnet and cryptocurrencies that are proportionate, lawful, accountable and necessary. Over 100 investigators, judges and prosecutors were trained globally.

## **D. Cross-cutting issues: drugs and human rights, youth, children, women and communities**

### **1. Drugs and human rights, youth, women, children, vulnerable members of society and communities**

50. UNODC, together with WHO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, continued developing guidance documents on addressing substance use disorders in humanitarian settings through a technical consultation involving over 100 experts from more than 30 States and international organizations.

51. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 45/33, the joint programme on technical cooperation and capacity-building for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Philippines (2021–2023) was finalized, which includes a component on a human rights-based approach to drug policies developed jointly with UNODC, OHCHR and other United Nations entities, drawing on relevant guidance set out in the United Nations system common position on drug-related matters and recommendations of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, held in 2016.

52. UNODC continued to support States in developing quality assurance mechanisms for their drug treatment systems and services. During the reporting period, UNODC also facilitated the first informal meeting on addressing corruption in health systems, in particular with regard to drug treatment services and through quality-assuring governance.

53. UNODC launched a global awareness-raising campaign marking the fifth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). UNODC assisted 21 States in enhancing the application of the Bangkok Rules to improve the situation of women prisoners and their social reintegration.

54. In 2020, UNODC continued to advocate for children with substance use-related problems. UNODC assisted States in promoting a child rights-based, multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach to child justice systems as a response to the challenges of dealing with children in conflict with the law, including those with substance use-related problems. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC developed a guide to its technical assistance services in relation to protecting children deprived of liberty during the COVID-19 outbreak to assist States in ensuring that children deprived of liberty are treated in accordance with their rights.

55. Through its Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration: Towards the Promotion of a Culture of Lawfulness and the “Line Up, Live Up”

programme, UNODC continued to engage youth and promote healthy development and well-being, through both online sports challenges, with the participation of over 20,000 youth, and online and face-to-face training. These activities were aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles, physical activity and resilience mechanisms to better deal with the impacts of COVID-19, including the increased risk of substance use.

## **2. Proportionate and effective policies and responses, as well as legal guarantees and safeguards pertaining to criminal justice proceedings and the justice sector**

56. UNODC organized three ancillary meetings on promoting a human rights-based and multidisciplinary approach to criminal justice systems during the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Kyoto, Japan, in March 2021: (a) supporting family interventions to reduce youth violence and crime; (b) reducing prison overcrowding through drug treatment as an alternative; and (c) mental health in prison settings. Further, UNODC organized the first of four informal preparatory meetings on alternatives to conviction or punishment during four different stages of the criminal justice continuum. The remaining three preparatory meetings will follow during 2021 and 2022, with a view to holding a technical consultation in 2022.

57. UNODC continued to provide support to training programmes for prison staff, including through the provision of in-person training and webinars, the enhancement of training curricula and the deployment of prison mentors. Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Maldives, Panama, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam benefited from initiatives to build the capacity of prison officers, including specialized training and technical advice on the treatment of women prisoners. During the reporting period, officials in Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Somalia and Thailand received specialized training and technical advice on gender-responsive prison management and non-custodial measures for women offenders.

58. In Kenya in 2020, UNODC supported interventions to reduce prison overcrowding, including streamlining and standardizing bail and bond procedures, enabling greater use of diversion and plea bargaining, promoting other non-custodial measures and facilitating a sector-wide commitment to reducing prison overcrowding through the National Council on the Administration of Justice. Interventions to build the capacity of prison staff and reduce prison overcrowding addressed, among others, specific issues related to people having committed drug-related offences and people with drug use disorders.

59. During the reporting period, UNODC initiated a technical needs assessment in Thailand and Viet Nam to support the roll-out of the newly published *Toolkit on Gender-Responsive Non-custodial Measures*, involving consultations with police officers, prosecutors and judges to assess gaps and opportunities to strengthen the application of non-custodial measures for women offenders, including women arrested for drug offences.

## **E. Cross-cutting issues in addressing and countering the world drug problem: evolving reality, trends and existing circumstances, emerging and persistent challenges and threats, including new psychoactive substances, in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments**

### **1. Addressing new psychoactive substances, amphetamine-type stimulants, including methamphetamine, the diversion of precursors and pre-precursors and the non-medical use and misuse of pharmaceuticals containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances**

60. In support of Sustainable Development Goal 3, on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, UNODC made available information on

emerging threats posed by new psychoactive substances, utilizing data from its early warning advisory through over 30 public messages and three publications during the reporting period. Information on the most harmful, prevalent and persistent new psychoactive substances was provided to WHO for the review of substances at the forty-third meeting of its Expert Committee on Drug Dependence and used in the preparation of the recommendations on eight substances to be placed under international control.

61. UNODC, through its global Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends (SMART) programme, continued to provide capacity-building and support States in the generation and analysis of data and scientific information on synthetic drugs, including amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances, and published the triennial *Global Synthetic Drugs Assessment* in November 2020.

62. UNODC continued to enhance national laboratories' capacity and effectiveness through the development and delivery of online and laboratory training courses for law enforcement and forensic personnel on the detection of drugs, including new psychoactive substances, and their precursors; the provision of field testing kits, including handheld Raman spectroscopic devices; the provision of authentic samples from the UNODC reference standards collection; and the provision of assistance activities, including the international collaborative exercises, a proficiency test for national laboratories, in which 303 laboratories from 89 States participated in 2020. UNODC also provided scientific support to law enforcement agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and West Africa. Collaboration on safe handling and disposal of seized chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs started with States in Latin America.

63. The *United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs*, a joint effort of UNODC, WHO, the Universal Postal Union and INCB, launched in March 2019, was expanded to offer additional resources for addressing challenges presented by synthetic drugs, including in relation to health responses, access to medicines, legislative approaches, detection and interdiction. The Toolkit platform, currently available in English, Russian and Spanish, offers an interactive experience and includes resources and practical solutions from across the United Nations system. To support States during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Toolkit includes a specialized module on the implication of the pandemic for responses to the synthetic drug problem. To reduce the risk for United Nations staff and frontline and forensic personnel, in 2020, UNODC launched the "Protecting those that protect us" initiative, which included guidance, including instructional videos, on the safe handling and management of the risk of exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2. Evolving reality, trends and existing circumstances, emerging and persistent challenges and threats**

64. In 2020, technical support was provided to Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia and Peru for monitoring coca bush cultivation; to Afghanistan, Mexico and Myanmar for monitoring opium poppy cultivation; and to Nigeria for monitoring cannabis plant cultivation.

65. In the framework of the Afghan Opiate Trade Project, UNODC produced a report on the latest developments in the early stages of the Balkan route, from Afghanistan to Turkey, and a special update based on in-depth interviews conducted with 41 Afghan opiate traffickers who were directly involved in the trafficking of opiates in Afghanistan and abroad. The report concluded that the Balkan route continues to play a major role in supplying opiates to the markets in Iran (Islamic Republic of), Turkey and Europe, with heroin mainly trafficked by land from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Turkey. The interviewees indicated that their main motivation for becoming involved in opiate trafficking was a lack of alternative licit employment opportunities to meet basic living costs. The main motivation for staying involved was the profit made.

66. During the reporting period, UNODC provided support for the design and implementation of a new national drug use survey in Pakistan; a drug use survey among young people in Afghanistan and neighbouring States; and a drug use survey in Uzbekistan.

67. UNODC, in cooperation with WHO and with the involvement of many partners, including UNAIDS, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, the African Union and the Organization of American States, continued to collaborate within the inter-agency technical working group on drug epidemiology to review international data collection and standards in drug epidemiology and to develop common standards and synergies, including those for the monitoring of target 3.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

68. UNODC continued to work on the strengthened and streamlined annual report questionnaire, as adopted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in its decision 63/15. The new data-collection instrument reduces the response burden for States but addresses more broadly the international commitments made over the past decade.

## **F. Strengthening international cooperation based on the principle of common and shared responsibility**

69. UNODC continued to hold implementation workshops to raise awareness of international drug policy commitments, thereby supporting the identification of technical assistance needs as well as facilitating a self-assessment of progress made in national implementation. Adapting to the travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC held its first online workshop with Kenya on 29 September 2020.

70. UNODC continued to update and maintain dedicated websites and portals<sup>1</sup> to support the implementation of all international drug policies, providing a platform for sharing information on upcoming sessions, and good practices in the implementation of commitments.

71. In contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs submitted a substantive contribution, along with the joint statement on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, to the 2021 high-level political forum on sustainable development, held under the theme “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.

72. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs further continued efforts to enhance horizontal cooperation with other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, including the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. On 12 June 2020, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice hosted a joint online high-level special event commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The special event was organized to raise awareness of the commitments made in 1995 in Beijing, in particular those relating to the work of the Vienna-based commissions.

<sup>1</sup> [www.unodc.org/ungass2016](http://www.unodc.org/ungass2016); [www.postungass2016.org](http://www.postungass2016.org); and [www.unodc.org/hlr/index.html](http://www.unodc.org/hlr/index.html).

## **G. Alternative development; regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented balanced drug control policy; addressing socioeconomic issues**

### **1. Socioeconomic issues and alternative development**

73. UNODC continued to provide technical assistance to Afghanistan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Peru and to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities to vulnerable populations affected by illicit drug crop cultivation, drug use and other drug-related problems. Alternative development programmes are aimed at helping communities cope with adversity by generating and supporting licit sources of income. This licit livelihood support became increasingly important to communities, as it strengthened community resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic.

74. In some States, COVID-19 infection rates remained relatively low, which allowed for a continuation of UNODC support on the ground. However, international travel and trade disruptions made it increasingly difficult for communities to connect to markets to sell their alternative development products. Such disruptions in the legal market can make illegal activities more attractive. UNODC supported mitigating measures, including the provision of logistical support to ensure a continuation of market access for alternative development products, reducing pressure to return to illicit cultivation.

75. In Afghanistan, UNODC is conducting impact assessments of its alternative development projects and of the alternative development projects implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as part of a collaboration between those organizations. The impact assessments include socioeconomic and remote sensing annual surveys and provide statistically valid and robust evidence of the impacts of alternative development projects on multidimensional issues related to poverty and on illicit drug crop cultivation. During 2020, UNODC initiated preparations for the final impact assessment of a UNODC alternative development project and the baseline work for a new UNDP alternative development project in Afghanistan.

76. Comparative research studies on the contribution of alternative development to farmers' livelihoods are in the final stage of preparation. The studies include analyses of the change in income and inequality before and after the implementation of projects in Afghanistan and Colombia and cover gender and intersectionality assessments.

### **2. Technical and financial cooperation for comprehensive and balanced development-oriented drug policies and viable economic alternatives**

77. UNODC continued its partnership with Germany, Peru and Thailand to increase policy dialogue to promote alternative development. The joint efforts included the presentation of a conference room paper (E/CN.7/2021/CRP.6) to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its sixty-fourth session and the organization of a side event at that session, as well as the organization of an expert group meeting on alternative development involving 100 participants from Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and academia.

78. UNODC continued to improve programmes through forging public-private partnerships and strengthening market access. In 2020, the Office fostered strong cooperation with the Malongo coffee company, which is now contracting farming cooperatives in Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and Myanmar and is in discussions with the Vanmai cooperative in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

## **H. Governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

### **1. Information on the work of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

79. The standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of UNODC continued to play an important role as a forum for discussions in areas including strategic and budgetary matters, evaluation, oversight, programme development and implementation, the financial situation of UNODC and strengthening human resources governance. The mandate of the working group was extended by the Economic and Social Council, in its decision 2021/218, until the reconvened sessions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to be held in December 2021, at which time a further review of the functioning of the working group will be carried out.

### **2. Information on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Strategy 2021–2025**

80. Led by the Executive Director, the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025 was developed by the Office and was launched in February 2021. The drafting process was based on consultations with States that were held throughout 2020. The Strategy takes a people-centred approach and outlines the unique position of UNODC across the United Nations pillars of peace and security, development and human rights, and its threefold role of encompassing normative work, research and technical assistance in support of States. The Strategy is built around five thematic areas: (a) addressing and countering the world drug problem; (b) preventing and countering organized crime; (c) preventing and countering corruption and economic crime; (d) preventing and countering terrorism; and (e) crime prevention and criminal justice.

81. The new Strategy guides the implementation of the Office's substantive mandates, including in connection with the 2030 Agenda, through increased integration and effective multilateral cooperation. The Strategy addresses cross-cutting issues, such as gender and the empowerment of women, human rights and youth as agents of change, to ensure that no one is left behind. The Strategy also identifies change and efficiency enablers to ensure better delivery of UNODC mandates, leveraging synergies with a wider range of actors and establishing new partnerships, including with civil society organizations, academia and the private sector.

### **3. Information on strategic planning**

82. UNODC developed a strategy implementation matrix for the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025, including the thematic area of workplans, to ensure that progress towards the Strategy's commitments is regularly monitored. The Office is further developing plans and guidance on the change enablers, particularly on resource mobilization, communications and innovation, and is reviewing its management instructions to streamline processes and create the right incentives for change.

83. UNODC has been working on regional strategic visions and it launched the Strategic Vision for Africa 2030 in February 2021 after a comprehensive consultation process. The vision for Latin America and the Caribbean is in development.

### **4. Information on integrated programming**

84. UNODC led the Secretariat-wide group of the Umoja Extended Business Team dedicated to project planning, monitoring and reporting. The new integrated planning, monitoring and reporting solution is live, allowing UNODC to prepare the transition

of existing projects into the new solution, which provides a link between expenditure and substantive results.

85. UNODC continued its technical assistance delivery under integrated global, regional and country programmes. Fifteen country and regional programmes were being implemented, and several global programmes continued to be implemented despite the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. During 2020, over 20 country, regional and global programmes were revised.

## **5. Information on evaluation**

86. UNODC addressed the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by redesigning its methods and approaches quickly, working closely with the United Nations Evaluation Group and seeking to implement the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025. UNODC also invested in innovative methods to ensure the finalization of gender-responsive and inclusive evaluations at the policy and programme levels and meet the accountability needs of States and stakeholders.

87. Evaluations and oversight results were aggregated through meta-analyses. The web-based evaluation management tool, Unite Evaluations, ensured that results were reported in terms of strategic targets. UNODC further focused on strengthening capacity for planning, implementing and using evaluations to inform evidence-based decision-making.

## **6. Information on fundraising and private sector cooperation initiatives**

88. Pledges to all mandate areas amounted to \$350 million, although it should be noted that the donor commitments are increasingly focused on the crime mandate, with contributions in drug control areas reaching approximately \$100 million (29 per cent of contributions) across all mandate areas. The private sector continued to be targeted as a strategic partner in drug control, with public-private sector partnerships being pursued as part of the donor-diversification approach.

## **7. Information on the financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

89. Despite efforts to increase fundraising and partnerships, the Office's financial situation remains vulnerable. UNODC continues to face a persistent deterioration in general-purpose income and its regular budget and programme support cost funds. General-purpose income is projected at \$9.0 million (1.2 per cent of the total income of UNODC) for the period 2020–2021. The low level of unearmarked funding is a major challenge to the effective implementation of the mandates and programmes of UNODC, as well as to the ability of the Office to manage its operations strategically, exercise effective corporate oversight, fund key activities and launch new initiatives and programmes.

90. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had significant implications for the programme delivery of UNODC. The Office reviewed activities, issued policy briefs and research papers and coordinated with donors and national beneficiaries with regard to the dates of events and other activities to adjust to the unprecedented situation. UNODC also took measures to support implementation at headquarters and in the field. Despite the Office's rapid response, programme delivery is projected to decrease by \$129.3 million (18.5 per cent), compared with the initial budget of \$697.9 million for the period 2020–2021.

## **V. Concluding observations**

91. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic crisis posed a number of challenges to the world and to well-established processes in the United Nations system. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, ensuring business continuity, working on innovative solutions and engaging all stakeholders to address the challenges have been top



priorities. The crisis has also once more proved that global problems cannot be addressed in isolation; a holistic and coordinated approach based on shared responsibility is required.

92. COVID-19 had major consequences for all aspects of the world drug problem, affecting the capacity of drug treatment and health services and posing new challenges for law enforcement authorities to address changes in trafficking routes and methods.

93. I call upon all States to ensure that no one affected by the world drug problem is left behind in our response to COVID-19 and in our efforts to mitigate the drug-related consequences of the pandemic, while continuing to accelerate the implementation of all international drug policy commitments.

94. The commitments made by States over the past decade provide for a comprehensive and balanced response that is needed more than ever. The United Nations continues to support States in the implementation of those commitments.

95. In the light of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and related mobility restrictions on the illegal drug markets, I urge all States to closely monitor developments and address the challenges in States of supply, transit and destination as a common and shared responsibility. In the *World Drug Report 2021*, UNODC encouraged international cooperation and the exchange and transfer of law enforcement intelligence and effective interdiction approaches and best practices. The United Nations system continues to support States to address drug trafficking as a predicate crime of money-laundering and disrupt and investigate online drug trafficking.

96. It continues to be critically important to ensure the availability of and access to controlled substances for the treatment of patients, both with and without COVID-19. In the *World Drug Report 2021*, it was noted that COVID-19 had triggered innovations in drug use prevention and treatment services. It contained a call to maintain those innovations with regard to the delivery of drug-related services to increase the accessibility and coverage of those services. I call upon all States to ensure adequate resource allocation and to mitigate the fragility of supply lines in order to strengthen approaches that enhance both resilience and efficiency, while addressing the interacting threats arising from the illicit trade in controlled substances.

97. Alternative development has also become more critical to address illicit drug crop cultivation and foster peaceful, safe, prosperous and inclusive societies. A lack of long-term funding support continues to inhibit the potential of alternative development. I urge States to strengthen support for research to identify the local and regional socioeconomic and environmental determinants of illicit drug crop cultivation and to enhance the effectiveness of alternative development projects.

98. In the *World Drug Report 2021*, it was noted that, from 1995 to 2019, cannabis potency increased by nearly four times in parts of the world, and the percentage of adolescents who perceived the drug as harmful fell by 40 per cent. Considering that the highest prevalence of drug use is among youth and keeping in mind the influences incurred by the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, I urge all States to establish and expand evidence-based drug prevention interventions and develop quality-assurance mechanisms for their drug treatment systems and services to support young people, parents and vulnerable families during the pandemic.

99. In spite of the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office and its governing bodies adapted to the new way of working and redesigned their methods and approaches quickly to fulfil their mandates, and continued to collaborate with other United Nations entities and to support States to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. With the lessons learned and experience gained, it is important to consider how the opportunities presented by the special conditions arising from COVID-19 can be captured in order to “build back stronger” after the pandemic.