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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 [74/178](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-fifth 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, in March 2019. 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 Member States in addressing and countering the world drug problem.

* [A/75/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 74/178, provides an overview of the current world drug situation and work undertaken in assisting Member 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 of 2009, 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 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”, of 2016, 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 of 2019.

2. Addressing and countering the world drug problem remains crucial in the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Thus, it is necessary to address the key causes and consequences of the world drug problem, including those in the health, social, human rights, economic, justice, public security and law enforcement fields, in line with the principle of common and shared responsibility.

3. As the world drug problem is multifaceted and closely intertwined with all aspects of sustainable development, cooperation within the United Nations system, as well as with other stakeholders, is key to advancing peace and security, development and human rights. The United Nations is committed to supporting Member 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 74/178, this report includes a section on collaboration and coordination across the United Nations system.

4. This report highlights, among other things, efforts in data collection, including the revised and streamlined annual report questionnaire, as comprehensive, reliable and comparable data on all facets of the world drug problem are a fundamental prerequisite for targeted, effective and efficient policymaking and interventions.

5. Particularly in the light of the current health crisis, data collection proves to be crucial, as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the responding measures taken by Governments are likely to have a severe impact on drug production, drug trafficking and drug consumption patterns. On the basis of initial data collected from Governments, open sources and the field offices, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) developed a first analysis, highlighting the expected changes, and developed policy documents¹ to address the emerging challenges.

II. Extent of the world drug problem

6. According to the *World Drug Report 2019*, both the range of drugs and drug markets have continued to expand and diversify.

7. About 271 million people worldwide, roughly 5.5 per cent of the global population aged 15–64, used drugs at least once during 2017. Some 35 million people who use drugs suffer from drug use disorders. The highest prevalence rates of drug use are found among the youth population.

8. 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

¹ Available at www.unodc.org/unodc/en/covid-19-policy-documents.html.

worldwide in 2017 – face the greatest health risks. More than half of them live with hepatitis C and one in eight lives with HIV.

9. While the headline figures for drug users have changed little in recent years, this stability masks ongoing changes in drug markets. The global area under coca cultivation doubled from 2013 to 2017, and the global area under opium poppy cultivation continued to be at a historically high level, despite the decline in 2018 (a 17 per cent decline from 2017) to about 345,900 ha. Drugs such as heroin and cocaine which have long been available increasingly coexist with new psychoactive substances, and the non-medical use of prescription drugs appears to have increased over the last 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 substances and combinations available has never been greater.

10. The non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids is of increasing concern for both law enforcement authorities and public health professionals in several 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 the 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, is emerging as a concern.

11. East and South-East Asia and North America remain the main regions for methamphetamine trafficking. In North America, the availability of methamphetamine was reported to have increased between 2013 and 2017. Qualitative assessments, the increases in consumption and in 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 in particular has become a key concern.

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

12. Following up to the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, the Commission focused on accelerating the implementation of all commitments made in the Political Declaration and Plan of Action of 2009, the Joint Ministerial Statement of 2014 and the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly held in 2016. The Commission adopted, in June 2019, a multi-year workplan, foreseeing annual thematic sessions to discuss how the different challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019 can be addressed by effectively implementing all international drug policy commitments. In line with the workplan, the first thematic session was held from 16 to 18 October 2019, involving all relevant stakeholders, including United Nations entities and specialized agencies, as well as international, regional and non-governmental organizations.

13. The discussions focused on the expansion and diversification of the range of drugs and drugs markets; the record high levels of abuse, the illicit cultivation and production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as the illicit trafficking in those substances and in precursors; the rise of the illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals; and increasing risks to public health and safety, as well as scientific, legal and regulatory challenges posed by synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of prescription drugs. The outcome of

that session was brought to the attention of the Commission in the form of a Chair's summary (E/CN.7/2020/CRP.1).

14. To improve data collection, research and the sharing of information, as requested in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, UNODC revised the existing annual report questionnaire to strengthen and streamline it in order to reflect and assess the progress made in the implementation of all commitments. The Commission adopted the revised annual report questionnaire by consensus at its sixty-third session, in its decision 63/15. UNODC is expected to start its implementation in 2020, in order to present the first report based on data from the revised questionnaire to the Commission at its sixty-fifth session, to be held in 2022.

15. UNODC, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) continued to cooperate closely, within their respective mandates under the international drug control conventions, and provided, upon request, substantial support to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for informed and evidence-based decision-making on the scope of control of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors. In June and September 2019, the Commission held two intersessional meetings with WHO, UNODC and INCB on the WHO recommendations on cannabis and cannabis-related substances in order to clarify open questions of a legal, scientific and medical nature.

16. Also at its sixty-third session, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs decided to include crotonylfentanyl, and valeryl fentanyl in Schedule I of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, as amended. The Commission further decided to include DOC in Schedule I of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, AB-FUBINACA, 5F-AMB-PINACA, 5F-MDMB-PICA, 4F-MDMB-BINACA, 4-CMC, *N*-ethylhexedrone, *alpha*-PHP in Schedule II of the 1971 Convention, and flualprazolam and etizolam in Schedule IV of the 1971 Convention. The Commission also decided to include methyl *alpha*-phenylacetoacetate, including its optical isomers, in Table I of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. Further, the Commission decided to continue at its sixty-third session the consideration of the recommendations of WHO on cannabis and cannabis-related substances and to vote at its reconvened sixty-third session, to be held in December 2020.

17. In addition, the Commission adopted the following five resolutions, which cover a broad range of issues: "Promoting efforts by Member States to address and counter the world drug problem, in particular supply reduction-related measures, through effective partnerships with private sector entities", "Promoting and improving the collection and analysis of reliable and comparable data to strengthen balanced, integrated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary and scientific evidence-based responses to the world drug problem", "Promoting awareness-raising, education and training as part of a comprehensive approach to ensuring access to and the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and improving their rational use", "Promoting the involvement of youth in drug prevention efforts", and "Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy".

18. Five meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission were held in 2019: the Twenty-Ninth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Africa, held in Balaclava, Mauritius from 16 to 20 September; the Forty-third Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok from 22 to 25 October; the Thirteenth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Europe, held in Lisbon from 2 to 5 July; the Twenty-ninth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Lima from 7 to 11 October; and the fifty-fourth session of the Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East, held in Tashkent from 23 to 27 September.

19. The subsidiary bodies addressed priority issues in their regions and discussed the regional implementation of all international drug policy commitments, in line with the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, including through workshops addressing topics

such as the misuse of new technologies for drug trafficking, the illicit manufacture and diversion of precursors, and specific needs of children and youth in contact with the justice system.

20. As in-person meetings have been limited due to the global health crisis related to COVID-19, the intersessional work of the Commission has been conducted virtually to the extent possible. Consultations and preparations are ongoing to conduct the intersessional activities scheduled for 2020 using videoconferencing services. Measures have been undertaken to sustain the dialogue on Commission-related matters among Member States and other relevant stakeholders on a real-time basis. In particular, a dedicated online communication channel has been set up to facilitate the exchange of ideas and good practices among Member States on the modalities of the remote work of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, as well as the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, also based in Vienna.

B. Collaboration and coordination across the United Nations system

21. The multifaceted nature of the world drug problem requires comprehensive responses that address supply and demand, protect health and human rights and contribute to sustainable development. Therefore, 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, which are described in section IV.

22. In the reporting period, the task team conducted several online meetings and one face-to-face meeting on the occasion of the sixty-third session of the Commission. In those meetings, the task team decided to focus its attention on a strategic communication to United Nations resident coordinators to encourage a United Nations coordinated approach to the drug problem in line with the United Nations system common position supporting the implementation of the international drug control policy through effective inter-agency collaboration. The task team also envisages designing joint topical projects that could involve all members. Further, in 2019, the task team also briefed Member States on its work, in Brussels, Vienna and Geneva.

23. To ensure a comprehensive overview of joint and individual activities undertaken by United Nations entities in support of the practical implementation of the operational recommendations contained in the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, held in 2016, UNODC created in 2017 a matrix of the initiatives of United Nations entities and has encouraged United Nations entities to update annually the information contained. In the first half of 2020, new initiatives were reported by the Department of Global Communications, UNODC, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and WHO.

24. In autumn 2019, during the Commission on Narcotic Drugs interactive, inclusive thematic sessions focused on policy implementation, in the follow-up to the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, experts from UN-Women, WHO, the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNDP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and INCB, participated, along with national experts and representatives of other intergovernmental and international organizations as well as civil society organizations, in the thematic discussions. In March 2020, at its sixty-third session, the Commission considered a note by the Secretariat on inter-agency cooperation and coordination of efforts in addressing and countering the world drug problem (E/CN.7/2020/CRP.5).

25. The Department of Global Communications produced regular news coverage across its multimedia, multilingual news platforms to highlight the range of issues,

trends and developments pertaining to the United Nations work to counter the world drug problem and mobilized, through its United Nations information centres, local media to sensitize audiences to the world drug problem. In June 2019, for example, United Nations information centres organized in Beirut, Rabat, Tehran and Vienna, together with United Nations entities and external partners, special press events to launch the *World Drug Report 2019*.

IV. Support for Member 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

26. Through the implementation of evidence-based family-skills training and life-skills education programmes, UNODC contributed to the prevention of drug use, youth violence, other risky behaviours, and child maltreatment in 18 countries benefiting 95,000 children and parents. Moreover, following the initial pilot programme in the previous year, the Office finalized the materials of “Family UNITED”, a universal programme for families. Special materials to support parents and caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic were developed and disseminated through social media.

27. The Youth Initiative mobilized youth and civil society organizations and supported them in delivering evidence-based prevention through social networks (for 18,400 people), grants (3,800 youth directly and 30,300 indirectly in 7 countries) and the Youth Forum (41 participants from 34 countries). During the sixty-third session of the Commission, the participants in the Youth Forum addressed the plenary and presented the handbook on youth participation in drug prevention work (E/CN.7/2020/CRP.12), an initiative undertaken following recommendations from the young people participating in the Youth Forum 2018. Presently, they are actively supporting their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

28. UNODC, together with the International Society of Substance Use Professionals, organized the International Conference on Drug Prevention, Treatment and Care: Inspiration and Direction, bringing together over 400 experts in substance use prevention, treatment and care from 100 countries for training and the sharing of experiences. In addition, UNODC led a series of regional and national dialogues to strengthen knowledge of 751 policymakers from 36 countries of the nature of drug use and drug use disorders and their prevention and treatment. The seminars focused on science, human rights and gender concerns, as well as the UNODC and WHO standards on the prevention of drug use and treatment of drug use disorders.

29. At the sixty-third session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, UNODC and WHO presented the final version of the UNODC/WHO *International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders*, following the field testing of the initial draft in more than 10 countries.

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

30. UNODC, often jointly with WHO, supported Member States in expanding and/or improving the services for the treatment, health care, social protection and rehabilitation of people with drug use disorders in 22 countries, reaching an estimated 51,000 patients, including children exposed to drugs at a very young age, as well as pregnant women with drug use disorders.

31. At the sixty-third session of the Commission, the preliminary results were presented of a scientific study on the feasibility of managing opioid overdose through the community-based distribution of naloxone in four countries. Also presented were

the preliminary results of a study of the implementation of the UNODC Treatnet Family programme, which provides components of family therapy for adolescents with substance use disorders and/or who are in contact with the criminal justice system.

32. A multi-phase process on promoting non-stigmatizing attitudes in the development and implementation of policies related to health, care and social services for persons who use drugs and with drug use disorders was also started during the period under review. As detailed in conference room paper E/CN.7/2020/CRP.11, completed activities include an overview of the scientific literature, an open online consultation, as well as a technical consultation on stigma conducted in January 2020. On the basis of the material collected during this multi-phase process, UNODC is drafting a handbook for Member States on best practices in this field.

33. Further, UNODC promoted human rights-based, public health-focused and gender-responsive HIV services for people who use drugs and people in prisons and built capacity in 25 countries for HIV and drug use services, and capacity in 34 countries for HIV services in prisons. UNODC disseminated the *Technical Guide on HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for People Who Use Stimulant Drugs* in its delivery of training for over 250 experts from 21 countries.

34. UNODC helped to establish referral systems and increase collaboration between prisons and local community health-service providers aimed at ensuring continuity of care of HIV and tuberculosis services in prisons. Assessments to support HIV and other health programming were implemented in prisons in 10 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

35. The Independent Evaluation Section of UNODC published its *Meta-synthesis of Evaluation Reports 2017–2018*, including aggregate findings relating to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support in prisons. UNODC initiatives were found to be very relevant in responding to identified national and regional priorities, thereby providing a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS in prisons that facilitated an even more holistic view of the integration of human rights.

36. Together with WHO, UN-Women, UNAIDS and civil society, UNODC addressed the needs of women who inject drugs by training more than 1,400 service providers in 13 countries. UNODC jointly with WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women and the UNAIDS secretariat and in consultation with experts nominated by Member States, developed the *Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV in Prisons: A Technical Guide* and disseminated that guide through the training of nearly 120 key implementing partners from 14 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe.

37. UN-Women, jointly with UNAIDS, WHO and UNODC, supported, in 2019 and 2020, the national HIV response of Viet Nam in the areas of prevention, testing, treatment, protecting human rights, reducing stigma and discrimination and improving gender equality, in particular taking into account the needs and vulnerabilities of women who use drugs.

38. In the area of data collection, UNODC continues to collaborate with WHO, UNAIDS and the World Bank in gathering strategic information on people who inject drugs and on the prevalence among them of HIV, the hepatitis C virus and the hepatitis B virus. These data were published in the *World Drug Report 2019*, in the section on the latest trends in drug use and health consequences, and disseminated globally.

39. People who use drugs and with drug use disorders can be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to underlying health issues, stigma and higher economic and social vulnerabilities. This is particularly the case in prison settings, where more people suffer from drug use disorders and other co-morbid mental health disorders, as well as HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases (whether related to the use of drugs or not). That is why UNODC has developed guidance on how to ensure the continuity of drug treatment, health care, social protection and rehabilitation services, including

HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care, during the pandemic, both in the community and in prison settings. On the basis of the guidance, UNODC has provided capacity-building to policymakers and service providers through a variety of online tools, including webinars and e-learning platforms, and supported services in their delivery, for example, by providing emergency supplies of personal protective equipment and medications and/or organizing the provision of counselling by phone. UNODC also issued a UNODC, WHO, UNAIDS and OHCHR joint statement on COVID-19 in prisons and other closed settings, urgently drawing the attention of political leaders to the heightened vulnerability of prisoners and other people deprived of liberty.

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

40. Access to and availability of essential controlled medicines at the international and national levels continues to be a critical issue that UNODC addresses jointly with WHO and the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC). UNODC has also fostered ongoing partnerships with INCB, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and civil society partners such as the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care, the African Palliative Care Association and Indiana University.

41. The UNODC/WHO/UICC joint global programme on access to controlled drugs for medical purposes, while preventing diversion and abuse, continued to provide technical guidance in Panama, Nigeria and Timor-Leste and held regional meetings in Latin America and Central Asia. Work focused on three areas: (a) analysis of legislation and development of comprehensive national policies and regulations; (b) building the capacity of the existing and new health-care workforce to screen, assess and care for persons living in pain; and (c) strengthening a regulatory system with a supply chain that is responsive to the needs of patients.

42. The regional meeting held in Panama in March 2019 worked with the health sector and regulatory sector using the document entitled *Technical Guidance: Increasing Access and Availability of Controlled Medicines* as a tool to develop a priority focus on increasing access to the medicines required to appropriately manage pain in patients in Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama. In November 2019, UNODC held a follow-up meeting in Uzbekistan focused on the experience and needs of the regulatory bodies related to access to controlled medicines.

43. Under the leadership of WHO, UNODC, as well as 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. Issues related to pain management for cancer patients, in particular cervical cancer, have been on the agenda of the coordination efforts of the Task Force. UNODC participated in two high-level events organized by IAEA to highlight the importance of cancer patients having access to adequate medication. In turn, IAEA presented its work on increasing access to controlled medicines at side events held at the last five sessions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

44. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC advocated, together with partners, for access to controlled medicines as they are instrumental for patients on ventilators and for patients with other symptoms requiring pain management, and provided basic guidance for the consideration of policymakers.

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

45. Through the Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration, UNODC continued to promote sport-based life-skills training to prevent drug use and crime among youth, using sport as a tool for creating safe public spaces in which youth can positively develop and interact with peers. On the basis of the UNODC “Line Up, Live Up” curriculum, UNODC provided training to over 300 teachers and coaches on how to incorporate individual and social skills training into their 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 who received that training subsequently trained more than 7,000 boys and girls in schools and other community settings in 11 countries, helping them build resilience to substance use, violence and crime. In Morocco, UNODC engaged 68 experts from various sectors and levels of government as well as civil society in practical reflection and training on ways to prevent crime, violence and drug use affecting children and youth.

2. Countering illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

46. UNODC continued to support countries seeking to ratify the three international drug control conventions. In August 2019, Palau acceded to the 1988 Convention, becoming the 191st party to that treaty.

47. The Office continues to provide, upon request, legislative assistance to Member States on the implementation of the international drug control conventions. During the reporting period, assistance was provided to Cambodia, Eswatini and Mozambique by reviewing and advising on draft national legislation on drug control. Further, UNODC provided technical assistance on implementation of those treaties and related international commitments to Angola, Ethiopia and Papua New Guinea.

48. UNODC has continued to develop and maintain the knowledge management portal known as Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC), which hosts a number of databases containing legal resources relevant to drug trafficking, among other forms of crime. These include databases of legislation, national strategies, and bibliographic abstracts. The international drug control treaties and information about the ratification of these treaties can be found on the treaties database. Additionally, the CNA Directory, hosted on the knowledge management portal known as Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC), provides a directory of competent national authorities designated under the 1988 Convention.

49. Furthermore, the Office continued to maintain the Drug Control Repository, an information management portal on the implementation of the international drug control treaties. The Repository hosts a database of legislation on drug control which currently contains 938 pieces of legislation from 174 countries.

50. Through the UNODC-World Customs Organization (WCO) Container Control Programme, UNODC continued to support Member States in establishing port control units and air cargo control units at seaports, dry ports, land borders, railway stations and airports. Training was provided to front-line law enforcement officers on profiling and inspecting cargo containers suspected of containing illicit goods. To date, over 775 tons of various drugs have been seized in Container Control Programme operations.

51. In an effort to improve coordination and exchange of information between organizations working in the field of border management, UNODC has embarked upon an informal consultation mechanism with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the International Organization for Migration, the Organization

for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX) and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. These meetings usually take place on a monthly basis and have led to increased cooperation and proposals for joint programme delivery and have been widely recognized by participating organizations as an area of good practice which could be replicated elsewhere.

52. The Global Programme for Strengthening the Capacities of Member States to Prevent and Combat Organized and Serious Crime provided support to Member States to facilitate and strengthen international cooperation in criminal matters for the investigation and prosecution of drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime through the West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors, the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network and the judicial cooperation network for central Asia and the Southern Caucasus. In 2019, support was also provided to establish the South-East Asia Justice Network (SEAJust). Through these networks, UNODC facilitated cooperation between central authorities on 48 requests for assistance.

53. In addition to the programmes mentioned, there are a number of other programmes with activities relating to drug trafficking and seizures, such as the Global Maritime Crime Programme, as well as numerous regional and country programmes.

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

54. Through the Global Firearms Programme, UNODC supports Member States to effectively address illicit firearms as a critical link in anti-drug trafficking responses, including in countering illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition and related crimes. 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. In this vein, the Programme's work fosters international cooperation and the exchange of good practices in crime prevention and investigations and strengthens capacities of authorities to generally fight transnational illicit flows and to disrupt the criminal organizations that are behind them.

55. UNODC organized with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) the law enforcement operation KAFO, which targets firearms trafficking networks in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, and is co-organizing the Trigger operations in Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, Africa, Europe and the Western Balkans. The operations are part of joint efforts to strengthen the criminal justice chain to prevent and counter illicit firearms trafficking and related crimes, especially their links to drug trafficking, from detection to prosecution and adjudication.

56. In 2019, 102 countries and two jurisdictions in nine subregions received technical assistance from the UNODC Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism, in the areas of countering money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. The assistance was delivered through tailor-made modular training, international conferences and substantive legal reviews.

57. UNODC also assisted Member States to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically its target 16.4, under which Member States are to significantly reduce illicit financial flows by 2030. In January and March 2019, two regional training workshops were organized in South Africa focusing on pre- and post-seizure asset management, involving law enforcement, border management and other officials from 15 countries. In October 2019, officers from four Caribbean

countries were trained in tracking couriers transporting cash across borders. A joint meeting of UNODC and the Southern African Development Community on fostering international cooperation on illicit financial flows and asset forfeiture was held in November 2019, with the participation of 15 States.

58. UNODC continues to provide support to the inter-agency networks for asset recovery of Latin America, Southern Africa, Asia and the Pacific, West Africa, and West and Central Asia. These informal networks of law enforcement and judicial practitioners support the complete asset recovery process, from the starting point of the investigation involving the tracing of assets, to freezing and seizure, management and finally the forfeiture/confiscation, including any necessary asset-sharing between jurisdictions.

59. Furthermore, UNODC continues to implement its cryptocurrency investigation training course at national and regional levels. The training course is a joint project under the UNODC Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism and the Global Programme against Cybercrime. The course focuses on enhancing collaboration between investigators and international cooperation on cryptocurrency cases, as well as on increasing the understanding of the cryptocurrency concept.

60. UNODC provided capacity-building to over 36 Member States to counter online criminality, including electronic evidence and illicit financial flows. As the majority of transnational organized drug criminality is facilitated by online means, the work of UNODC to counter this key enabler helps Member States to reduce risks and increase international cooperation.

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

61. In January 2020, UNDP, the International Centre on Human Rights and Drug Policy, University of Essex, WHO, UNAIDS and OHCHR launched the Spanish language version of the *International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy* and held the first regional implementation meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean.

62. In cooperation with the Thailand Institute of Justice, UNODC developed the *Toolkit on Gender-Responsive Non-custodial Measures* to support countries in their efforts to strengthen the capacity of police, prosecutors and judges in applying non-custodial measures, in line with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) and related international standards. The toolkit includes a focus on women arrested for drug offences and provides specific training materials on ensuring gender equality in the use and application of non-custodial measures at the pretrial, sentencing and post-sentencing stages. UNODC assisted seven countries to improve the situation of women prisoners and their social reintegration in line with the Bangkok Rules.

63. UNODC promoted the Bangkok Rules and related United Nations standards and norms at an expert group meeting on the sentencing of women convicted of drug-related offences organized by Penal Reform International in February 2020. At the meeting, UNODC also participated in a review of a new study covering 18 jurisdictions which found that although responses to drug-related offences are now widely recognized as having a differentiated impact on women, this is not reflected in the applicable legislation and/or sentencing guidelines and practices.

64. In Sri Lanka, UNODC continued to promote treatment as an alternative to conviction and punishment for people with drug use disorders by providing general advice and contributing to the development of a curriculum on this issue in line with

the Columbus Plan. UNODC also initiated a multi-phase process to develop guidance on promoting mental health, including treatment for drug use disorders, in prison settings.

65. The cooperation between UNODC, UNICEF, WHO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UN-Women, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and other stakeholders within the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children was strengthened. In the framework of the partnership, UNODC, UNICEF and WHO led the development and implementation of INSPIRE, a set of seven evidence-based strategies for countries and communities working to eliminate violence against children, three of which can directly improve the situation of children with substance use-related problems. UNODC co-organized a first regional workshop on INSPIRE in the Americas, held in El Salvador and participated in several implementation meetings.

66. UNODC promoted a child rights-based and multidisciplinary approach to juvenile justice systems as a response to the challenges of dealing with children with substance use-related problems. Further, UNODC supported Member States in drafting legislation and exchanging best practices to prevent drug use and to ensure that medical, psychiatric and psychological care are provided in a holistic manner, in compliance with child rights and without discrimination, including for children in conflict with the law and those affected by terrorist or violent extremism groups.

67. In December 2019, UNODC organized an event on family skills highlighting the importance of families in the treatment and the need to strengthen child protection systems. The event raised awareness of the vital role of family and caregivers as key players in the effective prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of children recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups, in line with the UNODC publication *Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Child Victims of Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: A Training Manual*, as well as the UNODC/WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention and related programmes (e.g., the Strong Families and Families United programmes).

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

68. In Kenya, criminal justice practitioners from judiciary, public prosecution, probation and witness services benefited from new policies developed with the support of UNODC related to plea bargaining, diversion and alternative justice. The policies have already been applied in a number of low-level drug use cases.

69. As victims of trafficking in persons can be and have been forced to work in the illicit drug industry, UNODC continues to support the training of investigators and prosecutors in identifying and responding to suspected victims of trafficking. In 2019, through the work of the United Nations system-wide Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, UNODC developed an issue brief to help legislators, police, prosecutors and policymakers to implement measures to prevent the arrest, charge, detention, prosecution or punishment of victims of trafficking for illegal conduct that they committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked.

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

70. In support of Sustainable Development Goal 3, on health, UNODC collected information on recent health threats posed by new psychoactive substances, utilizing data from toxicological casework collected through a new module of its early warning advisory. Information from the period 2018–2019 was published in two reports on current new psychoactive substances threats. Information on the most harmful, prevalent and persistent new psychoactive substances was also provided to WHO for the review of substances at the forty-second meeting of its Expert Committee on Drug Dependence.

71. The global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends (SMART) programme continues to support existing research, collection and scientific analysis of data related to synthetic drugs, including amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances. The UNODC early warning advisory on new psychoactive substances continues to provide the basis for effective evidence-based policy responses and collaboration with national, regional and international partners, including the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States, WCO and WHO and its Expert Committee on Drug Dependence.

72. UNODC continues its efforts to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of national laboratories and to promote collaboration for the detection and identification of drugs, including new psychoactive substances, through, inter alia, the following: the development and delivery of laboratory training courses for law enforcement and forensic personnel in the field on the detection of controlled substances and precursors; the provision of drug and precursor field testing kits, including modern handheld Raman spectroscopic devices; the provision of authentic samples from the UNODC reference standards collection; and assistance activities including the international collaborative exercises, which consists of a proficiency test for national laboratories, in which 289 laboratories from 90 Member States participated in 2019. Scientific support was also provided by UNODC to law enforcement agencies in South and Central America and the Caribbean, Central Asia and West Africa.

73. The *United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs*, a joint effort of UNODC, WHO, UPU and INCB, launched in March 2019, was expanded to offer additional information on addressing key challenges presented by synthetic drugs, including in relation to prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, access to medicines, regulation, detection and interdiction. The resources are offered in an interactive way and include guidelines, technical information, training, e-learning courses and data. To reduce the risk for United Nations staff and national security and forensic personnel, guidance, including instructional videos on the safe handling and management of the risk of exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic, was released in 2020.

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

74. In the *World Drug Report 2019*, UNODC highlighted emerging and persistent trends in the world drug problem in terms of cultivation, production, trafficking, consumption and health consequences in different regions and globally.

75. During the period under review, UNODC continued assisting Member States in the monitoring of illicit cultivation and production of drugs. In 2019, 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.

76. In the framework of the Afghan Opiate Trade Project, UNODC produced a report on understanding opiate trafficking from the perspective of opiate traffickers in Afghanistan, and a short update report on opiate trafficking along the initial stages of the Balkan route.

77. 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 countries and a drug use survey in Uzbekistan.

78. UNODC, in cooperation with WHO and with the involvement of many partners, including UNAIDS, EMCDDA, the African Union and the Organization of American States, has 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 for target 3.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

79. As requested by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in its resolution 60/1 and by Member States in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, UNODC prepared a strengthened and streamlined annual report questionnaire, following a comprehensive process of expert-level consultations with Member States and relevant international organizations. Two expert working group meetings were convened, from 29 to 31 January 2018 and from 28 to 30 August 2019, with participants from 59 countries and five international organizations. After a pilot exercise in October 2019 involving 35 Member States, the revised annual report questionnaire was adopted by the Commission of Narcotic Drugs at its sixty-third session.

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

80. In line with the commitment made in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, UNODC continued to hold implementation workshops to raise awareness of existing policy commitments, including the provisions of the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly held in 2016, thereby supporting the identification of technical assistance needs as well as facilitating a self-assessment of progress made in national implementation. During the period July 2019–January 2020, national implementation workshops were conducted in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Further, UNODC organized implementation workshops in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States in Antigua and Barbuda and in Saint Kitts and Nevis in August 2019.

81. In addition to updating the website dedicated to follow-up to the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly held in 2016 (www.unodc.org/ungass2016/), as well as the related good practice portal (www.postungass2016.org), UNODC created a website focusing on the implementation of all international drug policy commitments in follow-up to the Ministerial Declaration of 2019 (www.unodc.org/hlr/index.html). These websites provide detailed information on the preparation for and follow-up of

the special session and the Ministerial Declaration by the Commission, statements delivered during the thematic sessions, as well as information on national implementation efforts.

82. In contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, also in 2020, submitted its annual substantive contribution, on the theme “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”, for consideration in the high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Economic and Social Council.

83. The Commission 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. Special attention has been given to the issue of gender-mainstreaming, with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs joining efforts to foster the full and equal participation and leadership of women in the work of the Commissions, including through the “Let’s talk gender” meetings. A high-level event organized jointly with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women, scheduled for 2 March 2020, had to be postponed due to COVID-19.

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

1. Socioeconomic issues and alternative development

84. UNODC alternative development interventions continued to be oriented towards addressing the social and economic factors driving illicit cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis. Field-based interventions in Afghanistan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Peru have contributed substantially to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in project communities.

85. UNODC continues research on the links between illicit cultivation and sustainable development, peace and stability, using relevant indicators, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Socioeconomic surveys with community leaders and households conducted annually in countries affected by illicit crop cultivation consistently show that the availability of infrastructure and services are important determinants of illicit crop cultivation and that income inequality, food insecurity, weak governance and insecurity are both causes and consequences of illicit cultivation. Several of these factors are highly dynamic over time. For the first time, global estimations of the total number of households cultivating opium poppy and coca were conducted using a similar methodology in all countries. The estimates showed large fluctuations by year, reflecting the complexity of rural life. In addition, the socioeconomic survey data collected over several years, combined with remote sensing analyses, were being used to build strategic maps to assist decision-making on drug control policies.

86. To further evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, UNODC conducted baseline and midterm surveys for three UNODC and UNDP alternative development projects, one of them with a focus on women in Afghanistan, to obtain statistically valid impact assessments of the projects. The impact assessment uses a comprehensive approach, taking into account changes in the approximately 1,000 socioeconomic indicators, as well as changes in the type of land coverage analysed via remote sensing, differentiating between a dozen different uses of land,

including licit and illicit crops. These changes are evaluated over time in more than 500 villages.

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

87. The Office increased policy dialogue to promote alternative development as an important development-oriented drug-control approach requiring cooperation at all levels to fulfil the targets of the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly and meet community needs. While successes are evident in countries with adequate support for alternative development, its broader potential continued to be stymied by a lack of longer-term funding support.

88. An overview study of the number of alternative development projects, individual budgets and trends, main objectives, geographical coverage, duration, number of beneficiaries, and implementing partners was carried out at the global level, which allowed the provision of systematized data for evidence-based policies.² Studies of alternative development as a viable economic alternative, including analyses of the change of income structure before and after the implementation of projects in Colombia and Afghanistan, were at an early stage.

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

89. Information on the governance and financial situation of the UNODC, including information on the work of the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of UNODC, on strategic planning, evaluation, fundraising and private sector cooperation initiatives, as well as on the financial situation of UNODC, has been included in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the mandates of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, with particular reference to the technical cooperation activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (A/75/[...]).

I. Concluding observations

90. The current COVID-19 pandemic has shown once again that global problems cannot be addressed in isolation but call for a holistic and coordinated approach based on shared responsibility. To address the world drug problem, the commitments made by Member States over the past decade, including those in the Political Declaration and Plan of Action of 2009, the Joint Ministerial Statement of 2014 and the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly held in 2016, in line with the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, provide for such a comprehensive response, addressing supply and demand reduction, health and human rights protection, and sustainable development in a balanced, integrated manner. The United Nations stands ready to support Member States in the implementation of those commitments, with a view to accelerating progress in addressing the world drug problem in the comprehensive way that our experience proves yields the most effective results.

91. Reliable, comparable and comprehensive data, and their sound analysis, are prerequisites for the future development and implementation of balanced, comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based, human rights-based, development-oriented and sustainable responses to the world drug problem, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, Member States are encouraged to make good use of the revised and streamlined annual report questionnaire and continue to strengthen the evidence-based work of the Commission

² UNODC, "Global overview of alternative development projects (2013–2017)", Research brief (2019).

on Narcotic Drugs with a view to accelerating progress in addressing the world drug problem in a comprehensive way.

92. The current health crisis highlights the importance of availability of and access to controlled substances for medical purposes, in particular for pain relief. It is important that Member States ensure adequate resource allocation and mitigate the fragility of supply lines of controlled substances in order to strengthen approaches that enhance both resilience and efficiency, while addressing the interacting threats due to illicit trade in these substances.

93. In the light of the expected changes in drug trafficking and drug markets due to COVID-19 mobility restrictions, it is important that Member States, in close cooperation with relevant United Nations entities, closely monitor developments and address the challenges in countries of supply, transit and destination as a common and shared responsibility. Drug trafficking remains an international responsibility, as most of the demand for internationally trafficked substances comes from countries other than those countries producing those substances, and most of the profits are generated in destination countries.

94. One of the focus issues of the global conversation on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations is “Investing in health for an equitable future”. Member States are encouraged to take the dialogue feedback and survey results into account and ensure access to health services for the most vulnerable members of society, including children, people in detention and institutionalized settings, such as rehabilitation centres, people living with HIV and people using drugs. The United Nations system stands ready to continue to collaborate with and support Member States in the development of comprehensive approaches, including in their COVID-19 response plans, with a view to ensuring that those plans systematically map the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and provide special measures for their protection and access to health services and equipment.
