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PREFACE

About 230 million people, or 5 per cent of the world's adult population, are estimated to have used an illicit drug at least once in 2010. Problem drug users number about 27 million, which is 0.6 per cent of the world adult population. Throughout the world, illicit drug use appears to be generally stable, though it continues to be rising in several developing countries. Heroin, cocaine and other drugs kill around 0.2 million people each year, shattering families and bringing misery to thousands of other people. Illicit drugs undermine economic and social development and contribute to crime, instability, insecurity and the spread of HIV.

Global opium production amounted to 7,000 tons in 2011. That is more than a fifth less than the peak of 2007 but an increase from the low level of 2010, the year in which a plant disease destroyed almost half of the opium harvest in Afghanistan, which continues to be the world's biggest producer. The total area under coca bush cultivation in the world fell by 18 per cent between 2007 and 2010 and by 33 per cent since 2000. Efforts to reduce cultivation and production of the main plant-based problem drugs have, however, been offset by rising levels of synthetic drug production, including significant increases in the production and consumption of psychoactive substances that are not under international control.

Although Member States are to be commended for their hard work in dealing with the drug problem, often with the support of UNODC, the figures sketched above indicate the scale of the challenge. The response by UNODC has been twofold: first, develop an integrated approach; and second, focus on prevention, treatment, alternative development and the promotion of fundamental human rights.

Developing an integrated approach

Drug trafficking flows have global dimensions. The flows link regions and continents, sometimes with dramatic consequences for the countries they affect. Our research and trend analysis is designed to improve understanding of those issues. The results are fed into integrated programmes to reduce illicit drug supply and demand.

UNODC is building integrated regional programmes, as well as promoting interregional and inter-agency responses. One such inter-agency approach is the United Nations system Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking, established in 2011.

In December 2011, the UNODC Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries was launched. To support this programme, UNODC and its partners have created cross-border, intelligence and precursor control initiatives to share information and experience and to

conduct joint operations. All these regional initiatives are interlinked with existing law enforcement networks.

There are also new initiatives for countering money-laundering and for coupling law enforcement with alternative livelihoods. An initiative has been launched to disrupt drug trafficking by sea in West and South Asia. UNODC has also launched a new Regional Programme for South-Eastern Europe to focus action on areas where heroin flowing along the Balkan route enters Europe.

A regional hub for Central America and the Caribbean has been developed in Panama. The strengthened UNODC Regional Office for Mexico and countries in that region will be linked to the hub. In the Dominican Republic and Mexico, centres of excellence are being established to promote drug demand reduction.

A network of prosecutors in Central America is using best practices to strengthen criminal justice in the region. At the same time, the Container Control Programme is expanding, operating in more countries and controlling containers transported by sea, as well as by air. In West and Central Africa, successes are being achieved through the establishment of transnational crime units.

In South-East Asia, UNODC provides the groundwork for cross-border cooperation between the countries of the Greater Mekong subregion, helps secure sustainable livelihoods through alternative development schemes and gives countries an evidence base for taking action against the interrelated threats of organized crime and drug trafficking.

UNODC is also improving capacities to counter money-laundering and corruption in all regions by interrupting the flow of illicit drug proceeds, which are used by criminal networks to carry out further criminal activities.

Rebalancing drug control policy through alternative development, prevention, treatment and fundamental human rights

UNODC will continue to build international cooperation and to help Member States respond to these threats. If we are to confront these challenges, however, both supply and demand need to be reduced. There is growing recognition that treatment and rehabilitation of illicit drug users are more effective than punishment.

Of course, this does not mean abandoning law enforcement activities; instead, the supply and demand sides need to complement each other. This means balancing our efforts against drug trafficking with alternative development programmes for farmers and helping drug users to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society.

Alternative development is the key to reducing illicit drug

crop cultivation and drug production. At present, only around one quarter of all farmers involved in illicit drug crop cultivation worldwide have access to development assistance. If we are to offer new opportunities and genuine alternatives, this needs to change.

UNODC is also promoting activities that significantly reduce illicit drug demand. Such activities are necessary because of growing signs of drug use in the so-called transit countries. For example, there are increasing numbers of cocaine users in West and Central Africa; and the highest prevalence rates for opium and heroin use are in Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

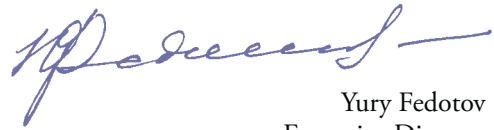
Drug control means restoring the balance and paying greater attention to the health side by reducing overdoses, psychiatric problems and the incidence of infections such as HIV and hepatitis. Prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, reintegration and health all have to be recognized as key elements in the global strategy to reduce drug demand. To support its activities, UNODC takes an approach based on human rights, the international drug control conventions and international standards and norms.

Moving forwards not backwards

Recently several countries facing high rates of violence, kidnapping, corruption and human trafficking related to transnational organized crime and drug trafficking have called for international assistance. These countries need our support. It is our shared responsibility to do everything possible to help.

In doing so, we need to be equally clear about the importance of the international conventions on drugs, organized crime and corruption. Indeed, almost everything mentioned in this preface — focusing on drug demand, rehabilitation and reintegration, alternative development, shared responsibility and fundamental human rights — are underscored in the conventions.

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs put this succinctly when, in its resolution 55/3, on the 100th anniversary of the International Opium Convention, it expressed its determination to strengthen action and cooperation at the national, regional and international levels towards the goals of the international drug control conventions, which remain the cornerstone of the international drug control system. Our direction is guided by the international conventions on drug control and crime prevention. We need to move as one; if not, we risk going backwards, not forwards.



Yury Fedotov
Executive Director
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CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
EXPLANATORY NOTES	vii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1

1. RECENT STATISTICS AND TREND ANALYSIS OF ILLICIT DRUG MARKETS

A. Extent of illicit drug use and health consequences	7
B. Illicit opiate market	26
C. Cocaine market	35
D. Cannabis market	43
E. Illicit market for amphetamine-type stimulants	51

2. THE CONTEMPORARY DRUG PROBLEM: CHARACTERISTICS, PATTERNS AND DRIVING FACTORS

A. What are the fundamental characteristics of the contemporary illicit drug problem	59
B. How have the patterns of the drug problem shifted over time	72
C. Which factors shape the evolution of the problem	86
D. Conclusion	97

ANNEX	
Regional groupings	99
GLOSSARY	100

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