

of lifetime and recent illicit drug use, the proportion of pupils who reported taking any drug falling from 24 per cent (2018) to 18 per cent (2021). There was a similar trend among those who reported taking any drug in the past year, the proportion of such individuals decreasing from 17 per cent (2018) to 12 per cent (2021).

935. In Estonia, studies on syringe residues from used syringes have been conducted since 2021 as part of the provision of treatment and services to reduce the negative health and social consequences of drug use, enabling a better understanding of the use of injectable drugs in different regions and locations where treatment and services are provided. In 2022, more than half of the syringes contained amphetamine (66 per cent), followed by methamphetamine (28 per cent) and other substances. Isotonitazene and other synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, furanylfentanyl and carfentanil were also found.

F. Oceania

Pacific island States have confirmed the transformation of their countries from solely transit sites along drug trafficking routes to destination markets for synthetic drugs, posing significant challenges to communities and their public health systems. Law enforcement and customs agencies of these countries reported multiple drug seizures, particularly of cannabis and methamphetamine. Transnational organized crime, especially drug trafficking, has been recognized as one of the most challenging issues facing the Pacific region.

Transnational organized criminal groups were attempting to traffic unprecedented amounts of cocaine to Australia, although the methamphetamine market remained the predominant illicit drug market. Law enforcement authorities highlighted the need to address organized crime and violence related to trafficking in large quantities of drugs to the region.

1. Major developments

936. The Pacific Islands Forum “Pacific security outlook report 2022–2023” highlights transnational organized crime as one of the region’s priority focus areas. The report noted that transnational organized criminal groups had adapted to COVID-19-related border closures, resulting in increased channels and platforms for illicit activity, with a surge in

transnational criminal activity expected with the reopening of borders across the region. The import, trans-shipment, sale and possession of drugs, together with precursor trafficking, were the most prevalent transnational criminal activities in the region. While Pacific island States had mainly been affected as transit points in the past, domestic illicit drug markets had grown across the region over the past 10 years, leading to increases in drug use disorders and mental health issues. Some countries also reported increases in crimes related to drug trafficking, such as burglary, violence, intimidation and extortion, and, in larger countries, increasing use of firearms. In countries such as Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand and Tonga, non-medical drug use had been observed to harm families, with an increased risk of sexual violence, child neglect, and poor health, educational and employment outcomes. The report also noted that a causal relationship between illicit drug use and child labour had been identified in Kiribati.

937. The Pacific Islands Forum *Second Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report 2022* noted that only four¹⁶⁷ of the Forum’s member States were party to all three international drug control conventions and that, as a result, drug-related legislation across some Pacific island States was outdated and ill-equipped to address emerging issues. The region faced rising levels of crime and drug misuse and, despite commitments made by Pacific island States to address trafficking and transnational crime, there continued to be a lack of information on drug trafficking. However, efforts were under way among regional customs and law enforcement bodies, such as the Oceania Customs Organization and the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, to enhance data collection on and analysis of transnational crime.

938. In previous reports, the Board has highlighted that non-parties to the international drug control conventions are concentrated in Oceania, which remains highly vulnerable to drug and precursor trafficking in view of its extensive maritime borders. **INCB reiterates its call upon non-parties to take steps towards accession to, and full implementation of, the international drug control conventions to facilitate action against the drug problem in all its forms. The Board also encourages regional and bilateral partners to support countries in the region to this end, with a view to ensuring that these States can benefit from the implementation of the conventions, in particular in improving the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical purposes, preventing and addressing drug trafficking, strengthening international cooperation in criminal matters and providing evidence-based prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services.**

¹⁶⁷ Fiji, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of) and Tonga.

939. Although the methamphetamine market remained the largest illicit stimulant market in Australia, transnational organized criminal groups were attempting to traffic unprecedented amounts of cocaine to Australia. Wastewater analysis found that over the 12-month period from September 2021 to August 2022, at least 3.3 tons of cocaine were consumed in Australia; less than the 5.6 tons consumed in the 12-month period ending in August 2020. In 2022 and 2023, large seizures of cocaine were made in Oceania.

940. In 2023, UNODC launched a new transnational organized crime programme based in Fiji and aimed at supporting Pacific island States in addressing cybercrime, money-laundering, environmental crime and trafficking.

2. Regional cooperation

941. Security leaders from 25 countries attended the fourth meeting of the Joint Heads of Pacific Security in Nadi, Fiji, in November 2022. The participants agreed to establish a partnership for the sharing of information to enhance regional maritime security, with a view to mitigating the security issues faced by Pacific island States as a result of climate change, illegal fishing, drug trafficking and other threats.

942. In November 2022, a UNODC regional workshop on synthetic drugs was held in Nadi with the participation of law enforcement, public health and forensic experts from Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. At the workshop, participants confirmed that their countries had become destinations for synthetic drugs, in addition to being points of transit for drug trafficking between East and South-East Asia and the Americas. Cannabis remained a major concern in the region, but several countries, including Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, reported that methamphetamine had now become the primary drug of concern and was causing a strain on public health systems. The lack of drug-related data within the region and its implications were acknowledged by participants, as was limited forensic testing capacity.

943. From 28 November to 9 December 2022, the Oceania Customs Organization, in partnership with INCB, the Universal Postal Union, the Australian Border Force and the United States Postal Inspection Service, held a two-week training activity in Hagatna, Guam, for the Northern Pacific subregion. The first week of training focused on the use of the Oceania Customs Organization Pacific Small Craft mobile application and All Partners Access Network technology, which provide a secure platform for the exchange of information. The second week focused on the detection and interdiction of suspicious parcels arriving through air freight, courier and post, focusing on new psychoactive substances, opioids and fentanyl-type substances, as well as controlled

drugs. The GRIDS Programme delivered an awareness-raising and capacity-building workshop on the safe interdiction of synthetic opioids and related chemicals and on the interregional and intraregional exchange of intelligence and cross-border cooperation for 19 senior customs and postal security officers. The training focused on capacity-building to enhance communications among the authorities of the Northern Pacific subregion concerning safe handling and interdiction approaches for dangerous substances.

944. From December 2022 to January 2023, the authorities of Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia (Federated States of), New Zealand, the Northern Mariana Islands, Solomon Islands and Tonga participated in the GRIDS Programme's Operation Knockout, aimed at identifying and dismantling illicit manufacturing and distribution points for non-medical carisoprodol, 1,4-butanediol, flubromazepam, GBL and ketamine trafficked through the international post, express mail, courier services and related modalities.

945. From 20 to 31 March 2023, the Oceania Customs Organization held a two-week workshop in Tonga, with the support of INCB, the Universal Postal Union, the Australian Border Force and the United States Postal Inspection Service. Customs officers from the Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu attended the workshop, which focused on small craft intelligence, including the use of the Oceania Customs Organization Pacific Small Craft mobile application. The application was now used by more than 300 officials, who had recorded over 2,000 movements leading to the apprehension of 1,200 vessels. During the second week of the workshop, training on postal inspection and the use of intelligence-gathering tools was led by the GRIDS Programme for 32 enforcement officers from police, customs and postal security authorities from 14 countries and territories in the South Pacific subregion. Subsequent training was held by the GRIDS Programme for the authorities of Samoa on 4 April 2023. Both INCB training activities followed a practical curriculum covering the safe identification and interdiction of dangerous substances. Participants also received instruction on the IONICS and GRIDS Intelligence high-definition targeting tools to improve cross-border intelligence-sharing.

946. In March 2023, UNODC held regional multi-agency training on cryptocurrencies and darknet investigations in Nadi. The training focused on the new Internet-based technologies being exploited to facilitate trafficking in opioids and synthetic drugs.

947. In May 2023, the UNODC Global Maritime Crime Programme, in partnership with the United States Navy, held a one-week training activity on maritime crime scene

management for the Maritime Police, Navy and Customs Enforcement Division of Fiji in Suva. Building upon virtual training conducted in 2021 and 2022 for participants from Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, the activity was aimed at creating a more secure maritime environment by countering illicit activities such as drug trafficking, human trafficking and illegal fishing.

948. The first Transnational Serious Organized Crime Global Summit was held in Sydney in June 2023 and was attended by senior law enforcement officers from 46 countries. The event focused on partnerships for disrupting the illicit drug trade and addressing transnational crime.

949. The GRIDS Programme organized the sixth annual operational meeting on countering trafficking in dangerous synthetic drugs and chemicals through postal, courier and air cargo services, held in Vienna from 11 to 15 September 2023. The event brought together over 100 officers from 30 Governments and international organizations, including three participants from Fiji and the Oceania Customs Organization. Several participating Governments also conducted bilateral and multilateral case meetings to enhance cooperation across borders, facilitated by INCB.

950. From 18 to 22 September 2023, the GRIDS Programme held a twinning event in Nadi for Pacific island States on regional law enforcement cooperation, trust-building, relationship development and active networking, awareness of opioids, fentanyl-related substances and new psychoactive substances, and access to and training on intelligence development (GRIDS Intelligence high-definition) and secure real-time trafficking communications (IONICS).

951. Customs and law enforcement officers of the region completed training on the detection and prevention of transnational crimes in the Pacific by the Australia Pacific Security College in Nadi in May 2023. Oceania Customs Organization participants were from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Micronesia (Federated States of), Samoa and Solomon Islands. In 2023, the Australian Federal Police provided forensic and crime scene training for members of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force on, inter alia, drug seizure and preliminary drug testing.

952. A total of 26 drug control officials from the competent national authorities of nine countries in Oceania, namely, Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, have registered to use INCB Learning e-modules. There are now five e-modules developed by INCB Learning, which cover narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, precursors, the international drug control framework and ensuring the adequate availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. The e-modules are available upon

registration through INCB Learning to officials of competent national authorities at no cost. At the global level, as at 1 November 2023, 1,462 officials from the competent national authorities of 154 countries and territories had been granted access to INCB Learning e-modules.

3. Availability of internationally controlled substances, including reporting to the Board

953. The three international drug control treaties require States parties to furnish statistical reports to the Board on an annual basis. These reports enable the Board to monitor the licit movement of internationally controlled substances, as well as ensure the availability of these substances for medical, scientific and industrial purposes. Most of the countries and territories of Oceania provided the required reports for narcotics drugs controlled under the 1961 Convention as amended for 2021. For psychotropic substances controlled under the 1971 Convention, approximately three quarters of the countries and territories provided the required reports for the last five years, including most of the required information. A few countries have not provided any of the required reports regarding narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the last five years.

954. In 2002, the level of consumption of opioid analgesics in Oceania, expressed in S-DDD_{pm} per million inhabitants, stood at 14,974 S-DDD_{pm}. It had doubled by 2021, reaching 29,167 S-DDD_{pm}. The largest amounts in 2021 were consumed in Australia (7,675 S-DDD_{pm}) and New Zealand (6,508 S-DDD_{pm}). However, a number of small territories also reported high levels of S-DDD_{pm} (Norfolk Island, 7,565 S-DDD_{pm}; New Caledonia, 3,176 S-DDD_{pm}; and French Polynesia, 1,946 S-DDD_{pm}) owing to the fact that the amounts of opioid analgesics reported is standardized in daily dose per capita and therefore, given the limited populations, small actual amounts of opioids translate into a high level of S-DDD_{pm}. Wallis and Futuna Islands reported 721 S-DDD_{pm}, followed by Palau (463 S-DDD_{pm}), Christmas Island (459 S-DDD_{pm}), Samoa (209 S-DDD_{pm}) and Fiji (170 S-DDD_{pm}). Other countries in the region reported smaller or no amounts. The majority of the consumption in Oceania was of fentanyl (16,893 S-DDD_{pm}), followed by morphine (5,850 S-DDD_{pm}), oxycodone (5,518 S-DDD_{pm}), pethidine (225 S-DDD_{pm}) and hydromorphone (159 S-DDD_{pm}).

955. It remains challenging to determine the levels of consumption of psychotropic substances in Oceania, because fewer than half of the region's countries and territories have provided to the Board consumption data on any psychotropic substance for the past five years.

956. **The Board encourages the countries and territories of Oceania that have not provided the reports under the international drug control conventions, in particular on consumption of psychotropic substances, to do so as soon as possible and to take the necessary measures to ensure that their respective competent national authorities have sufficient resources and training to prepare the reports in a timely manner. This will significantly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the operation of the international drug control system. The Board encourages bilateral partners to provide support, including technical assistance, in this area.**

957. **The Board stresses that there is insufficient availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in some countries of the region and emphasizes the importance of ensuring sufficient availability of and access to internationally controlled substances for medical purposes.**

958. With regard to precursor chemicals, Member States voluntarily provide estimates of their annual legitimate requirements for imports of certain precursor chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants in the context of Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 49/3. The provision of annual legitimate requirements is requested for, among other substances, ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, substances that also have medicinal uses, as well as, to the extent possible, for preparations containing those substances that could be easily used or recovered by readily applicable means.

959. Out of the 16 countries in Oceania, eight (50 per cent) provided to the Board at least one estimate of annual legitimate requirements for imports of ephedrine, ephedrine preparations, pseudoephedrine or pseudoephedrine preparations. However, three, or 38 per cent, of those eight countries have not updated their estimates in the past 10 years, which undermines the potential of annual legitimate requirements to act as a tool to guide exporting countries with regard to the legitimate requirements of importing countries, thus preventing oversupply and diversion into illicit channels, as well as ensuring the availability of those substances for legitimate purposes. Two countries in Oceania, namely, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia (Federated States of), have provided annual legitimate requirements to the Board for the first time in the last five years.

960. Further information on the availability of internationally controlled substances can be found in the technical reports of the Board for 2023 on narcotic drugs,¹⁶⁸ psychotropic substances¹⁶⁹ and the implementation of article 12 of

the 1988 Convention.¹⁷⁰ In addition, the publication entitled *Guide on Estimating Requirements for Substances under International Control*, developed by INCB and WHO for use by competent national authorities, and the document entitled “Issues that Governments may consider when determining annual legitimate requirements for imports of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine” are available on the Board’s website.

4. National legislation, policy and action

961. In November 2022, nine detector dog teams graduated from the New Zealand Police and New Zealand Customs Pacific Detector Dog Programme. The teams were from law enforcement and customs authorities of Fiji, French Polynesia, New Zealand, Samoa and Tonga.

962. The Australian National Advisory Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs published its first communiqué in June 2023, outlining discussions that covered, inter alia, options for addressing addiction medicine workforce shortages, the potential benefits of developing a national research agenda on alcohol and other drugs, and implementation of the National Quality Framework for Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services, an update of which had been published in April 2023.

963. In July 2023, the police force of the Australian State of New South Wales announced the creation of a new task force to coordinate investigations and operations related to recent shootings that had taken place in public places in Sydney and that were believed to be related to organized crime and illicit drug supply. The task force was also to take a proactive approach to hindering potential future activity, with a view to restoring a sense of safety in the community. Organized crime-related homicides increased in New South Wales during the 2021/22 reporting period, and the significant decline in sea and air freight to Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic was accompanied by increased competition between organized criminal groups over drug trafficking networks. The near doubling of the price of cocaine compared to pre-pandemic prices also provided a substantial financial incentive for organized criminal groups.

964. From 1 July 2023, medicines containing psilocybin and MDMA could be prescribed by authorized psychiatrists in Australia for the treatment of, respectively, treatment-resistant depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. For these specific purposes, the substances will be listed as Schedule 8 (Controlled Drugs) medicines in the Poisons Standard. For all other purposes, the substances will remain in Schedule 9 (Prohibited Substances), which limits

¹⁶⁸ E/INCB/2023/2.

¹⁶⁹ E/INCB/2023/3.

¹⁷⁰ E/INCB/2023/4.

their use to clinical trials. In order to prescribe MDMA or psilocybin for the aforementioned conditions, psychiatrists must be registered under the Authorised Prescriber Scheme and must obtain approval from a human research ethics committee. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists released guidance for psychiatrists to help prevent adverse outcomes for patients prescribed these substances. The advertising of psilocybin and MDMA to Australian consumers remained illegal. In 2023, the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration announced that it was prioritizing action to stop the unlawful advertising of these substances, as well as medicinal cannabis, through measures including education, intelligence-gathering and use and compliance action.

965. The Australian Capital Territory Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022 came into effect on 28 October 2023. Under the amendment, people found with small quantities of specific drugs may be issued with a simple drug offence notice, which can be discharged by paying a fine of 100 Australian dollars or participating in an illicit drug diversion programme assessment and harm reduction session, instead of facing a potential prison sentence. The amendment defines small quantities of amphetamine, cocaine and methamphetamine as 1.5 g, and of other substances as follows: 1.5 g of MDMA; 50 g of dried cannabis; 150 g of harvested cannabis; 1 g of heroin; 0.001 g of lysergic acid or LSD; and 1.5 g of psilocybin.

966. Raising awareness about drugs in schools and tertiary institutions was highlighted as a priority for policing in Fiji, with activities held in schools in July 2023. In April 2023, a proactive narcotics workshop was held by the Narcotics Bureau in Labasa, Fiji, for police officers.

967. In December 2022, temporary class drug orders under the New Zealand Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 were issued for one-year periods for the benzodiazepine derivative bromazolam and the synthetic cannabinoids ADB-5Br-INACA, MDMB-5Br-INACA and MDMB-INACA as Class C1 controlled drugs. These substances are currently not under international control.

968. Amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1977 that came into effect in December 2022 expanded the New Zealand ePrescription Service so that prescribers could issue signature-exempt prescriptions for medicines containing controlled drugs. This was aimed at reducing the administrative burden for prescribers and pharmacists, as there was previously a requirement for the prescriber to provide a signed hard copy of any prescription for a medicine containing a controlled drug. The ultimate goal of the amendments was to improve access to Class B controlled drugs for people in palliative care or with chronic conditions

such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and cancer. The amendments would also allow prescriptions for Class B controlled drugs to cover a period of up to three months when issued through the system, which was expected to improve access for patients. Subsequently, a Cabinet decision was taken in July 2023 to reduce the maximum limit for opioid prescriptions from three months to one, to apply to both Class B and Class C opioids, bringing the prescribing limit for Class C opioids (such as codeine) into line with that for Class B opioids. The changes were made to reduce the risk of harm associated with opioid prescribing while ensuring regular clinical review and continued access to these medicines. The changes were planned to come into effect in late 2023. In addition, a number of interim safeguard measures were implemented to manage risks associated with opioid prescribing, including regulations setting out who could prescribe opioid medicines, monitoring of prescribing practices, clinical guidance, professional sanctions in cases of inappropriate prescribing and the Pharmac Pharmaceutical Schedule, which provides criteria limiting the amount of Class B opioids that may be prescribed and dispensed.

969. In 2022, Palau released its National Security Strategy, comprising six pillars, one of which was transnational crime. The Government noted that although illicit drug markets in the country were fairly limited, they continued to operate counter to the laws, culture and values of the country. The Strategy outlined the negative impact of illicit drug abuse on public health and the national health-care system, and highlighted the significant negative socioeconomic impacts of methamphetamine. In February 2023, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Bureau of Public Safety, the Ministry of Justice, the Palau Bureau of Customs and Border Protection and the Ministry of Finance with a view to advancing cooperation in law enforcement and border management in the country.

970. In November 2022, the Samoa Police, Prisons and Corrections Services met with the Scientific Research Organization of Samoa to discuss future collaborative work on drug testing to support police investigations and court prosecutions.

971. In February 2023, training was held in Tonga for law enforcement officers on the operation of a drone acquired through the Illicit Drugs Response Fund.

5. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

972. Seizures of drugs and precursors at the Australian border increased by 18.1 per cent between 1 July 2022 and 28 February 2023 compared with the period between

1 July 2021 and 28 February 2022, with cocaine being seized at unprecedented levels. Operation Tin Can, conducted from 14 November to 9 December 2022, was organized by WCO, UNODC and the Australian Border Force in cooperation with members of the World Shipping Council, with the participation of enforcement agencies of 58 countries. The Operation, which focused on tackling organized crime and insider threats exploiting the container supply chain, resulted in the global seizure of 98.7 tons of cocaine and 314 kg of cannabis. On the basis of wastewater analysis, it was estimated that only up to a quarter of the drugs that reached the border were seized.

973. Methamphetamine is trafficked into Australia from the Mekong region of South-East Asia and Mexico and other countries, with around 70 per cent of the methamphetamine seized in Australia sourced from Myanmar. The amount of methamphetamine concealed in tea packages, or “tea packet methamphetamine”, seized in Australia has increased since 2019. Tea package designs have been used by criminal groups over the past decade to conceal and market methamphetamine illicitly produced in South-East Asia. In 2022, the Australian Federal Police seized more than two tons of such methamphetamine, with Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Indonesia identified as the top five countries contributing to its importation. The Australian Federal Police were targeting outlaw motorcycle gangs involved in trafficking in methamphetamine from Afghanistan to Australia. Since 2021, more than 250 kg of methamphetamine produced in Afghanistan had been prevented from arriving in Australia, with the majority intercepted offshore, including in Pakistan. In 2022, the Australian Border Force seized 26 kg of methamphetamine produced in Afghanistan in 19 separate imports, primarily concealed in packages sent by international mail.

974. Preliminary data indicated that seizures of methamphetamine by New Zealand Customs increased from 844 kg in 2021 to 1,819 kg in 2022. January 2023 saw a record seizure of 713 kg of methamphetamine at the New Zealand border, concealed in a shipment of maple syrup from Canada. In March 2023, a seizure of 83 kg of methamphetamine was made at Port Napier, New Zealand, destined for the local market; it represented the first major drug seizure arriving from South Africa via sea freight. For the first time, in March 2023, New Zealand Customs seized 15.24 kg of crystal methamphetamine trafficked directly from Afghanistan by mail in three consignments.

975. A large increase was seen in cocaine trafficking to New Zealand. In January 2023, a joint police, customs and defence force operation resulted in the seizure of 3,348 kg of cocaine in the Pacific Ocean north-east of New Zealand, believed to have been destined for Australia.

976. A record seizure of 174 kg of ketamine, a substance not under international control, was made in Australia in July 2023, including 80 kg of ketamine concealed inside liquid cement shipped from Spain, together with 25 kg of MDMA. In May 2023, the Australian Border Force seized 84 kg of ketamine concealed inside new commercial vans imported to the country. In New Zealand, it was reported that the amount of ketamine seized from January to April 2023 was significantly larger than in the same period in 2022. March 2023 saw the largest monthly amount of MDMA seized in New Zealand since January 2019, primarily made up of one large seizure of almost 20 kg.

977. In February 2023, the Australian Federal Police issued a warning about synthetic drugs, in view of the import of a new synthetic stimulant, dimethylpentylone, into the country, first detected in Australia in October 2021. Forty-four consignments of the substance were detected by the Australian Border Force in 2022. Seizures by the Australian Federal Police of the substance in parcel post and air cargo ranged from around 100 g to 10 kg. In New Zealand in 2022, there was a significant increase in the detection of the new psychoactive substances dimethylpentylone and bromazolam, which had replaced eutylone and etizolam on the illicit market. In addition, the following new psychoactive substances were identified for the first time in New Zealand in 2022: deschloroetizolam, flubrotizolam, flubromazepam, etonitazepyne, metonitazene, 2-Fluorodeschloroketamine, 25B-NBOH, MDMB-5Br-INACA, MDMB-INACA, 3,4-methylenedioxy-N-tert-butylcathinone, N-cyclohexylmethylone, ADB-FUBIATA, gidazepam and fluorexetamine.

978. The use of Pacific island States to traffic drugs to Australia and New Zealand continues, as evident in a number of seizures, such as 247 kg of cocaine seized from a yacht moored in Townsville, Australia, which had sailed from Vanuatu, and methamphetamine trafficked to Australia via Fiji.

979. Seizures of cannabis, cocaine, ketamine and methamphetamine were reported by the police and customs authorities in Fiji in 2023, both in the country and at the borders. Cannabis cultivation continued in Fiji, with the law enforcement authorities reporting the eradication of over 6,000 cannabis plants on the island of Kadavu and in the Vunikoko Highlands in May and July 2023. In June 2023, the Nauru Police Force reported the seizure of 15 cannabis plants in Anibare district.

980. In March 2023, an attempt was made to traffic 52 kg of methamphetamine from Papua New Guinea to Australia on a “black flight” that had departed from and returned to central Queensland. A black flight refers to a light aircraft

for which no or false flight plans are logged, that flies at a very low altitude, or that turns off flight monitoring systems in order to avoid detection by law enforcement authorities or aviation monitoring systems.

981. The Samoa Police, Prisons and Corrections Services expressed deep concern over the growing trend in the use of electronic devices for the exchange of drugs, particularly methamphetamine. In 2023, numerous seizures of cannabis and methamphetamine were reported in the country.

982. In Tonga in April 2023, over 1 kg of methamphetamine trafficked inside a shipment from the United States was intercepted by customs officers with the assistance of Tonga Police detector dogs. Small quantities of methamphetamine and cannabis were seized domestically in the country on a regular basis.

983. Information on the control of precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances can be found in the report of the Board for 2023 on the implementation of article 12 of the 1988 Convention.¹⁷¹

6. Prevention and treatment

984. There continue to be indications that Pacific island States are experiencing increased levels of drug use and treatment demand, including as a consequence of drug trafficking through the region. However, data on the drug use situation in the region are still not available. **The Board reiterates its recommendation that Pacific island States prioritize the collection of data on the extent and patterns of drug use and the demand for treatment of drug use disorders. Such data will aid the development of targeted, evidence-based drug control policies and drug prevention and treatment services. The Board also urges bilateral partners and regional and international organizations to support Pacific island States to this end.**

985. In Solomon Islands, the use of a new substance, “copen”, was becoming a serious concern in schools. The substance was made up of tobacco and other substances such as toothpaste and coral lime, and was reported to have a psychoactive effect, as well as side effects such as vomiting and headaches. It was reported to negatively affect concentration and lead to dependence. A survey of school students aged 8 to 20 found that “copen” use was highly prevalent among teenagers. In response, the Royal Solomon Island Police Force (RSIPF) and the RSIPF-Australian Federal Police Policing Partnership Programme, in cooperation with

the National Community Police Department of RSIPF, conducted a “copen” awareness-raising programme in schools in Honiara. The programme comprised interaction between facilitators and students, and informative presentations aimed at educating students about the dangers of “copen”, the identification of risks and protective factors, and how to respond to peer pressure. A reduction in the use of the substance was observed after the implementation of the programme.

986. Wastewater analysis covering about 55 per cent of the population of Australia between August and December 2022 found that consumption of heroin, oxycodone and cannabis had decreased, while consumption of methamphetamine, cocaine, MDMA, tenamfetamine (MDA), fentanyl and ketamine had increased. The increase in cocaine consumption followed a record low recorded in August 2022. Fentanyl consumption had been increasing since April 2022 and exceeded oxycodone consumption for the first time since April 2021. Record lows were seen in oxycodone consumption in December 2022 (outside capital cities) and in February 2023 (in capital cities).

987. In a sentinel group of adults residing in capital cities in Australia who had injected drugs at least once monthly in the previous six months, prevalence of use in the past six months of heroin (53 per cent), methamphetamine (81 per cent), non-prescribed morphine (14 per cent) and non-prescribed fentanyl (5 per cent) had remained stable in 2022 relative to 2021. Over the same period, the use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products within the past six months had increased significantly, from 67 per cent in 2021, the lowest level since monitoring began, to 72 per cent in 2022. Half of the respondents who had recently used these products reported daily use, as in the previous year. A survey of people who used MDMA and other stimulants on a regular basis found that recent use of MDMA had decreased significantly, from 95 per cent in 2021 to 88 per cent in 2022, reaching the lowest level since monitoring commenced in 2003. Recent use of methamphetamine had increased significantly in 2022 (31 per cent) compared with 2021 (26 per cent). Recent use of cocaine had remained stable in 2022; however, weekly use had increased to 11 per cent (up from 7 per cent in 2021). Recent use of cannabis among the sample had declined from 84 per cent to 79 per cent over the same period.

988. In Australia, the most common type of drug for which people sought treatment continued to be amphetamines, primarily methamphetamine, followed by cannabis and heroin. However, the number of treatment episodes relating to amphetamines continued to decline in the 12-month reporting period 2021/22, after having almost tripled between the 12-month reporting periods 2012/13

¹⁷¹E/INCB/2023/4.

and 2019/20. The number of treatment episodes related to pharmaceutical opioids fell to 4,700 in the 12-month reporting period 2021/22, compared with a peak of 7,700 episodes in the 12-month reporting period 2013/14. The number of treatment episodes related to benzodiazepines increased to 3,200 in the 12-month reporting period 2021/22.

989. On the basis of preliminary estimates, there were 1,788 drug-induced deaths in Australia in 2021, accounting for 1 per cent of all registered deaths in the country that year. The estimated rate of overdose deaths involving opioids, which were the most commonly identified type of substance, was lower in 2021 than in 2020. The rate of overdose deaths involving amphetamine-type stimulants was lower in 2021 than in 2020, when it had reached a record high.

990. According to the New Zealand Health Survey for the period July 2021 to July 2022, 14.7 per cent of adults had used cannabis within the past 12 months, compared with 15.3 per cent in the period from July 2020 to July 2021. Weekly use of cannabis was estimated at 4.3 per cent of adults, similar to the previous year (4.5 per cent). Past-year cocaine use was estimated at 1.1 per cent of adults, a similar level to the previous year (1 per cent). Past-year “ecstasy” use among adults declined from 4.8 per cent to 4.3 per cent, while use of amphetamine-type stimulants increased from 1 per cent to 1.3 per cent of adults. Past-year non-medical use of opioids among adults had doubled over the past year to 1.2 per cent. The annual prevalence of non-medical use of sedatives and hallucinogens had also increased compared with the previous year, from 0.9 per cent to 1.2 per cent, and from 1.9 per cent to 2.5 per cent, respectively.

991. Analysis of wastewater covering about 75 per cent of the population of New Zealand found a reduction in consumption of methamphetamine and MDMA in the fourth quarter of 2022 compared with average consumption in the previous four quarters. Cocaine consumption was found to have increased compared with average consumption detected over the previous four quarters. Heroin was not detected in reportable quantities in 2022, and fentanyl was only detected at a reportable level in the third quarter in two districts.

992. Over the past year, the early warning system of New Zealand, High Alert, issued notifications about a dangerous batch of synthetic opioids linked to serious hospitalizations, the potent stimulant *alpha*-PV detected in a white powder misrepresented as MDMA, and the synthetic cannabinoid MDMB-4en-PINACA detected in a yellow powder presumed to be N,N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT). The service also reissued a notification about serious harm linked to metonitazene, a highly potent opioid, and fake oxycodone tablets found to contain metonitazene, possibly linked to one death and a series of serious hospitalizations. It appeared that the non-medical use of ketamine was increasing in New Zealand, and in the first half of 2023, an increase in ketamine analogues was observed in the country. In the Australian State of Queensland, an official warning was issued in April 2023 about fake Xanax tablets found to contain protonitazene, a highly potent opioid, and bromazolam, a non-medical benzodiazepine. Two deaths were linked to the use of the tablets.