



UNODC: drug problem contained, but not solved

Addressing the 51st session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa, has called for the international drug control regime to be made "fit for purpose for the 21st century".

Mr. Costa admitted that "drug control has an image problem: too much drug-related crime; too many people in prisons, and too few in health services; too few resources for prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation; too much eradication of drug crop, and not enough eradication of poverty". However, what people fail to see are the accomplishments of drug control:

- Illicit drug use has been contained to less than 5% of the world adult population, as opposed to 5 to 6 times this proportion for people addicted to tobacco or alcohol;
- there are no more than 25 million problem drug users - that's less than 0.5% of the world population. There are more people affected by AIDS;
- deaths due to drugs are limited to perhaps 200.000/yr, namely 1/10 of those killed by alcohol and 1/20 of those killed by tobacco;
- world-wide, drug cultivation has been slashed (with the obvious exception of Afghanistan where the issue is insurgency, more than narcotics);
- adherence to the international drug control regime is practically universal, with the principle of *shared responsibility* unanimously accepted;
- the regulatory system of production, distribution and use of drugs for medical purposes, functions well.

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USA: Tighter control for National Drug Strategy 2008

President Bush released the 2008 National Drug Control Strategy on the 1st of March. The Strategy outlines progress made in reducing both the supply of and demand for illegal drugs, and highlights challenges that remain.

With the release of his first National Drug Control Strategy in 2002, the President set the ambitious goal of cutting drug use among young people by 25 percent over five years. Through a balanced approach that emphasized prevention, education, and treatment, as well as enhanced law enforcement and international cooperation, youth drug use has declined 24 percent since 2001 - 860,000 fewer young people using drugs today than six years ago. In addition, teen marijuana use is down 25 percent, Ecstasy use has dropped by more than half, and youth use of methamphetamine has plummeted 64 percent.

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INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD

2007

Annual Report

INCB Annual Report for 2007

Africa:

In its Annual Report, the International Narcotics Control Board states that West Africa is rapidly developing into a major smuggling route for cocaine from Latin America through and into Europe.

Interpol estimates that 200-300 tons of cocaine make their way into Europe; mainly through West Africa, where it is stockpiled and re-packaged for transport. West African countries do not have the means to counter this challenge. Traffickers are also using Africa, particularly Central Africa, as a trans-shipment area for precursors such as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. Weak legislation against trafficking in precursor chemicals in most African countries makes it easy to obtain chemicals for illicit drug manufacture.

Africa accounts for 7.6 per cent of all the cocaine abusers in the world. Cannabis continues to be the most abused drug in Africa, and the region also shows an increase in the abuse of that drug. It is illicitly cultivated and smuggled through the region, into Europe and North America. The largest cannabis producers in the region are countries in West Africa and East Africa.

Americas:

Central America and Caribbean

Drug traffickers continue to use the region as a transit and trans-shipment area for illicit drugs en route to the United States and Europe. Estimates show that 88 per cent of the cocaine entering the United States passes through Central America and 40 per cent of the cocaine entering Europe passes through the Caribbean. Increased involvement of international and national criminal groups in drug trafficking undermines the rule of law in the region. In El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras this is exacerbated by youth gangs or maras, which often control street-level sale of cocaine hydrochloride and "crack" cocaine.

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INCB: Disproportionate application of drug laws

The Vienna-based International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) called on Governments to apply the law proportionately when prosecuting drug offenders, as not doing so could undermine efforts to effectively implement the very conventions that these laws seek to enforce.

The principle of proportionality and drug-related offences is the focus of chapter one of the INCB Annual Report 2007, launched on the 5th of March 2008 in Vienna, Austria. The Board notes that progress has been made since it last addressed the issue of proportionality in 1996. However, some countries still expend disproportionate effort in targeting low level offenders and drug users, as compared to the more pressing issues of identifying, dismantling and punishing those who control or organize major drug trafficking activities.

While highlighting the need to provide alternatives to imprisonment for drug users, including access to treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, the Board urges Governments to pay adequate attention to high profile cases of drug abuse.

Celebrity "endorsement" of drug-related lifestyles is particularly relevant when it comes to the issue of deterring drug use among youth, who are often most vulnerable to the cult of celebrity and its attendant glamour.

The fact is that when a celebrity uses drugs, he or she breaks the law, states the report. Young people are quick to pick up on and react to perceived leniency in dealing with such offenders. This raises questions about the fairness of the justice system and could undermine wider social efforts at reducing the demand for drugs. The same is true for higher level drug offenders.

The Report notes the wide differences between countries and regions when it comes to tolerance towards drug-related offences and offenders. Penalties for similar offences may seem severe in some places, but lenient in others.

Source: www.INCB.org



ECAD 15th MAYORS' CONFERENCE
First Announcement
DRUGS IN THE CULTURE OF THE CITY YOUTH
Warszawa, Poland
May 28-29, 2008
VENUE: NOVOTEL HOTEL,
WARSZAWA CENTRUM
Preliminary Programme is already published online, now it is time to book your participation and accommodation!
For registration and booking forms, please, visit www.ecad.net.

Ban on grow shops in the Netherlands

Dutch Justice Minister Hirsch Ballin is working on a bill to tackle so-called grow shops. He wants to make it a criminal offence to sell material for growing marijuana at home. Parliament supports his initiative.

The Christian Democrat CDA submitted a motion in November calling for a ban. The party is annoyed that grow shops are able to sell virtually everything necessary for growing marijuana at home, and that shop owners also freely give out detailed information on the matter, often on setting up a trade in marijuana as well.

Dutch parliament holds debates on the drug policy this month and will also urge for an investigation into the effects of the policy.

By Expatica.com

USA: Tighter control for National Drug Strategy 2008

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John Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy and President G. Bush's "Drug Czar" (picture) said,

"Teen drug abuse is down sharply, and this will provide lasting benefits to our Nation, since we know that most adults who get caught in addiction begin with use as teens. But there are still too many of our friends, our family members, our co-workers and our neighbors who are becoming lost in the maze of addiction. We need to find whatever ways we can to create a turning point in their lives - a turning point that leads to recovery."

Bringing attention to the emerging threat of prescription drug abuse, President Bush called for tighter controls on Internet sales of controlled substances. Online pharmacies have increasingly become sources for diversion of prescription drugs, and the President urged Congress to take swift legislative action to put an end to illegal sales of controlled substances on the Internet.

The Ryan Haight Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act (S.980), sponsored by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Jeff Sessions (R-AL), would restrict the ability of rogue Internet pharmacies to illegally divert dangerous controlled substance prescription drugs to millions of people - even teens - without valid prescriptions issued under a legitimate physician's care. The bill was unanimously approved by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary in September 2007, and awaits consideration by the full Senate.

"Prescription drugs provide tremendous benefits to our Nation," said Director Walters, "but when misused or abused they can lead to addiction, and worse. We are working with leaders in Congress to modernize our laws to address the problem of 'rogue online pharmacies' which skirt around the safeguards of legitimate medical practice and prescriptions. Prescription drug abuse is an area of serious concern, and we are now focusing our Nation's supply, demand, and prevention policies with the goal of seeing the same reductions that we have achieved for illegal 'street' drugs."

By ONDPC.gov

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Central America and the Caribbean show an increase in cannabis abuse and trafficking. Although production has decreased, Jamaica is still the main producer of cannabis and the main exporter.

North America

A cause for concern in the region is the sharp increase in tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content (10-fold) in cannabis potency, compared with the average cannabis potency in the 1960s. THC is the active ingredient in the cannabis plant.

North America is a large producer of cannabis. The United States of America, Mexico and Canada produce about 5,000 tons, 4,000 tons and 800 tons of cannabis respectively. Canadian demand for cannabis is satisfied by domestic production.

The Board calls upon the Government of Canada to end programmes, such as the supply of "safer crack kits", including the mouthpiece and screen components of pipes for smoking "crack", authorized by the Vancouver Island Health Authority, as they are in contravention of article 13 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

South America:

Recent surveys in the region show a continued rise of cocaine abuse. Among drug users in treatment, cocaine-type drugs account for almost 50 per cent and cannabis for 26 per cent. Drug-related organized crime, violence and murder continued to plague South American countries. Strengthened cooperation among regional law enforcement authorities resulted in cocaine seizures representing about 40 per cent of global illicit cocaine manufacture.

The entire region is affected by large-scale illicit cultivation of coca bush, opium poppy and cannabis plant, along with manufacture of and trafficking in illicit drugs. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in 2006, Colombia accounted for 50 per cent of global coca bush cultivation; it was followed by Peru (33 per cent) and Bolivia (17 per cent).

Asia:

East and South-East Asia is no longer a major producer of illicit opium poppy but some illicit manufacture of heroin remains in the region. Myanmar is still the largest cultivator of illicit opium poppy with a total of 27,700 hectares in 2007, an increase from 2006. The Lao People's Democratic Republic recorded 1,500 hectares of illicitly cultivated opium poppy in 2007, the lowest figure since 1992.

The Board is concerned about the continued availability of precursor chemicals, in particular acetic anhydride for the illicit manufacture of heroin in Afghanistan and reminds all Governments, that Afghanistan has no legitimate need for that substance.

Afghan opiates are smuggled through the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and countries in Central Asia. Large-scale drug trafficking in those countries results in organized crime, corruption and high illicit demand for opiates. The Islamic Republic of Iran has the highest rate of abuse of opiates in the world.

Central Asia has seen an alarming rise in drug-related crime, the abuse of narcotic drugs and the spread of HIV/AIDS as a result of

the increased availability of opiates. There has been a 30 per cent increase in the number of officially registered cases of HIV/AIDS in Central Asia, from 14,799 cases in 2005 to 19,197 in 2006, mainly due to injecting drug abuse.

The southern Caucasus is also used as a transit area for Afghan opiates, resulting in increased drug abuse. The drug trafficking and abuse situation is likely to deteriorate further in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Board recommends better information-sharing, more efficient border control and regional and national coordination of drug control activities..

Europe:

Cannabis continues to be the most prevalent drug in Europe. Western Europe remains the world's largest market for cannabis resin, though seizures of cannabis resin have decreased in some countries in Europe. This may be linked to the decline in cannabis resin production in Morocco. Illicit cultivation of cannabis plants is reported in Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland.

Italy and Spain have the highest annual prevalence rate for cannabis use in Western Europe. While annual prevalence of cannabis use among youth and adults in Italy increased, it remained stable in Spain. The United Kingdom reported a decrease in annual and monthly prevalence rates for cannabis abuse in England and Wales. Bulgaria, Greece, Malta and Romania reported the lowest annual prevalence rates for cannabis.

Europe remains the second largest market for cocaine in the world. Cocaine consignments increased significantly in Finland, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland in 2006, while they declined in Austria. The highest rates of cocaine abuse are in Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy.

Practically all of the heroin in European illicit drug markets comes from Afghanistan. Turkey is the main corridor for heroin consignments destined for Western Europe and the start of the Balkan route. Heroin is also smuggled along the so-called "silk route" through Central Asia into the Russian Federation, for local consumption or further transport to European Union member States.

The southern branch of the Balkan route, which passes through Istanbul, Sofia, Belgrade and Zagreb, is being increasingly used to smuggle Afghan opiates into the Russian Federation and other countries in the region.

It is estimated that 3.3 million people abuse heroin in Europe. The abuse of opiates is stable or has declined in Western and Central Europe but has increased in the Russian Federation and in other countries in Eastern Europe, as well as in some countries in South-Eastern Europe along the Balkan route. In Eastern Europe, the demand for treatment for the abuse of opiates is higher (61 per cent) than in Western Europe (55 per cent).

Europe remains a major source of amphetamines. Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have recorded an increase in seizures of amphetamines. In 2006, the Russian Federation authorities detected 1,700 illicit manufacturing facilities, including 136 chemical laboratories used to manufacture illicit synthetic drugs.

Source: incb.org.

Read more at: <http://www.incb.org/pdf/annual-report/2007/en/03-press-release.pdf>

Latvia: statistics and drug-related murders

Latest statistics in Latvia, one of the three Baltic countries, shows that the amount of drug abusers in the country has stagnated during the recent months. Despite the statistics, two murders within a couple of days in a well-off businessmen community near Riga became closely related to drug dealing and unpaid drug-debts.

Head of Latvian criminal police, Mr. *Ints Kuzis* admits that drugs have become an integral part of the social life in the Baltics, and not only there. Statistical data do not indicate growing supply of narcotic substances shipped to Latvia. To provide drugs in abundance is a task enthusiastically performed by Afghan farmers as well as by thousands of laboratories, processing opium, delivering it to Europe and serving the goods thanks to smooth logistics.

Latvian legal drug ventures as well as retail and wholesale drug dealers fight for life to attach more clients to this deadly business chain. That is why menace, conflicts and ordered murders to pay off the contracted debts are becoming a common matter.

On the other side of the law is Latvian police, which has never been so efficient in seizing illegal substances. Drug fighting has become one of the prioritized areas of interest for the police, which is also marked by the new Latvian Minister of the Interior Mr. *Mareks Seglinsh*. As a part of priority measures, an anti-drug bureau will be re-established soon and each Latvian region and city will be provided with a locally operating bureau personnel.

Illegal drugs seizures in LATVIA (police statistics):

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Poppy straw (kg)	57,72	107,23	64,26	23,374	74,611
Heroin (g)	600,44	524,92	42,29	157,41	1750,5
Marijuana (kg)	6,02	7,55	25,92	6,34	52,34
Hash (g)	50052,26	176,456	1553,79	358,4	253,65
Ephedrine (g)	847,24	664,246	18,46	0,88	0
Amphetamine (g)	3051,02	3550,53	3789,15	11065,18	6162,15
Metamphetamines (g)	5989,12	4890,65	3416,52	8198,59	11863,26
Ecstasy (tabl)	9239	9460	21937	4640	102798*
Cocaine (g)	777,21	639,99	683,9	1123,13	11913,9
LSD blotting paper	20	79	2190	3	146
Medicinal drugs: psychotropic substances	7970,72 g	4342,65 g	761,77 g	1366,16 g	982, 2351 g
Or narcotic drugs (tabl)	466143	15608	208666	37671	4256,5
* totally 31 975 tablets					

By *Andrejs Vilks*, ECAD representative in Latvia

UNODC: drug problem contained...

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To move beyond merely containing the problem, the UN drugs chief underlined the need for a multilateral approach, and a stronger focus on health.

"Scientific evidence shows that drug addiction is an illness that can and must be treated. There are no ideological debates about curing cancer or diabetes; left and right are not divided on the need for treating tuberculosis or HIV. So why are there political contrapositions about drugs?"

As a priority, Mr. Costa urged Member States to prevent and treat drug abuse. At the same time, he underlined the importance of reaching the world's 25 million hardcore drug addicts in order to reduce the harm that they cause to themselves and to society. He emphasized the need for more funding for development projects to give farmers an alternative to cannabis, coca, and opium: "the eradication of poverty must go hand-in-hand with the eradication of drug crops".

To move forward, the head of UNODC called for more security to help states that are caught in the cross-fire of drug trafficking, and to promote criminal justice to ensure that fighting drugs is based on the rule of law...

He called for a grass-roots mobilization of society to help fight drug abuse, and urged civil society and media campaigns "to promote consumer boycotts against the fashion houses, recording companies, and sport enterprises that hire celebrities proud, rather than shameful, of their addiction". The CND is the central policy-making body within the United Nations system dealing with illicit drugs. It is also the governing body for UNODC's work in the drugs field.

For the full text, please consult www.unodc.org



ECAD is Europe's leading organization promoting a drug free Europe and representing millions of European citizens.

ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives against drug abuse supporting the United Nations Conventions.

Has your city joined ECAD?

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