



New York City, NY, USA
NY–A: 29 March–2 April 2026
NY–B: 6–10 April 2026



Commission on Narcotic Drugs Background Guide 2026

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Subham Barua and Assistant Director Till Staschko (Conference A), and Director Kaylan Guvernator and Liz. R. Haley (Conference B). Subham studied Political Science (International Affairs) at UC Riverside and is currently working as a Research Assistant for the British Council Climate Futures: South Asia (Bangladesh) grant-winning project - Discovering Matarbari Folk Tales. Till studied Chemistry at the University of Siegen in Germany, where he is now pursuing a PhD and a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education. Kaylan studied Psychology at Austin College and currently works for a private equity company in downtown Chicago. Liz R. Haley graduated in Dec 2025 with a MPA in Public Policy at Valdosta State University, and previously earned a BA in Political Science with the EU Studies Certificate at Valdosta State University, as well as an AA in Biology at St. Petersburg College. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Ashlee Ann Rolheiser (Conference A) and Karla Paola Chávez (Conference B), as well as Steven Vanhulle, Director of Conference Management (Conference A).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Illicit Cultivation, Production, and Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs
2. Strengthening International Cooperation to Combat the World Drug Problem

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 PM ET on 1 March 2026 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Subham Barua, Director
Till Staschko, Assistant Director
Conference A

Kaylan Guvernator, Director
Liz. R. Haley, Assistant Director
Conference B



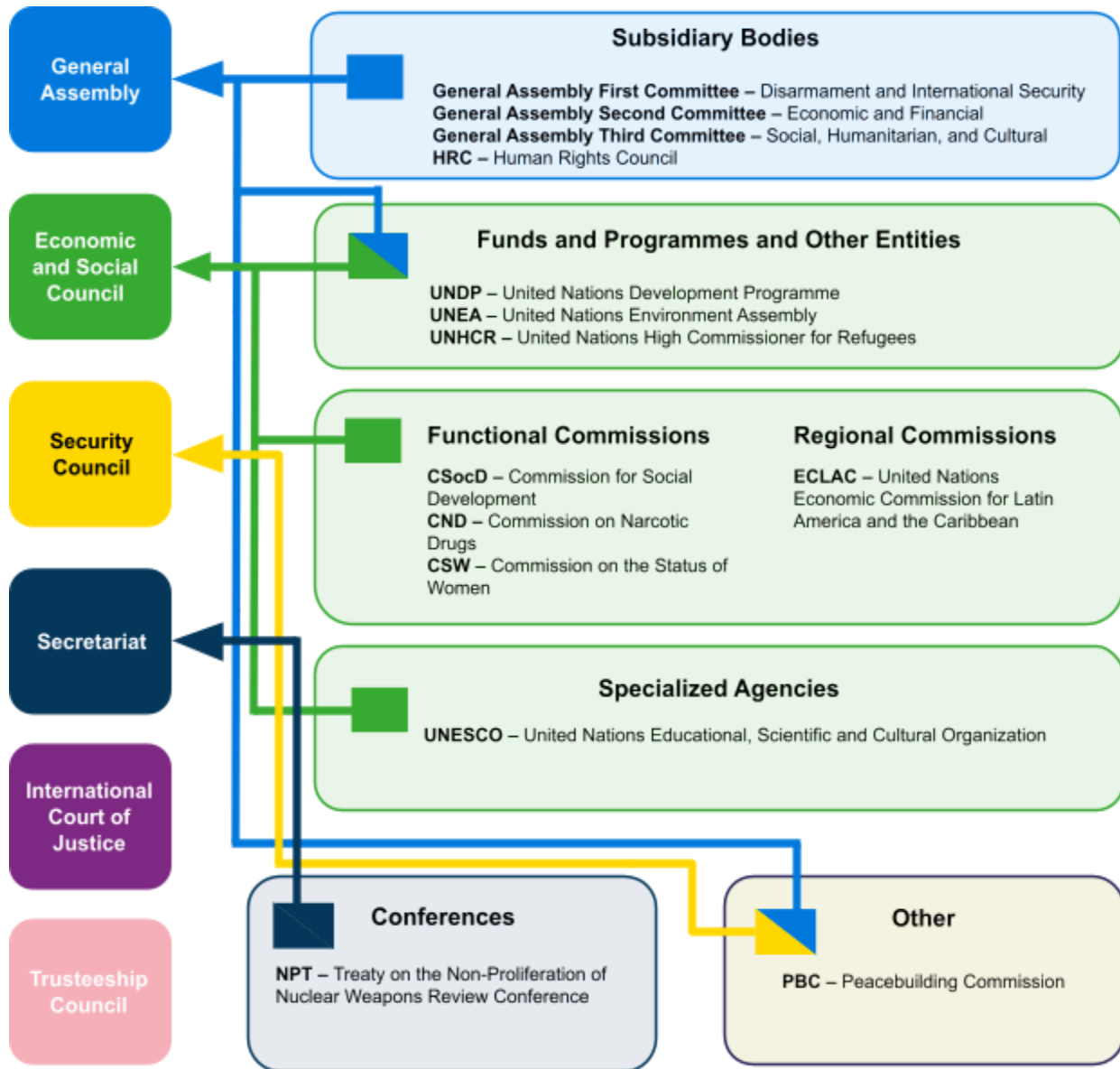
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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN•NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

Established in 1946 by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 9(1), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) is the central drug policy-making body of the United Nations.¹ CND advises on drug policy and the control of narcotic drugs through monitoring the application of international drug control treaties.² In addition to being a functional commission of ECOSOC, CND is one of the governing bodies of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).³ Its work is guided by the 1961 *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs* (Single Convention), the 1971 *Convention on Psychotropic Substances*, and the 1988 *Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*.⁴

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are complementary to CND's work to address the world drug problem effectively.⁵ In particular, SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) in part seek to minimize the suffering that results from the world drug problem and the use or trafficking of illicit narcotics.⁶

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

CND is a functional commission of and reports directly to ECOSOC.⁷ The commission's original mandate was to assist in monitoring the application of international drug control treaties.⁸ CND's mandate has since evolved significantly, and the commission currently uses research from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) to decide whether narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and their precursors, should be placed under or released from international control and if the level of control on these substances needs to be changed.⁹ CND then establishes strategies to control these illicit narcotics and provides recommendations to Member States and UNODC on countering the world drug problem.¹⁰ CND is also mandated to approve the budget for the Fund of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, which receives the majority of the United Nations' drug control resources.¹¹ CND's role was further clarified and formalized by ECOSOC resolution 1999/30 on "*Review of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme: strengthening the United Nations machinery for international drug control within the scope of the existing international drug control treaties and in accordance with the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations*," which structured CND's agenda into two distinct sections: a normative section and an

¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Resolution on the Establishment of a Commission on Narcotic Drugs (E/RES/9(1))*. 1946.

² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs*. N.d.

³ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2025-26*. 2025. p. 168.

⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs*. N.d.

⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. N.d.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.



operational section.¹² Under the normative segment, CND focuses on policy issues and the upholding of treaties, while under the operational segment, CND exercises its role as the governing body of UNODC.¹³

One of the most notable expansions of CND's mandate came with the adoption of the *Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem* at CND's 52nd session in 2009.¹⁴ CND is responsible for encouraging and assisting Member States in implementing the plan and for developing new indicators and instruments to measure the extent of the global drug problem.¹⁵

While the following list is not exhaustive, CND's mandate can be summarized as:

- **CND will generally:** supervise the application of narcotic treaties; advise ECOSOC on all issues related to the control of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and their precursors; monitor national, regional, and international commitments to implement joint commitments aimed at countering the world drug problem; make recommendations to Member States and other bodies.¹⁶
- **CND will not generally:** make binding decisions on drug policy; unilaterally direct Member States, NGOs, and other United Nations bodies to implement actions; enforce action against Member States not complying with international drug control treaties.¹⁷

Governance, Funding, and Structure

CND has 53 members, with 11 seats each for African and Asian States, 10 for Latin American and Caribbean States, six for Eastern European States, 14 for Western European and Other States, and a rotating seat between the Asian and Latin American or Caribbean States every four years.¹⁸ Members must be party to the 1961 Single Convention, and there must be "adequate representation" for Member States that are important producers of opium or coca leaves, Member States where illicit narcotics are manufactured, and Member States where the use of illicit narcotics is particularly concerning.¹⁹ Members of CND are elected by an organizational session of ECOSOC.²⁰

CND is led internally by a Bureau and Extended Bureau.²¹ The Bureau is composed of a Chairperson, three Vice-Persons, and a Rapporteur, who are elected at the end of each CND session for the following

¹² United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Review of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme: strengthening the United Nations machinery for international drug control within the scope of the existing international drug control treaties and in accordance with the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations (E/RES/1999/30)*. 1999.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem*. 2009. p. iii.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 8.

¹⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Mandate and Functions*. N.d.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Membership and Bureau*. N.d.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs et al. *Fact sheet on elections and membership*. 2024.

²¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Membership and Bureau*. N.d.



session.²² The Bureau works with the United Nations Secretariat to prepare CND sessions and undertake organizational work between sessions.²³ The Extended Bureau consists of representatives from the five regional groups, the European Union, and the Group of 77 and China.²⁴ Additionally, CND has five subsidiary bodies to advance cooperation in drug law enforcement activities at the regional level.²⁵

CND meets twice annually, with a regular session in which CND adopts decisions and resolutions, and a reconvened session to discuss budgetary and administrative issues as part of CND's role as the governing body of UNODC.²⁶ CND also regularly convenes intersessional meetings to provide policy guidance to UNODC.²⁷

²² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Membership and Bureau*. N.d.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *CND Subsidiary Bodies - Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies and Subcommission*. N.d.

²⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Events*. N.d.

²⁷ Ibid.



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https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Membership/Elections_and_Membership_Factsheet_Jan2024.pdf

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https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Index/ECOSOC_Res-9I_E.pdf

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https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/Resolutions/resolution_1999-07-28_1.html

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. N.d. Retrieved 7 November 2025 from: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/SDG/commissions-2030.html>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *CND Subsidiary Bodies - Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies and Subcommission*. N.d. Retrieved 7 November 2025 from:

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Subsidiary_Bodies/Subsidiary-Bodies_Index.html

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Mandate and Functions*. N.d. Retrieved 7 November 2025 from: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Mandate_Functions/index.html

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Membership and Bureau*. N.d. Retrieved 7 November 2025 from: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Membership/Membership.html>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem*. 2009. Retrieved 7 November 2025 from:

<https://www.unodc.org/documents/ungass2016/V0984963-English.pdf>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Events*. N.d. Retrieved 7 November 2025 from:

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Events.html>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs*. 2023. Retrieved 7 November 2025 from:

https://www.unodc.org/res/commissions/CND/Mandate_Functions/scheduling-elearning-tutorial_html/Brochure_on_the_Commission_on_Narcotic_Drugs.pdf



1. Illicit Cultivation, Production, and Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs

Introduction

The illicit cultivation, production, and manufacture of narcotic drugs remain a significant issue for Member States amidst global instability.²⁸ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines narcotic drugs, as it relates to international drug policy, as any natural or synthetic substance listed in Schedules I and II of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (Single Convention) and its 1972 Protocol.²⁹ Under the Single Convention, cultivation refers to the illegal growing of plants that are used to produce narcotic drugs, such as opium poppy, coca bush, and cannabis.³⁰ Production is a broad term, encompassing all stages of preparing a drug for use through the separation and processing of raw materials, while manufacture specifically refers to the chemical synthesis or transformation of raw materials or precursors into finished narcotic or psychotropic substances.³¹ Among plant-based drugs, cannabis continues to be the most widely cultivated drug worldwide and accounts for the highest number of total drug seizures, but over the past five years, cocaine has become the fastest-growing illicit drug market.³² The illicit drug economy accounts for a significant portion of the gross domestic product (GDP) in some Member States.³³

According to UNODC's World Drug Report 2025, the illicit cultivation, production, and manufacture of narcotic drugs have been exacerbated due to the rapid growth in synthetic drug production.³⁴ The illicit drug trade relies on precursor chemicals, which are key ingredients used in synthetic drug manufacturing, as well as new psychoactive substances (NPS) that are not yet regulated under international drug control, but still pose significant public health risks.³⁵ Illicit diversions of manufactured pharmaceuticals have created additional geographically concentrated hotspots, such as the use of methadone in Europe, codeine in North America, Asia, and Africa, fentanyl in North America, tramadol in parts of West, Central, and North Africa, and pregabalin in North and West Africa and the Middle East.³⁶ The World Drug Report 2025 also highlighted that the illegal manufacture of drugs in labs poses a greater environmental harm than that associated with illicit drug crop cultivation.³⁷

²⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025: Key findings*. 2025. p. 5.

²⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Terminology and Information on Drugs*. 2016. p. 64.

³⁰ United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 (as amended by the 1972 Protocol amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961)*. 1961. p. 1.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 2.

³² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025: Key findings*. 2025. p. 48.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 5.

³⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2014: Precursor control*. 2014; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Terminology and Information on Drugs*. 2016. p. 31; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *UNODC Early Warning Advisory on New Psychoactive Substances: What are NPS?*. N.d.

³⁶ Baker. SANS Cyber Defense. *Investigating Fentanyl Supply Chains: An OSINT Analysis of Chinese Biotechnology Companies*. 2025; Waly. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *UNODC Executive Director's Remarks Opening of the 68th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs*. 2025.

³⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025: Key findings*. 2025; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Practical Guide on Alternative Development and the Environment*. 2023.



Illicit drug production fuels transnational organized crime, poses extreme public health risks, harms the environment, and undermines the rights of vulnerable populations.³⁸ The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) is currently prioritizing synthetic drugs, precursor control, and cross-border cooperation, while promoting evidence-based drug policies and expanding access to health and social services to vulnerable populations, such as women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples.³⁹ CND has also highlighted the environmental impacts of illicit drug cultivation and production, as well as the sophistication of criminal supply chains, by promoting additional investment in law enforcement technology, knowledge sharing, and voluntary eradication and alternative development programs.⁴⁰ In 2025, CND's 68th session focused on enhancing officer safety in high-risk operations involving illicit synthetic drug labs, establishing a panel of independent experts tasked with monitoring the effectiveness of the international drug control conventions, and addressing the environmental impacts associated with illicit drug activities.⁴¹

International and Regional Framework

The international drug control conventions established the legal and policy foundation for addressing global illicit drug production.⁴² After World War II, international control of narcotic drugs became necessary, as previous treaties did not cover chemical advances.⁴³ Therefore, limitations on the cultivation, manufacture, production, and use of narcotic drugs were set in Articles 2, 3, 21, 21 bis, and 29 of the Single Convention and its 1972 Protocol, which limited the production of narcotic drugs based on estimated medical and scientific needs and emphasized licensing and state control as restrictive measures for illicit manufacture.⁴⁴ To address synthetic drugs, Articles 2 and 3 of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971) restrict synthetic drug production and focus on synthetic labs involved in illicit production, calling for tighter legal frameworks to be implemented by governments.⁴⁵ Article 12 of the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988 Convention) establishes additional limitations to control supply chain elements like precursors and equipment in illicit drug manufacture.⁴⁶ Its Articles 13 and 14 address the seizure of equipment and materials used in illicit drug production, as well as illicit crop cultivation, including alternative development initiatives for appropriate regions.⁴⁷

³⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025: Contemporary issues on drugs*. 2025.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² World Trade Organization. *International Drug Control Conventions (1961, 1971 and 1988 Conventions)*. N.d.

⁴³ Anslinger et al. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *The Traffic in Narcotics*. 1953.

⁴⁴ United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 (as amended by the 1972 Protocol amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961)*. 1961.

⁴⁵ United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Protocol on Psychotropic Substances. *Convention on Psychotropic Substances*. 1971.

⁴⁶ United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. *United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*. 1988.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 1988.



Special Sessions of the General Assembly played a pivotal role in advancing the framework of international drug control policy alongside the established conventions.⁴⁸ The General Assembly's 17th Special Session (1990) was the first Special Session to focus on international cooperation against the illicit production and distribution of narcotic drugs.⁴⁹ The Political Declaration and Global Programme of Action (1990), adopted at the 17th Special Session, acts as a landmark commitment toward international collaboration against illicit drugs and provides recommendations for the eradication of illicit crops, control of precursors, and demand reduction.⁵⁰ The 20th Special Session (1998) focused on international cooperation to eradicate illicit drug crops and alternative development in a more structured framework with concrete action plans and 10-year targets.⁵¹ The 30th Special Session (2016), which marked the most recent Special Session on the illicit production, manufacture, and cultivation of narcotic drugs, shifted the emphasis from an eradication- and prohibition-centered approach towards public health, harm reduction, and development-oriented strategies.⁵²

Illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs poses a significant challenge to achieving sustainable development.⁵³ General Assembly resolution 70/1 (2015) on "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" created 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDGs 3 (good health and well-being) and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).⁵⁴ These goals stand in contrast to the negative effects of drugs on the physical and mental health of users, as well as the socioeconomic disparities promoted by the illicit drug trade.⁵⁵ Specifically, SDG targets 3.7 on "strengthening the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol" and 16.4 on "combating all forms of organized crime" tackle drug abuse and drug trafficking.⁵⁶ To address these circumstances, General Assembly resolution 68/196 (2013) on "United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development" provides guidance to Member States on alternative development, especially on reducing illicit drug crop cultivation.⁵⁷ The Outcome Document of the General Assembly's 30th Special Session firmly commits to implementing the SDGs by combating drug trafficking.⁵⁸ This commitment has since been reaffirmed by General Assembly resolution 73/192 (2018) on "International cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem," in which the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug

⁴⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Political Declaration and Global Programme of Action (A/S-17/13/Rev.1)*. 1990.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem (A/RES/S-20/2)*. 1998.

⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem. (A/RES/S-30/1)*. 2016.

⁵³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Outcome Document of the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem*. 2016. p. 3.

⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

⁵⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Outcome Document of the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem*. 2016. pp. 3, 22-25.

⁵⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development (A/RES/68/196)*. 2013.

⁵⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Outcome Document of the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem*. 2016. pp. 3, 22-25.



Problem (1998) was thoroughly supported, and alternative development was recommended to implement long-term sustainable change.⁵⁹

Role of the International System

CND uses diverse approaches to combat illicit drug production.⁶⁰ A significant emphasis in CND's efforts against illicit drug production is placed on strengthening international cooperation, particularly through CND resolution 48/11 (2005) on "Strengthening international cooperation to prevent the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances by preventing the diversion and smuggling of precursors and essential equipment in the context of Project Prism, Operation Purple and Operation Topaz".⁶¹ Resolution 48/11 aims to prevent the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in narcotic drugs, as well as programs monitoring illicit cultivation.⁶² Recently, CND has involved private sector entities to assist Member States in countering the world drug problem and addressed the rise of slightly modified designer precursors in the illicit manufacture and proliferation of drugs.⁶³ Additionally, CND holds annual thematic discussions to review progress and challenges in implementing international drug policies.⁶⁴ While these thematic discussions cover a wide range of issues, CND has recently focused particularly on synthetic opioids, precursors, and structural drug control challenges.⁶⁵

Multiple United Nations agencies and bodies have addressed the illicit cultivation, production, and manufacture of narcotic drugs.⁶⁶ The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) acts as a monitoring and compliance body for CND by assessing Member States' compliance and giving technical advice.⁶⁷ From its findings, INCB submits annual reports to CND with analyses of global drug trends, policy issues, developments in precursors, and statistical data on the global drug trade, which helps CND make

⁵⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *International cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem (A/RES/73/192)*. 2018.

⁶⁰ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Monitoring and verification of illicit cultivation (42/3)*. 1999.

⁶¹ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Strengthening international cooperation to prevent the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances by preventing the diversion and smuggling of precursors and essential equipment in the context of Project Prism, Operation Purple and Operation Topaz (48/11)*. 2005; United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Monitoring and verification of illicit cultivation (42/3)*. 1999.

⁶² United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Strengthening international cooperation to prevent the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances by preventing the diversion and smuggling of precursors and essential equipment in the context of Project Prism, Operation Purple and Operation Topaz (48/11)*. 2005.

⁶³ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *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 (63/1)*. 2020; United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Intensifying efforts to address the diversion of non-scheduled chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and the proliferation of designer precursors (65/3)*. 2022.

⁶⁴ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Chair's summary of the thematic discussions on the implementation of all international drug policy commitments (E/CN.7/2025/CRP.1)*. 2024.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ International Narcotics Control Board. *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2024 (E/INCB/2024/1)*. 2024; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Secretariat to the Governing Bodies*. N.d.; World Health Organization. *Global status report on alcohol and health and treatment of substance use disorder*. 2024.

⁶⁷ United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 (as amended by the 1972 Protocol amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961)*. 1961.



informed decisions on necessary policy measures.⁶⁸ Other INCB initiatives include the INCB Learning Global Programme, which raises awareness and provides training on medically necessary narcotic and psychotropic substances.⁶⁹ INCB's projects, Project Cohesion and Project Prism, focus on international cooperation in matters related to the trafficking of chemicals used for cocaine and heroin (Project Cohesion) and amphetamine-type stimulants (Project Prism).⁷⁰

CND and INCB are supported administratively by UNODC, which includes legal and technical advice on resolutions, organization of formal sessions, and coordination with other United Nations agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).⁷¹ In addition to its annual World Drug Report, UNODC also published Terminology and Information on Drugs (2016), an Early Warning Advisory (EWA) (2024) on NPS, and a Practical Guide on Alternative Development and the Environment (2023), among others.⁷² These documents set the discussional basis on drug trafficking, provide a statistical overview of emerging issues, and recommend measures to combat identified problems, all of which help policy-making bodies such as CND determine optimal solutions.⁷³ To combat the rising threat of synthetic drugs, UNODC launched the Synthetic Drugs Strategy (2021) and the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs (2019), which propose science-based measures to prevent crises before they happen, promote informed health responses, and employ international cooperation to substantially reduce synthetic drug trafficking.⁷⁴ WHO collaborates with INCB and UNODC by providing medical, pharmacological, or pharmaceutical experts for INCB and by publishing data on public health concerning drug abuse.⁷⁵ In a joint statement from 2021, WHO, INCB, and UNODC have also advocated for a balanced approach to ensure the licit demand of controlled medicines can be met when restricting access, especially in emergencies.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ International Narcotics Control Board. *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2024 (E/INCB/2024/1)*. 2024; International Narcotics Control Board. *Precursors, Chemicals and Equipment Frequently Used in the Illicit Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances: Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2024 on the Implementation of Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 (E/INCB/2024/4)*. 2024.

⁶⁹ International Narcotics Control Board. *INCB Learning*. N.d.

⁷⁰ International Narcotics Control Board. *Projects Cohesion and Prism*. N.d.

⁷¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Secretariat to the Governing Bodies*. N.d.; International Narcotics Control Board. *INCB Secretariat*. N.d.

⁷² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2024*. 2024; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Terminology and Information on Drugs*. 2016; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Practical Guide on Alternative Development and the Environment*. 2023; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Current NPS Threats*. 2024.

⁷³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2024*. 2024; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Terminology and Information on Drugs*. 2016; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Practical Guide on Alternative Development and the Environment*. 2023; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Current NPS Threats*. 2024.

⁷⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Synthetic Drugs Strategy*. 2021; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs*. 2019.

⁷⁵ World Health Organization. *Global status report on alcohol and health and treatment of substance use disorder*. 2024.

⁷⁶ World Health Organization et al. *INCB, UNODC and WHO Joint Statement on Access to Controlled Medicines in Emergencies*. 2021.



Regional initiatives aim to reduce the illicit cultivation, production, and manufacture of narcotic drugs with highly localized measures.⁷⁷ Within Europe, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation readily shares its data with UNODC to disrupt transnational drug networks and enhance global enforcement capacities.⁷⁸ Similarly, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction works closely with UNODC to combat the drug problem in Europe by sharing data.⁷⁹ In the Western hemisphere, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission serves as a forum for Member States in North, Central, and South America to find solutions to the drug problem and provide technical assistance.⁸⁰ CICAD also works with UNODC by co-organizing training programs or data collection through the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism.⁸¹ Similarly, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) utilizes the monitoring ASEAN Narcotics Cooperation Center or the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters, which coordinates regional drug policies.⁸² These policies have focused on preventive education, reduction of drug-related crime, access to treatment, and alternative development in recent years.⁸³ The African Union has also invested in drug control by committing to the regularly revised Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2019-2023) (2019), which deals with persistent regional challenges and threats by focusing on countering drug traffickers and acknowledging the special needs of vulnerable groups like women and children in these efforts.⁸⁴ UNODC's Regional Programmes in Africa have also positively impacted the continent with capacity-building workshops or policy advice, for which the Programme for Legal Empowerment and Aid Delivery in Kenya is a great example.⁸⁵

The Effect of Illicit Drug Production on Women and Indigenous Peoples

Women's participation in the illicit drug trade is rising worldwide.⁸⁶ According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women's Policy Brief on Gender and Drugs (2014), most women contributing to the illicit cultivation, manufacture, production, or trade of narcotic drugs are from socioeconomic groups lacking access to education, economic opportunities, and have suffered domestic abuse.⁸⁷ Women, especially from ethnic minorities, who participate in criminal organizations involved in the trafficking of narcotic drugs are often sexually exploited and employed in low-ranking, low-paying, and

⁷⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime et al. *Co-operation Agreement between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Police Office*. 2004; Organization of American States. *Establishment of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and Approval of its Statute (AG/RES. 813 (XVI-O/86))*. 1986. pp. 22-34; Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016-2025*. 2017; African Union. *African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2019-2023)*. 2019.

⁷⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime et al. *Co-operation Agreement between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Police Office*. 2004.

⁷⁹ European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction et al. *Memorandum of Understanding between The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)*. 1998.

⁸⁰ Organization of American States. *Establishment of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and Approval of its Statute (AG/RES. 813 (XVI-O/86))*. 1986. pp. 22-34.

⁸¹ Organization of American States. *Multilateral Evaluations Mechanism (MEM)*. N.d.

⁸² Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016-2025*. 2017.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ African Union. *African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2019-2023)*. 2019.

⁸⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *2021-2023 Progress Report on the Strategic Vision for Africa*. 2024. p. 18.

⁸⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A Gender Perspective on the Impact of Drug Use, the Drug Trade, and Drug Control Regimes*. 2014.

⁸⁷ Ibid.



high-risk positions such as drug mules.⁸⁸ When not employed in these roles, women can also be reliant on illicit drug cultivation to sustain themselves and their families.⁸⁹ Article III.2.3 of the UNDP International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy (2019) specifically calls for the equal provision of alternative livelihoods for women involved in illicit drug cultivation, especially since drug crop substitution programs mainly benefit men who are traditional land titleholders. For example, women account for only 13% of exclusive land title owners in the Trópico de Cochabamba region of Bolivia.⁹⁰

Indigenous Peoples may face adverse impacts from illicit crop cultivation in their territories and from eradication policies without development alternatives.⁹¹ The right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, including the right of governance of their territories, is firmly anchored in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), specifically in Articles 3 and 29.⁹² This right is threatened by criminal organizations exploiting limited state regulations on Indigenous land to cultivate illicit crops for the production of narcotic drugs, leading to up to 45% of a single Indigenous territory being used for coca cultivation in Costa Rica.⁹³ The yield of these cultivations may also be used by Indigenous Peoples for traditional medicines, which is protected by Article III.4.4 of the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy (2019) and Article 14.2. of the 1988 Convention, which stands in contrast to the eradication policy of the 1961 Single Convention.⁹⁴ Government programs still mainly eradicate illicit crop cultivations, including those within territories of Indigenous Peoples, destroying legitimate food crops, polluting drinking water, and causing health problems when herbicides are sprayed over areas containing illicit crop cultivations.⁹⁵

Policies targeting drug trafficking may unintentionally harm vulnerable groups.⁹⁶ Forced eradication of illicit crops without providing alternatives harms communities and is a driver of displacement and poverty, demonstrating why alternative development is crucial in protecting Indigenous and rural communities when tackling the illicit cultivation of narcotic drugs.⁹⁷ CND adopted resolution 65/1 (2022) on “Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ United Nations Development Programme et al. *International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy*. 2019; Grimmelmann et al. UNODC Bulletin on Narcotics. *The Land-Drugs Nexus: How Illicit Drug Crop Cultivation Is Related to Access to Land*. 2018. pp. 90-91.

⁹¹ United Nations Development Programme et al. *International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy*. 2019.

⁹² United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295)*. 2007.

⁹³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Monitoring of territories with presence of coca crops, 2023*. 2025. p. 29; Montero. Mongabay. *From murder to mining, threats abound in Colombian Amazon Indigenous reserves*. 2024.

⁹⁴ United Nations Development Programme et al. *International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy*. 2019; United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. *United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*. 1988; United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 (as amended by the 1972 Protocol amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961)*. 1961.

⁹⁵ Transnational Institute. *Connecting the Dots... Human Rights, Illicit Cultivation and Alternative Development*. 2018. pp. 17-21.

⁹⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2024: Key findings and conclusions*. 2024. pp. 16-19.

⁹⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development (A/RES/68/196)*. 2013.



protect the environment” to establish alternative development as a sustainable alternative to illicit crop cultivation.⁹⁸ To implement alternative development without increasing existing gender disparities, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommends creating comprehensive development plans for rural areas that include women in every step of their construction and implementation and establishes women as effective decision makers and beneficiaries of alternative development programs.⁹⁹ Non-governmental organizations (NGO) provide valuable data, like treatment outcomes or community-level impacts of drug trafficking, while policy insights through capacity-building events like webinars that are hosted by the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs focus on increasing equitable access to controlled medicines.¹⁰⁰ It is evident that vulnerable social groups require special attention when creating novel policies that target criminal organizations involved in drug trafficking, which is also true for the environment.¹⁰¹

The Impact of Illicit Drug Production on the Environment

Environmental crime converges with other serious crimes, such as illicit drug cultivation, manufacture, and production.¹⁰² The environmental impacts of the illicit drug trade can be divided into two categories: cultivation and production, and drug use.¹⁰³ Cultivation and production can contribute negatively to energy use, deforestation and biodiversity loss, soil and water pollution and depletion, adverse effects on the food chain, and air pollution, while drug use may lead to water pollution, soil pollution, and negative food chain effects.¹⁰⁴ Illicit drug production can lead to toxification, habitat destruction, watershed depletion, unmonitored emissions through illegal waste deposition, deforestation, and unregulated infrastructure development.¹⁰⁵ Illicit drug cultivation is a driving force for deforestation by direct cultivation and to create space for infrastructure related to drug trafficking, threatening SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 15 (life on land) and undermining efforts towards SDG target 15.2 on “promoting the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests”.¹⁰⁶ In Colombia, for example, government data showed that about 51,388 hectares, or 29.9% of all deforestation, was directly or indirectly linked to illicit coca cultivation.¹⁰⁷ Regionally, such as in the Amazonía or Catatumbo regions of

⁹⁸ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment (65/1)*. 2022.

⁹⁹ United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. *Concluding Observations: Afghanistan (CEDAW/C/AFG/CO/1-2)*. 2013. pp. 11-12.

¹⁰⁰ Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs. *About the VNGOC*. N.d.

¹⁰¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022.

¹⁰² van Uhm et al. *European Journal of Criminology. The Convergence of Environmental Crime with Other Serious Crimes: Subtypes within the Environmental Crime Continuum*. 2020.

¹⁰³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. pp. 22-23.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 22-23.

¹⁰⁵ Burns-Edel. *Global Societies Journal. Environmental Impacts of Illicit Drug Production*. 2016.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2024: Contemporary issues on drugs*. 2024. pp. 71-73, 89, 90; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Practical Guide on Alternative Development and the Environment*. 2023.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. pp. 49-50.



Colombia, the rate of deforestation directly caused by or associated with illicit coca bush cultivation can be even higher at 43% or 58% respectively.¹⁰⁸

The rise of synthetic drugs presents unique dangers for the environment and requires special attention.¹⁰⁹ While the environmental harm of synthetic drugs consumed by humans through contaminated wastewater with metabolites and emission of parent drugs is negligible, the production of synthetic drugs can substantially harm the environment through the illicit disposal of large amounts of chemicals or especially ecotoxic precursors or side products.¹¹⁰ The generated waste, typically 5-30 kilograms per one kilogram of amphetamines, depends on the derivative and synthesis procedure and may be dumped in sealed containers that allow identification and removal.¹¹¹ Generated waste can also be discharged directly into the environment, leading to direct exposure of the environment to chemicals and limited data availability due to the substances' invisibility.¹¹² When synthetic drug-related waste is found in high enough concentrations, it can heavily affect ecosystems, as has been shown in the Netherlands, where disposed waste from illicit MDMA-producing laboratories led to mass killings of fish, amphibians, and invertebrates.¹¹³

Simple drug prohibition may have harmful effects on the environment, so other policies need to be considered.¹¹⁴ Prohibition, combined with the prosecution and eradication of crops, could displace existing plantations to new plots deeper in remote areas, where endemic species are especially vulnerable to human influence.¹¹⁵ However, this so-called balloon effect is not yet fully understood in the context of eradication and is still under investigation by scholars.¹¹⁶ Other approaches to combating drug trafficking include the destruction of laboratories used in the production of narcotic drugs, for which the United Nations has offered guidelines to safely dispose of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.¹¹⁷ Alternative development may be the solution for sustainable cultivation in rural areas without illicit crops.¹¹⁸ CND adopted resolutions 65/1 (2022) on "Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment" and 68/5 on "Addressing the impacts of illicit drug-related activities on the environment" to advance alternative

¹⁰⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Comunidad, Bosque y Coca: Un Camino Para La Acción*. 2018. pp. 12-13.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. pp. 60-74.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 60.

¹¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. pp. 60-61; Schoenmakers et al. Justitiële verkenningen. *Drugsafval in Brabant*. 2017.

¹¹² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. pp. 60-61; Schoenmakers et al. Justitiële verkenningen. *Drugsafval in Brabant*. 2017.

¹¹³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. p. 71.

¹¹⁴ Walsh. Washington Office on Latin America. *What's the Carbon Footprint of Drug Prohibition?*. 2022.

¹¹⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. p. 53.

¹¹⁶ Dávalos. Centro de Investigaciones Económicas y Financieras. *Is There a Balloon Effect? Coca Crops and Forced Eradication in Colombia*. 2019.

¹¹⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Guidelines for the Safe Handling and Disposal of Chemicals Used in the Illicit Manufacture of Drugs*. 2006.

¹¹⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. pp. 54-55.



development while keeping the environment in mind, focusing on SDGs 3, 13, 14, 15, and 16.¹¹⁹ Another strategy for environmental protection from drug trafficking is designating protected areas, though recent findings show no deterring effects, but a growth in illicit cultivation instead.¹²⁰ Most policy responses on synthetic drugs remain reactive in nature and focus on analytical studies to determine drug concentrations in wastewater, cleaning of clandestine laboratories, or monitoring of drug trends.¹²¹ Carbon credit schemes, which translate greenhouse gas emissions into tradeable credits, have also been used in conjunction with alternative development in areas with communities partly dependent on illicitly cultivated crops, with the effect of increasing sustainable forestry and decreasing reliance on illicit practices.¹²² To create similar economic stimuli, governments may also provide payments for environmental services to incentivize environmentally beneficial activities, which would otherwise lead to reduced profits, such as environmentally friendly land management or the provision of water and water quality.¹²³ The European Union, among others, has successfully implemented payments for environmental services with positive effects.¹²⁴

Conclusion

The illicit cultivation, production, and manufacture of narcotic drugs is an ongoing global issue that continues to rapidly evolve and present new challenges.¹²⁵ Addressing the illicit drug trade requires an extensive approach that disrupts criminal organizations while protecting vulnerable populations and the environment.¹²⁶ For illicit drug trafficking, mapping the operations of criminal groups can identify weaknesses and shrink markets, while law enforcement can benefit from training and using enhanced equipment equivalent to the level of technology used in the drug supply chain, with emerging new drugs.¹²⁷ Cooperation between sectors, agencies, stakeholders, and Member States is also needed to balance supply and demand reduction while protecting vulnerable groups, which can be supported by improved data collection disaggregated by gender and age.¹²⁸ CND and UNODC also recommend that drug control policies include environmental protection, ensuring that actions against illicit labs and

¹¹⁹ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment (65/1)*. 2022; United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Addressing the impacts of illicit drug-related activities on the environment (68/5)*. 2025.

¹²⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Colombia: Monitoreo de territorios afectados por cultivos ilícitos 2020*. 2021; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia: Monitoreo de Cultivos de Coca 2020*. 2021; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Perú: Monitoreo de Cultivos de Coca 2017*. 2018.

¹²¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. pp. 73-74.

¹²² United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Strengthening the Capacity for Integrating REDD+ Projects into BioTrade Strategies in Colombia*. 2015. pp. 17-20; Duangkklad. *Earth Journalism Network. Evaluating Carbon Credits in Thai Community Forests*. 2024.

¹²³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2022: Booklet 5 - Drugs and the Environment*. 2022. pp. 56-57.

¹²⁴ Baylis et al. *Ecological Economics. Agri-environmental policies in the EU and United States: A comparison*. 2008.

¹²⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025: Key findings*. 2025. p. 5.

¹²⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *UNODC World Drug Report 2025: Global instability compounding social, economic and security costs of the world drug problem*. 2025.

¹²⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025: Special points of interest*. 2025. pp. 16-17.

¹²⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025: Special points of interest*. 2025. p. 20.



cultivation sites reduce harm to ecosystems and communities.¹²⁹ Additionally, more research is needed to close knowledge gaps on how precursor chemicals and long-term illicit drug cultivation, production, and manufacture affect biodiversity, food systems, and well-being.¹³⁰

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: What role can technologies, such as predictive modeling and artificial intelligence, play in improving early detection and prompt responses to emerging threats from synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals? How can monitoring and reporting mechanisms for chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs be strengthened at the national, regional, and international levels? How can drug control policy be made more responsive to the specific vulnerabilities that women, children, and Indigenous Peoples face in the illicit cultivation, production, and manufacture of narcotic drugs? How can drug control strategies, such as eradication and alternative development, be designed to both protect the environment and target the root causes of illicit crop cultivation?

¹²⁹ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Addressing the impacts of illicit drug-related activities on the environment (68/5)*. 2025; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025: Contemporary issues on drugs*. 2025. p. 71.

¹³⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025: Special points of interest*. 2025. p. 20.



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<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/377960/9789240096745-eng.pdf?sequence=1>



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N.d. Retrieved 5 August 2025 from: https://wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/int_exp_regs_part2_1_e.pdf



2. Strengthening International Cooperation to Combat the World Drug Problem

"National priorities may differ, but the global community shares a common goal: to protect people's security, health, and wellbeing."¹³¹

Introduction

The World Drug Problem, an issue recognized as early as 1909, threatens individuals and communities of Member States through various means, and is defined as the illegal production, trade, and consumption of drugs such as cocaine, opium, heroin, and other synthetic drugs.¹³² According to the 2025 *World Drug Report*, over 316 million people use illegal drugs, while the Global Financial Integrity estimates global drug trafficking revenue to be between \$400-\$600 billion.¹³³ Despite this, only one in five individuals with drug use disorders have access to treatment services, with particularly low coverage in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.¹³⁴ The global drug market is steadily growing and rapidly shifting, posing a spectrum of complications ranging from mental and physical health risks associated with individual drug abuse to organized crime that connects drugs to economic and violent crime, corruption, and even terrorism.¹³⁵ The World Health Organization (WHO) links drug use disorders to increased chances of mortality and physical suffering in individuals affected by them, and says the disorders can also lead to the impairment of individuals in areas of functioning such as personal, family, social, educational, and occupational.¹³⁶ In addition to these personal afflictions, drug use disorders also impact society and its communities with costs such as premature mortality, loss of production, and increased expenditures for criminal justice, health care, and social welfare programs.¹³⁷ Ultimately, the General Assembly recognizes that the World Drug Problem threatens the socio-economic systems, political stability, and sustainable development of Member States.¹³⁸

Despite International efforts to address the World Drug Problem, the global drug market and treatment accessibility continue to constitute a complex challenge for the international community.¹³⁹ Existing partnerships with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) have encouraged international cooperation in monitoring drug trafficking by establishing specific projects that facilitate information sharing between countries.¹⁴⁰ Regional institutions such as the European Union, the League of Arab States, and the African Union have also implemented frameworks to target the niche impacts of drug trafficking and abuse in their communities.¹⁴¹ They also cooperate with other Member States for information sharing and policy creation.¹⁴² Although these

¹³¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Secretary-General's remarks at High-Level Event on Counter-Narcotics hosted by the United States of America [as delivered]*. 2018.

¹³² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Drugs*. N.d.

¹³³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025 Key Findings*. 2025. p. 5; May. Global Financial Integrity. *Transnational Crime and the Developing World*. 2017. pp. xi & 3.

¹³⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2023: Executive Summary*. 2023. p. 3.

¹³⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025 Key Findings*. 2025. p. 5.

¹³⁶ World Health Organization. *Drugs (psychoactive)*. 2025.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Cooperation Against the World Drug Problem (A/RES/66/183)*. 2012. p. 2.

¹³⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Drugs*. N.d.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *UNODC Country Partnership Programme in the Islamic Republic of Iran 2023-2026*. 2023.

¹⁴² Ibid.



partnerships and programs have made progress in intervening in the global drug market, existing loopholes and gaps in international and regional policy give drug traffickers flexibility to maneuver through various distribution networks.¹⁴³ On the other hand, treating individuals with existing drug disorders poses a separate challenge, due to limited access to treatment resources and funding globally.¹⁴⁴ However, efforts by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) to promote science-based prevention and treatment protocols provide Member States with guidance in developing their own programs and policies.¹⁴⁵

International and Regional Framework

Human rights instruments provide a legal framework that shapes how to design and implement drug policies, ensuring that public health and equality remain central to combating the world's drug problem.¹⁴⁶ The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), Article 25, affirms the right to an adequate standard of living, including access to healthcare and necessary social services.¹⁴⁷ According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the right to health conveys the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical, mental, and social well-being.¹⁴⁸ Building on this, the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR), Article 12, recognizes the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and requires Member States to take steps to prevent and control disease, which extends to drug dependence.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, Article 34 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), which has achieved near-universal ratification, instructs Member States to protect children from the illicit use of drugs and psychotropic substances, reflecting the heightened vulnerability of children.¹⁵⁰ General Comment No. 14 (2000) of the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights further expands on the right to health, requiring Member States to provide health facilities that include drug dependence treatment and are available and accessible to all.¹⁵¹ These instruments ensure that international drug conventions adopt a rights-based approach, in line with the 2015, *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (good health) and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.¹⁵²

¹⁴³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025 Key Findings*. 2025.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report: Special Points of Interest*. 2023. p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *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*. 2020. p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. *Summary of deliberations (CEB/2018/2)*. 2018. p. 12.

¹⁴⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Art. 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) (E/C.12/2000/4)*. 2000. p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966. p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration of the Rights of the Child (A/RES/1386 (XIV))*. 1959. p. 2.

¹⁵¹ United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Art. 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) (E/C.12/2000/4)*. 2000.

¹⁵² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)*. 2020.



CND built the global drug control system on three core treaties that establish shared legal obligations with Member States to combat and address the world drug problem.¹⁵³ The broad adoption of the three treaties reflects CND's central role in the international drug control system.¹⁵⁴ The *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs* (1961) created a system to limit the production, distribution, and use of narcotic drugs to medical and scientific purposes.¹⁵⁵ As new synthetic substances emerged, the 1971 *Convention on Psychotropic Substances* (1971 Convention) extended international controls, including categorization into four categories, restrictions on manufacturing and distribution through licensing, and requirements for trade authorizations.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, in response to the rapid expansion of illicit trafficking, in 1988, the *United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances* (1988 Convention) was established.¹⁵⁷ The 1988 Convention bolstered law enforcement provisions, introduced more controls on chemicals, and therefore strengthened international cooperation.¹⁵⁸ In addition to the three conventions, the *Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction* (1998 Declaration) established a commitment by Member States to address the demand side of the world drug problem.¹⁵⁹ The 1998 Declaration commits Member States to long-term investment in demand reduction programmes that improve public health, support individual well-being, and strengthen families and communities.¹⁶⁰ The guiding principles further emphasize the importance of prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration.¹⁶¹

Regional frameworks strengthen international cooperation by addressing drug-related challenges and priorities shared among Member States within a given region.¹⁶² The 2021 *European Union Drugs Strategy 2021-2025* sets out the priorities for the European Union's approach to illicit drug trafficking.¹⁶³ It focuses on three policy areas: disrupting illicit drug markets, promoting prevention, and reducing drug-related harm through care services.¹⁶⁴ The strategy uses an evidence-based approach that incorporates gender equality and health equity, ensuring adherence to the rule of law and human rights.¹⁶⁵ This framework aligns with the 2016 Special session of the General Assembly (UNGASS) against corruption, particularly with the outcome document *Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem*, which outlines how regional policy can be used through coordinated

¹⁵³ International Narcotics Control Board. *INCB Report 2018*. 2019. p. 13.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 (as amended by the 1972 Protocol amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961)*. 1961.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Protocol on Psychotropic Substances. *Convention on Psychotropic Substances*. 1971. pp. 3-12.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. *United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*. 1988.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Political Declaration, guiding principles of drug demand reduction and measures to enhance international cooperation to counter the world drug problem*. 1998. p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 3.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 5.

¹⁶² United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Measures to enhance subregional, regional and global cooperation in drug control in western and central Asia*. 1996.

¹⁶³ Council of the European Union General Secretariat. *EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025*. 2021. p. 12.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 8.



actions across Member States.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, in 2023, the League of Arab States and UNODC adopted the *Regional Framework for the Arab States 2023-2028* in the Arab region.¹⁶⁷ It focuses on six thematic areas, including: a balanced approach to drug policy, responses to organized crime, corruption, financial crime, trafficking in persons, and strengthening criminal justice response.¹⁶⁸ The framework focuses on youth inclusion, innovation, human rights, and gender-responsive programming.¹⁶⁹ Lastly, the African Union *Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention* provides a continental framework guiding Member States on drug trafficking, prevention, treatment, alternative development, and law enforcement cooperation.¹⁷⁰ The action plan also aims to enhance health and socio-economic well-being while promoting inter-state coordination.¹⁷¹

Role of the International System

CND is the United Nations' principal policymaking body on drug-related matters, guiding Member States in implementing the international drug control conventions.¹⁷² UNODC highlights that the organization approaches the drug problem through a comprehensive and coordinated strategy.¹⁷³ This strategy includes promoting evidence-based policymaking, strengthening institutional and technical capacities, and providing targeted assistance to help Member States develop effective responses.¹⁷⁴ CND works to ensure that discussions are informed by the most recent research through its secretariat, UNODC, and the *World Drug Report*.¹⁷⁵ Published annually by UNODC and reviewed by the Commission, the report compiles global data, trends, and analysis on drug production, trafficking, and consumption.¹⁷⁶ CND's guides discussions by key policy documents, including the 2009 *Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem* (2009 Plan), which established a strategy integrating illicit drugs demand, supply reduction, and international cooperation while also calling for proportionate and effective criminal justice responses consistent with human rights laws.¹⁷⁷ For example, resolution 63/4 on "Promoting the involvement of youth in drug prevention efforts" encourages youth participation through education campaigns, while resolution 64/3 on "Promoting scientific evidence-based drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services" calls on Member States to expand access to treatment.¹⁷⁸

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 32.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Regional Framework for the Arab States 2023-2028*. N.d.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations in Iraq. *Signature of the Regional Framework for Arab States (2023-2028) And Launch of the Arab Plan for Prevention and Reduction of the Dangers of Drugs to Arab Society: Towards Effective Handling of the Issue from a Social Perspective*. 2023.

¹⁷⁰ African Union. *African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control And Crime Prevention (2019-2023)*. 2019. pp. 5-7.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs*. N.d.

¹⁷³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *UNODC Strategy 2021-2025*. N.d. p. 6.

¹⁷⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs*. N.d.

¹⁷⁵ Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs. *The Commission on Narcotic Drugs*. 2018.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Outcome Document of the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session On the World Drug Problem*. 2016. p. 2; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem*. 2009.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Promoting efforts to prevent drug use through effective youth engagement*. 2020; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Promoting scientific*



CND partners with various actors to establish global interventions that address the multifaceted world drug problem.¹⁷⁹ For instance, WHO provides public health expertise in five key areas: prevention, treatment, harm reduction, access to controlled medicines, and monitoring and evaluation of interventions.¹⁸⁰ The provision of public health services in these five areas ensures that drug policies align with scientific evidence and human rights.¹⁸¹ For example, UNODC and WHO's *International Standards on Drug Use Prevention Report 2018* offers guidance that Member States can integrate into school, family, and community programmes, while the INCB is an independent judicial expert body established under the 1961 Convention.¹⁸² CND particularly collaborates with UNODC by monitoring compliance with international drug control treaties and assisting governments in implementing them.¹⁸³ Its initiatives include Project ION, which tracks new psychoactive substances, and the OPIOIDS Project, which intends to disrupt the illicit trafficking of synthetic opioids.¹⁸⁴ INCB also works closely with countries to ensure sufficient legal supplies of controlled substances and medical requirements are maintained, all while also preventing diversion into illicit markets.¹⁸⁵ There are joint initiatives with CND and other bodies; for example, UNODC's Early Warning Advisory on New Psychoactive Substances is a platform that collects and analyses data from law enforcement and health authorities and translates it to allow for rapid responses to new substances.¹⁸⁶ Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations also play a vital role by providing technical expertise and ensuring diverse viewpoints.¹⁸⁷ These organizations participate in regular and intersessional CND sessions and organize events such as expert panels on protecting civil society space in drug policymaking.¹⁸⁸

Regional actors play a vital role in combating the world drug problem.¹⁸⁹ The involvement of regional actors is important because trafficking networks often exploit cross-border routes, therefore making regional cooperation essential for effective surveillance and enforcement.¹⁹⁰ Frameworks and mechanisms are tailored to specific geographic contexts, enabling targeted and coordinated responses to drug-related challenges.¹⁹¹ For instance, the Dublin Group is joint a mechanism of the European Union and the UNODC.¹⁹² It serves as a platform for donor countries to exchange information and is concerned

evidence-based, quality, affordable and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services. 2021.

¹⁷⁹ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (E/2023/28)*. 2023.

¹⁸⁰ World Health Organization. *The Public Health Dimension of The World Drug Problem*. 2019.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² World Health Organization et al. *International Standards on Drug Use and Prevention*. N.d; International Narcotics Control Board. *About the INCB: Mandate and Functions*. 2025.

¹⁸³ International Narcotics Control Board. *About the INCB: Mandate and Functions*. 2025.

¹⁸⁴ International Narcotics Control Board. *Project ION*. 2025.

¹⁸⁵ International Narcotics Control Board. *About the INCB: Mandate and Functions*. 2025.

¹⁸⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Early Warning Advisory*. N.d.

¹⁸⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *A Practical Guide for NGO Participants*. N.d.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 'Regional Cooperation Key in Countering Drug Routes in Central Asia'*. 2011.

¹⁹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Chair's Summary of the Thematic Discussions on the Implementation of All International Drug Policy Commitments, Following-up to the 2019 Ministerial Declaration (23–25 October and 4–6 December 2023) (E/CN.7/2024/CRP.1)*. 2024. p. 8.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. pp. 9-10.

¹⁹² Council of the European Union. *Regional Report on South Asia*. 2018. p. 5.



with tackling problems of illicit drug production, trafficking, and demand.¹⁹³ The Mini Dublin Group monitors the situation in the host country and assesses drug trends and technical assistance needs of Member States.¹⁹⁴ It enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of assistance programmes, strengthening Member States' capacities to address the world drug problem.¹⁹⁵ For example, in 2017, under the regional chairmanship of France, the Group convened a series of mini-group meetings in Accra, Cotonou, Dakar, Abuja, and Bamako to assess regional threats, including drug trafficking, money laundering, and the emergence of clandestine laboratories.¹⁹⁶ The resulting recommendations informed technical assistance priorities and regional cooperation measures in West Africa.¹⁹⁷ In the Americas, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) acts as the advisory body of the Organization of American States (OAS) on drug-related matters.¹⁹⁸ It promotes policies through the *Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs (2021-2025)*, which focuses on supply and demand reduction and international cooperation.¹⁹⁹ Its Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism conducts peer reviews to provide tailored recommendations that align with the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs, which supports the collection and analysis of reliable data.²⁰⁰ Through this cooperative, information-sharing platform, CICAD helps Member States in the hemisphere to prevent drug use and implement control strategies.²⁰¹ Additionally, the Paris Pact Initiative is another regional partnership of 58 countries and 23 organizations that is committed to countering the trafficking of opiates originating in Afghanistan.²⁰² It operates under the *Paris Pact Initiative's Vienna Declaration (2012)*, which emphasizes shared responsibility and an integrated, balanced approach to addressing opiate trafficking through regional cooperation.²⁰³ It focuses on four pillars of strengthening regional cooperation, detecting illicit financial flows, preventing the diversion of chemicals, and improving access to treatment services.²⁰⁴ The initiative addresses one of the world's largest illicit supply chains and plays a significant role in reducing the availability of illicit opiates on global markets.²⁰⁵

Multilateral Cooperation on Addressing Illicit Drug Trafficking

The illicit drug trade is a complex, transnational problem with a global supply chain where countries play interconnected roles.²⁰⁶ An estimate by the Global Financial Integrity placed global drug trafficking revenue at around \$400-600 billion, which, when compared with a global gross domestic product (GDP) of \$78 trillion in the same year, represents roughly 0.5% to 0.8% of the global GDP.²⁰⁷ All regions of the world engage with the illicit drug trade in many capacities, either as source, transit, or destination

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 39.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 5.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁹⁶ Council of the European Union. *Regional situation in West Africa*. 2017. pp. 2-4.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 5.

¹⁹⁸ Organization of American States. *Executive Secretariat of CICAD (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission)*. N.d.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. N.d.

²⁰⁰ Organization of American States. *Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism*. N.d.; Organization of American States et al. *Inter-American Observatory on Drugs*. N.d.

²⁰¹ Ibid. N.d.

²⁰² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Paris Pact Initiative*. 2017. pp. 2-3.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2024 Key Findings and Conclusions*. 2024. p. 5.

²⁰⁷ May. Global Financial Integrity. *Transnational Crime and the Developing World*. 2017. pp. xi & 3.



regions.²⁰⁸ For instance, the Andean region of South America is a significant source of illegal drug production, with UNODC estimating that nearly 45% of the world's cocaine exports originate from this area.²⁰⁹ From these origins, illicit drugs will move through transit countries, intended for the main consumer markets in North America and Europe.²¹⁰ Once illicit drugs reach destination countries, they move into domestic distribution networks.²¹¹ The structure of the drug supply chain illustrates how countries assume separate but interconnected roles.²¹² UNODC states that organised crime, corruption, and illicit trafficking are interconnected transnational challenges that no Member State can address alone, requiring coordinated action.²¹³ For example, Delegates at the CND noted the linkages between drug trafficking, terrorism, and the laundering of drug proceeds through international financial systems.²¹⁴ When trafficking in one country is eliminated, criminal networks may adapt to fragmented national systems, diverting flows to another location.²¹⁵

Regional and international initiatives show that coordination can disrupt trafficking routes and dismantle criminal networks.²¹⁶ The West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) is a project that supports the Economic Community of West African States Regional Action Plan, launched in 2009 by UNODC in partnership with multiple regional African bodies to address drug trafficking and drug abuse in the region.²¹⁷ CND has acknowledged WACI as a best practice for promoting cross-border intelligence sharing.²¹⁸ Transnational Crime Units established through WACI have been utilized by national law enforcement authorities, resulting in the seizure of significant amounts of cocaine along West African transit routes.²¹⁹ Established in 2009, also with UNODC support, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre facilitates real-time intelligence exchange among Central Asian Member States.²²⁰ The Centre liaises with officers from the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, and other partner agencies to ensure rapid responses to emerging threats, coordinating operations that have led to increased seizures of narcotics.²²¹

Despite international frameworks, Member States still face implementation gaps due to limited resources and coordination issues.²²² Illicit drug networks exploit instability and weak areas in the rule of law to

²⁰⁸ International Criminal Police Organization. *Drug Trafficking*. 2025.

²⁰⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *The Transatlantic Cocaine Market*. 2011. p. 17.

²¹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2010*. 2010. p. 73.

²¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Global Report on Cocaine 2023: Local dynamics, global challenges*. 2023. p. 151.

²¹² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2010*. 2010. p. 11.

²¹³ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Struggle Against Organized Crime, Corruption, Drug Trafficking Connected; Too Big for Countries to Confront on Their Own, Third Committee Told*. 2010.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ International Criminal Police Organization. *Unprecedented level of drug trafficking needs corresponding law enforcement response*. 2023.

²¹⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025 Key Findings*. 2025.

²¹⁷ United Nations Office for West Africa and The Sahel. *Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime*. 2025.

²¹⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *West and Central Africa*. N.d.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Regional Office for Afghanistan, Central Asia, Iran and Pakistan. *United Nations Regional Office for Afghanistan, Central Asia, Iran and Pakistan*. N.d.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² United Nations, Office of International Oversight Services. *Evaluation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*. 2021.



enable drug trafficking and the illegal sale of controlled substances.²²³ Criminal networks along the Balkan Route, for example, exploit legal gaps between jurisdictions to evade detection and prosecution, therefore demanding a need for stronger domestic law to ensure proper prosecution.²²⁴ According to UNODC, weak law enforcement capacity is instrumental in allowing illicit drug trafficking networks to operate while hindering regional cooperation.²²⁵ Furthermore, border surveillance remains weak in many regions, making it easier for traffickers to move shipments undetected by officials, for example, in Central America and the Caribbean.²²⁶ UNODC notes that many countries emphasized the need for stronger data sharing and real-time intelligence to improve coordination in dismantling organized networks.²²⁷ As highlighted in recent UNODC discussions, criminal groups are adapting quickly to the digitalization of initiatives, utilising encrypted communication and cryptocurrency transactions to conceal themselves.²²⁸ Although UNODC capacity-building projects are helping address the gap, several Member States, particularly those with limited budgets, lack access to advanced toolkits.²²⁹ According to UNODC's *Annual Report 2023: Advancing justice, health and security in a time of global need*, the Organization supported Member States through workshops and technical assistance to improve border management and disrupt organized criminal networks.²³⁰ While INCB monitors treaty compliance and can make recommendations under the 1961 Convention, it does not have the authority to enforce changes.²³¹ Therefore, as the latest *World Drug Report* notes, trafficking networks continue to adapt to political instability and weak enforcement environments.²³²

Prevention and Reduction of the Health Impact Associated with Drug Dependence

Addressing challenges to treatment access is critical to advancing SDG 3 and fulfilling international obligations under ICESCR.²³³ The right to health, as recognized in Article 12 of the ICESCR and reaffirmed by UDHR and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, includes the availability and accessibility of healthcare and treatment services for all individuals, including those affected by drug dependence.²³⁴ According to WHO, this right extends to ensuring equitable access to essential health services without discrimination and integrating substance-use treatment within broader public health

²²³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2024 Key Findings and Conclusions*. 2024. p. 5.

²²⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Regional Office for South-Eastern Europe. *UNODC Strengthens capacities to disrupt criminal networks in the Western Balkans*. N.d.

²²⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2017: The Drug Problem and Organized Crime, Illicit Financial Flows, Corruption and Terrorism*. 2017.

²²⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Annual Report 2024: Making the World Safer from Drugs, Crime, Corruption and Terrorism*. 2024. p. 11.

²²⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Chair's Summary of the Thematic Discussions on the Implementation of All International Drug Policy Commitments, Following-up to the 2019 Ministerial Declaration (23–25 October and 4–6 December 2023) (E/CN.7/2024/CRP.1)*. 2024.

²²⁸ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *Discussion Guide for the Thematic Discussions*. 2024. p. 20.

²²⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Annual Report 2023: Advancing justice, health and security in a time of global need*. 2023. p. 15.

²³⁰ Ibid. p. 15.

²³¹ International Narcotics Control Board. *Report 2023*. 2023.

²³² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025 Key Findings*. 2025.

²³³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *UNODC and the Sustainable Development Goals*. N.d.

²³⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948; United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration of the Rights of the Child (A/RES/1386 (XIV))*. 1959.



systems.²³⁵ The failure to address gaps in treatment for drug dependence impedes progress on target 3.5, which calls for strengthened prevention and treatment of substance abuse.²³⁶ Drug dependence is closely associated with higher mortality rates as well as an increase in HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C, contributing to long-term mental health disorders in individuals.²³⁷

Beyond the influence on individuals' health, drug use and treatment also carry significant economic and social impacts that affect development.²³⁸ According to WHO and UNODC Joint Programme on Drug Dependence Treatment and Care, when taking healthcare costs and law-enforcement burdens into account, the total economic impact of drug dependence can reach up to 2% of GDP in some countries.²³⁹ In 2001, Portugal implemented a reform that decriminalized the possession of all illicit drugs for personal use while maintaining criminal penalties for trafficking.²⁴⁰ The reform replaced criminal persecution for possession with referral to Commissions for the Dissuasion of Drug Addiction, alongside an expansion of harm reduction services.²⁴¹ According to a case study submitted to UNGASS 2016 process by the Transform Drug Policy Foundation, drug-related deaths fell sharply after the reform.²⁴²

To address the gaps in the availability and accessibility of prevention and treatment services, CND resolution 63/3 encourages Member States to strengthen international cooperation through training, education, and awareness-raising.²⁴³ CND resolution 63/3 on "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" calls upon Member States to enhance the prevention and treatment of drug use disorders through public education and awareness campaigns.²⁴⁴ UNODC GLOK67 toolkit is available to Member States and guides the design and implementation of prevention and rehabilitation services that adhere to human rights standards, emphasising the tailored aspect of regional initiatives.²⁴⁵ For instance, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' *ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs (2016-2025)* and the European Union's Drugs Strategy demonstrate further coordinated action.²⁴⁶ They both prioritise health-centred approaches and the reintegration of individuals in recovery.²⁴⁷ By 2023, the toolkit had helped at least five low- and middle-income Member States develop new national policies on access to

²³⁵ World Health Organization. *The Public Health Dimension of The World Drug Problem*. 2019.

²³⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *UNODC and the Sustainable Development Goals*. N.d.

²³⁷ World Health Organization. *Drugs (psychoactive)*. 2025.

²³⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2023: Executive Summary*. 2023. p. 7.

²³⁹ World Health Organization et al. *UNODC-WHO Joint Programme on Drug Dependence Treatment and Care*. 2009. p. 2.

²⁴⁰ Transform Drug Policy Foundation. *Drug Decriminalization in Portugal*. 2014.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Transform Drug Policy Foundation. *Drug Decriminalization in Portugal: Setting the Record Straight*. N.d.

²⁴³ United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs. *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*. 2020. p. 1.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 1.

²⁴⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Scaling Up the Implementation of International Drug Policy Commitments on Improving Availability of and Access to Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes*. N.d.

²⁴⁶ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Secretariat. *The ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016-2025*. 2017. pp. 4-6.

²⁴⁷ Ibid. pp. 8-10.



controlled medicines and train approximately 150 trainers and 100 health workers.²⁴⁸ Despite progress, WHO reports that stigma, discrimination, and limited resources continue to hinder access to healthcare and treatment for people with drug dependence.²⁴⁹

Conclusion

Partnerships among CND, regional actors, Member States, and other United Nations entities have made progress in addressing the World Drug Problem, but gaps remain in international cooperation.²⁵⁰ Although policy and monitoring programs have managed to disrupt the illicit drug market on certain levels, a lack of international cooperation for establishing treatment protocols for individuals living with drug-related health problems still exists.²⁵¹ Additionally, the global market continues to shift and grow with the introduction of new synthetic drugs and political transitions that threaten existing policy, and therefore requires international cooperation to adapt to it.²⁵² In reducing the dependence on drugs through the use of science-based treatment programs, the demand for drugs, and thus the demand for the illicit drug market, is reduced overall.²⁵³

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can international standards for trafficking intervention be established while maintaining the sovereignty of Member States? How can Member States address gaps in the prevention and treatment of individuals with drug disorders? How can existing monitoring and information-sharing resources be improved to strengthen international cooperation between Member States further?

²⁴⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)*. 2020.

²⁴⁹ World Health Organization. *The Public Health Dimension of The World Drug Problem*. 2019. p. 3.

²⁵⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2025 Key Findings*. 2025.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ World Health Organization. *Drugs (psychoactive)*. 2025.



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