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**Fifteenth Meeting of Heads of National
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**Current situation with respect to regional and
subregional cooperation in addressing and
countering the world drug problem****Current situation with respect to regional and subregional
cooperation in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe****Report of the Secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The present report provides an analysis of the situation concerning drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe from 2022 until early 2023 and includes a description of the activities conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in those regions.
2. UNODC continues to carry out its work in the region within the framework of its Regional Programme for South-Eastern Europe, the objective of which is to meet specific national needs while ensuring that national activities and outputs form part of a coordinated and harmonized regional and interregional approach.
3. In Eastern Europe, UNODC has developed a framework for Ukraine which follows the two-phase approach of the United Nations Transitional Framework, i.e. humanitarian response and recovery and reconstruction. The UNODC Office in Kyiv is exploring possible new areas of assistance, in line with the United Nations Transitional Framework and based on needs assessments, in particular with regard to research, border management, health, trafficking in firearms, trafficking in persons, prison reform, money-laundering, corruption and cybercrime.

II. South-Eastern Europe**A. Introduction**

4. The world's most important heroin and morphine trafficking route continues to run from Afghanistan through the Islamic Republic of Iran to Türkiye, and then

* Available only in English, French, Russian and Spanish, which are the working languages of the subsidiary body.

** [UNODC/HONEURO/15/1](#).



onward through the Balkan countries to Western and Central Europe. About half of all seizures of heroin and morphine worldwide are made in countries along this so-called “Balkan route”. There were significant changes in 2020. Seizures of heroin and morphine increased significantly in countries neighbouring Afghanistan, notably in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, but declined in the Balkan countries and in destination countries in Western and Central Europe.¹

5. While the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has not changed the status of the Balkan route as the most prominent heroin trafficking corridor, it did have an impact on trafficking activities during 2020, before they rebounded in 2021. Some traffickers apparently tried to circumvent the Balkan route to ship heroin during the pandemic, shifting flows towards the southern route. This was reflected by an increase in large seizures of heroin of up to 1.3 tons on the Arabian Sea since the onset of the pandemic, and the similarly large seizures made on ships arriving from West Asia at a number of European ports, such as in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.²

6. A sudden major increase in opium production in 2022 would not necessarily entail an immediate increase of similar magnitude in heroin manufacture, although increased opium production would eventually lead to upward trends in heroin manufacturing and trafficking. Past seizure data have shown that it can take between 1 and 1 1/2 years for opiates originating in Afghanistan to reach destination countries, depending on the distance from Afghanistan and the mode of transport used. This suggests that an eventual increase in opium production in Afghanistan can be expected, in general, to be reflected in an increase in the supply of opiates in the Near and Middle East and South-West Asia within the same year, and a year later in Europe. It can take up to one year for opiates originating in Afghanistan to reach Western Europe by land on the Balkan route, but it can take much less time if opiates are shipped by air on direct flights.³

7. The cocaine trafficking route between South America and Europe is the second largest in the world, and it is evolving. Supply chains once dominated by a few organized criminal groups are changing, with many more groups becoming involved. Much of the cocaine in Europe used to be imported through well-established channels, notably by Italian organized criminal groups and through alliances between groups in Colombia and Spain. Now, however, organizations originating in the Balkans are increasingly involved in trafficking and supply, and some are cutting out intermediaries and sourcing cocaine directly from production areas in the Andean region. The increased competition and efficiency of supply mean that cocaine is becoming more available and the quality is rising. The purity of cocaine available in Europe has increased by 40 per cent in the past decade, meaning that high-quality cocaine has, in effect, become cheaper per pure unit.⁴

8. Türkiye has been increasingly used as a transit country for cocaine in recent years. Since 2014, the amount of the drug seized in the country has increased sevenfold from 393 kg to a record 2.8 tons in 2021. Some of the cocaine reaching Türkiye arrives after transiting through West Africa, and some comes directly from Latin America. Neighbouring Greece has also been receiving increasing quantities of cocaine in recent years, much of it destined for the Balkan route and the markets of Western Europe. Seizure data show Greece intercepted almost 2 tons in 2020 before a slight decrease in 2022. Brazil and Ecuador are often the countries of departure for seized cocaine shipments.⁵

¹ *World Drug Report 2022*, booklet 3, *Drug Market Trends: Cannabis Opioids* (United Nations publication, 2022). **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid..**

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *World Drug Report 2021*, booklet 1, *Executive Summary: Policy Implications* (United Nations publication, 2021).

⁵ *Global Report on Cocaine 2023: Local Dynamics, Global Challenges* (United Nations publication, 2023).

9. The use of South-Eastern Europe for cocaine trafficking is likely to continue to increase as the region is another entry point for cocaine destined primarily for European markets. Based on seizures, cocaine appears to be increasingly trafficked through Türkiye to South-Eastern and Eastern Europe via air (couriers) and sea routes. The points of departure for cocaine trafficked to Türkiye remain in South America.⁶

10. Turkish authorities have highlighted that the increasing use of Türkiye as a transit country for cocaine might potentially affect other South-Eastern and Eastern European countries, as well as Greece. Criminal groups involved in the trafficking of heroin along the Balkan route may exploit their connections to also expand into the potentially emerging cocaine markets of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and the Middle East.⁷

11. Cocaine trafficked from Türkiye to European countries likely transits north through the Black Sea and the Balkans, which have been traditionally associated with trafficking of opiates and smuggling of cigarettes, but have recently become more prominent as transit subregions for cocaine trafficking. Container shipments of fresh fruit from South America, especially Ecuador, have been a typical method of concealment for cocaine that arrives at Balkan seaports. In addition, according to Italian authorities, since 2020, Italian ports have been increasingly used as a trans-shipment point for cocaine directed eastward to the Balkan ports on the Aegean Sea and on the Black Sea. At these ports, large shipments of cocaine from South America are received by Balkan criminal groups, in particular those of Albanian and Serbian-Montenegrin nationals, who ensure its wholesale distribution and transportation to markets and stockpiling areas in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Ukraine.⁸

12. As conflicts may disrupt and shift drug trafficking routes, it is likely that some trafficking flows through Ukraine might eventually be diverted to other ports on the Black Sea, such as those in Bulgaria and Romania. Moreover, the growing supply of cocaine transiting Türkiye adds another stream through the Balkans. With Balkan criminal actors more active in the European cocaine market than ever, the Balkan route is likely to continue growing in importance.⁹

13. Preventing a further increase in the cocaine being supplied to Europe requires the boosting of international cooperation between the Americas and Europe and the transfer of best law enforcement practices in terms of targeting loose criminal networks and new communication tools. Such cooperation needs to include not only law enforcement agencies but also prosecutors and should also involve the promotion of joint investigation teams through the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol).¹⁰

B. Organized crime and illicit drug trafficking

Organized crime

14. In Albania, organized criminal groups generally comprise 10 to 15 members and are well organized.¹¹ In terms of networks, criminal groups in Albania have begun to cooperate with criminal groups in other countries and regions, such as North Macedonia, Türkiye and Latin American, as well as with Albanian-speaking criminal groups in Kosovo.¹² The most common crimes are the cultivation of and trafficking

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *World Drug Report 2021*, booklet 1.

¹¹ Albanian State Police, National Service for Combating Narcotics.

¹² All references to Kosovo in the present document shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

in cannabis, the trafficking in and distribution of cocaine and heroin and money-laundering.

15. Since 2021, UNODC has been supporting the work of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the development of a comprehensive strategy against organized crime. That cooperation is an outcome of the dialogue between UNODC and the authorities in the country. In this context, and relying on the above-mentioned strategy, UNODC provided technical assistance to the working group for the drafting of the new country-wide strategy against organized crime. The national strategy was adopted by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 23 February 2023.

Drug trafficking

16. The drug seizures made in South-Eastern Europe by the port control units and inter-agency groups established under the UNODC-World Customs Organization (WCO) Container Control Programme and UNODC-WCO Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP) demonstrate the region's role as a transit route for different types of drugs, including cocaine. In addition to drug trafficking, seizures made by the units show that the smuggling of revenue goods, the violation of intellectual property rights and trafficking in arms and stolen cars also take place in the region.

17. The seizures reported by the port control units and air cargo control units in South-Eastern Europe in 2022 included 510 kg of cocaine, 1,584 g of cannabis, 369 methamphetamine pills, as well as 7 g and 27 capsules of synthetic drugs.

18. Albanian-speaking and Serbian- and Croatian-speaking groups have become increasingly active in procuring large amounts of cocaine at the source.¹³ Law enforcement agencies from jurisdictions in South-Eastern Europe continue to cooperate with their international counterparts in countering that trend.¹⁴

19. Organized crime and drug trafficking continue to pose major challenges for the Government of Albania. The country continues to be a source, transit and destination country for trafficking in narcotic drugs. Drug trafficking and other smuggling activities are a major threat to national economic development and to the safety and security of the international supply chain. The port of Durrës in Albania, the largest in the Western Balkans and among countries in the region that are not members of the European Union, is particularly vulnerable and remains a constant target for the trans-shipment of relatively large quantities of drugs, often hidden in legitimate cargo. It is generally agreed that drug trafficking is the most important source of income for organized criminal groups in Albania. Large volumes of cocaine originating from Latin America have reached the port of Durrës in transit or as a final destination.

20. Trends observed between January 2020 and June 2022 show numerous cocaine shipments bound for the port of Durrës as the final destination, with somewhat uncharacteristic routings, while airport cargo inspections illustrated that this type of crime, particularly in inbound shipments, is becoming increasingly diversified, introducing new smuggling risks for carriers serving Albania.

21. For the implementation of the Container Control Programme in Albania, it is fundamental to ensure coordination between various agencies and to enhance international cooperation among relevant countries. Effective international cooperation has sought to identify the modus operandi of the criminal groups and their production and distribution chains in order to ensure that illicit drugs and criminals can be tracked down.

22. Continued and sustainable communication between the port control unit officers at the port of Durrës and their colleagues at the port of Gioia Tauro, Italy, and some

¹³ UNODC and European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), "The illicit trade of cocaine from Latin America to Europe: from oligopolies to free for-all?", *Cocaine Insights*, No. 1 (Vienna, 2021).

¹⁴ Europol, "Over 60 charged in crackdown on Balkan cartel behind cocaine pipeline to Europe", 27 September 2021.

ports in Latin America shows that international cooperation networks established under the Container Control Programme have been increasingly active.

23. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that air cargo carriers play an important role in the supply chain, in particular in ensuring that essential equipment and supplies reach their destination. The situation also reinforced the role of the air cargo control unit at the only international airport in Albania. Current trends indicate that growth in the volume of air cargo will require more streamlined risk analysis to improve control techniques and related paperwork.

24. The Albanian State Police targeted the cannabis production chain, which involved various production methods, including both indoor and outdoor cultivation. Eradication was the first step in disrupting the cannabis supply chain. In the past two years, Albania has been working to eradicate cannabis crops in the north-western, south-western and central parts of the country. The authorities have carried out operations to eradicate cannabis crops with operational support from the Guardia di Finanza of Italy and from the European Commission-funded programme on air surveillance of cannabis plantations in Albania. The results in terms of the destruction of crops were significant, as the operations disrupted criminal chains of distribution and sale. That was also reflected in the reduced number of seizures of outbound cannabis at the port of Durrës.

25. With regard to the use of the Balkan route for heroin trafficking, various factors have pushed the route further north of Albania, and fewer seizures of heroin trafficked through and out of Albania have been observed.

26. Since January 2020, the region has been supported in enhancing border control through a joint European Union-UNODC initiative. On 27 February 2023, the Border Inter-Agency Unit in Skopje, a joint airport inter-agency group established in 2022, announced the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Interior (Border Police) and the Ministry of Finance (Customs Agency). In March 2023, the Unit seized 43 kg of gold jewellery worth 2.3 million euros. Preparations are ongoing to establish such an inter-agency group at Belgrade International Airport in Serbia.

27. In 2022, UNODC supported a number of technical meetings between the customs officials from the Indirect Taxation Authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Revenue and Customs Administration of Montenegro, as well as the Customs Administration under the Ministry of Finance of Croatia, which aimed at supporting joint operational activities. As a result of these activities, 27 packages (approximately 30 kg) of cannabis were seized and a total of 57 container shipments were controlled and inspected (42 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 15 in Croatia). These efforts resulted in the seizure of goods in Bosnia and Herzegovina with an approximate value of 150,000 euros, and in the issuing of seven minor offence warrants.

Corruption and asset recovery

28. UNODC continues to support the countries of the region in addressing corruption and developing capacity for effective asset recovery through its regional programme for South-Eastern Europe and its Global Programme to Prevent and Combat Corruption through Effective Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in Support of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

29. UNODC provides technical assistance to address specific national needs articulated in an inclusive, participatory process and ensures that activities and outputs at the national level form part of a coordinated, harmonized regional and interregional approach, in line with the principles that underpin the Office's global activities.

30. Regional and national support is delivered through two interconnected UNODC regional projects, entitled "From illicit financial flows to asset recovery" and the "Regional anti-corruption and illicit finance road map", which focus on the further enhancement of anti-corruption and asset recovery capabilities through international

cooperation, mutual legal assistance and the development of targeted knowledge products to facilitate asset recovery processes. Additionally, a project on combating low-level corruption will be launched in North Macedonia in mid-2023, aimed at strengthening the capacity of judges, prosecutors, and investigators to uncover, investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate low-scale corruption in the country. UNODC will also be implementing two anti-corruption projects in the Western Balkans, with one of the projects aiming at strengthening coordination mechanisms in the investigation of corruption cases and the second one focusing on promoting anti-corruption education among youth.

31. Work is under way to implement the regional anti-corruption and illicit finance road map for the Western Balkans jurisdictions, adopted in June 2021 by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, as well as Kosovo, with the support of UNODC. Building on the momentum generated in the context of the Berlin process, the initiative is aimed at fast-tracking the implementation of existing anti-corruption commitments, including those under the Convention against Corruption, the evaluation recommendations of the Group of States against Corruption of the Council of Europe, and the relevant European Union directives in support of the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 5, 16 and 17. The implementation of the road map will result in tangible improvements to the existing national frameworks for preventing and combating corruption and illicit finance and in better implementation of international standards and recommendations, including those stemming from the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the Convention against Corruption.

32. In December 2022, over 150 anti-corruption practitioners from jurisdictions in the Western Balkans gathered at a high-level regional anti-corruption conference in Skopje, hosted by the Government of North Macedonia, to reaffirm their commitment to the fight against corruption in the context of the “Regional anti-corruption and illicit finance road map”. Senior Government representatives and speakers from the United Kingdom, the European Union and the United States of America reiterated the importance of combating corruption through a sustained, joint effort.

Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants

33. UNODC delivered a number of tailor-made activities in South-Eastern Europe in 2021 and 2022, including on enhancing international cooperation among prosecutorial and central authorities, countering trafficking in persons in cooperation with judicial training institutions, organizing thematic regional conferences on countering trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced criminality and supporting meetings of national anti-trafficking coordinators in South-Eastern Europe.

34. In collaboration with the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe Secretariat, UNODC organized in January and October 2022 and April 2023 three regional workshops on enhancing criminal justice responses to address evidential issues for investigating cases of trafficking in persons in South-Eastern Europe. The workshop aimed at strengthening the capacity of practitioners in the countries of South-Eastern Europe to investigate and prosecute trafficking in persons and engage in effective cross-border cooperation by promoting a common understanding of the forms and manifestations of trafficking in persons in the region.

35. In mid-2022, UNODC produced and launched a report entitled *Exploitation and Abuse: The Scale and Scope of Human Trafficking in South-Eastern Europe*, which contains descriptions of the most common forms of trafficking in persons in South-Eastern Europe from a practical perspective and addresses the current challenges encountered by professionals involved in the various stages of the anti-trafficking response, from detection to prosecution, including prevention and the protection of victims. The key findings and the recommendations set out in the report were discussed during the regional expert group meetings and were further supported by country reports from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.

36. UNODC continued to implement the project on addressing trafficking in persons in South-Eastern Europe, in particular on ending the impunity of traffickers and supporting justice for victims of trafficking in persons. One aim of the project is to accurately identify gaps and weaknesses in the current response to trafficking in persons at the national and regional levels by facilitating partnerships and continuous interaction among Governments, the judiciary, civil society, academia, regional and international organizations and other relevant expert practitioners. Another aim of the project is to develop and provide sustainable and targeted capacity-building support to relevant stakeholders in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia. To date, UNODC has drafted national reviews and analyses of selected trafficking in persons cases as a starting point for further intensive consultation with the stakeholders involved, with a view to understanding how to identify instances of trafficking in persons, distinguish them from other offences, apply victim-centred approaches, substantiate cases by collecting adequate evidence and consistently operationalize existing cooperation agreements and arrangements with other countries of the region and the European Union. Through expert discussions and validation workshops held in April 2022, the findings and recommendations emerging from national reviews and analyses were validated by the respective national stakeholders and recommendations for proactive solutions to remedy gaps and challenges were proposed in all project countries. Moreover, UNODC has been conducting national multidisciplinary workshops with learning objectives that directly correspond to the final recommendations based on the review and analysis findings and the conclusions of the above-mentioned expert discussions.

37. For the investigation of cases related to smuggling of migrants, UNODC fosters international cooperation in criminal matters pursuant to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and assists States in South-Eastern Europe in strengthening coordination among relevant stakeholders, both internally and internationally, while ensuring that due support and assistance are provided to affected migrants. For North Macedonia and Serbia, UNODC developed training curricula on the smuggling of migrants that were subsequently included in the programmes of the relevant national training institutions and that featured applications of blended learning through case-based simulation and e-learning. Those curricula served as the basis for the implementation of three 3-day bilateral simulation training courses on the smuggling of migrants, held for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro in November and December 2021 and for Serbia and North Macedonia in January-March 2023. The training courses are aimed at strengthening the understanding, knowledge, expertise and skills of criminal justice practitioners to effectively investigate and prosecute migrant smuggling cases and to address smuggling along what is known as the Western Balkan route, one of the global hotspots for the smuggling of migrants.

38. In its interregional crime control approach, UNODC continues to play a unique connecting role in the enhancement of operational cooperation between South-Eastern Europe and West and Central Asia in order to support the efficient tackling of all forms of trafficking and transnational organized crime along the Balkan route, and also facilitates follow-up to specific cases and the establishment of joint investigation teams. As an example, in September 2022, UNODC organized a training course in Albania aimed at strengthening the capacity of national authorities to identify and disrupt drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling and modern slavery networks along the Balkan route. The course enabled participants to apply various analytical techniques to traditional and special investigative methods, to detect current policy and operational gaps and to identify potential solutions.

Illicit financial flows and countering the financing of terrorism

39. Since 2018, South-Eastern Europe has been supported in countering the financing of terrorism through a comprehensive multi-year training programme jointly implemented by UNODC and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The programme was first launched in Albania, after which it was

expanded to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020, North Macedonia in 2021 and Kosovo in December 2022. The programme is designed to support jurisdictions in detecting, investigating and disrupting terrorism financing more effectively, and in complying with international standards, in particular Security Council resolutions such as resolution 2462 (2019), and Financial Action Task Force standards.

C. Drug prevention and treatment, HIV treatment and care

40. The Balkan route is a key route for trafficking not only in heroin, but also in cocaine and cannabis. As a result, drugs and associated criminal activities are prevalent throughout the region, a situation that is further exacerbated by structural factors that have existed for decades. The economic and social upheaval experienced across South-Eastern Europe in the 1990s and early 2000s created a high-risk environment for drug abuse and the health and social consequences of such abuse. Regarding responses to drug abuse, alignment with the European Union has brought new challenges related to the transposition of the European Union *acquis* into national legislation, especially in the area of justice and domestic affairs. However, it has also created new opportunities for cooperation and discussion on approaches to addressing drug abuse and the associated health and social issues and responses. The jurisdictions of South-Eastern Europe supported the statements of the European Union with regard to the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, on the world drug problem, and with regard to the Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of Our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem of 2019, and they are in broad alignment with the approach taken by the European Union to preventing drug abuse.¹⁵

41. Treatment services for substance use disorders tend to be provided by a combination of government programmes and community service organizations and generally require improvement across the region.¹⁶ Drug treatment services are mostly provided by psychiatric hospitals; few or no services are offered by general practice clinics, except in Serbia.

42. The prevention work of UNODC is focused on improving and supporting policymakers in developing national comprehensive systems to prevent drug use and is based on the integration of evidence-based strategies that are consistent with international standards on drug use prevention. The Office's work also includes the collection of drug use prevention data, related research and evaluations, and the development and implementation of evidence-based tools, together with service providers, to prevent drug use, in particular among young people, young adolescents and high-risk groups, through life and social skills and family skills packages.

43. The activities carried out during the reporting period supported the region's efforts in the area of drug use prevention. Governments received assistance in implementing and expanding evidence-based prevention strategies, and notable progress was made in four Member States, namely, Albania, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, with regard to the delivery of preventive interventions based on international standards.

44. One of the key UNODC initiatives in the area of prevention in South-Eastern Europe is the Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence programme, which was launched in Serbia in 2014 and gradually expanded to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Croatia, reaching more than 7,700 students in over 180 schools across the region. In the expansion strategy, the countries initially involved in the

¹⁵ Council of the European Union, EU-Western Balkans dialogue on drugs (18 April 2018): outcome of the meeting, document 8930/18.

¹⁶ See European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), *Drug Treatment Systems in the Western Balkans: Outcomes of a Joint EMCDDA-UNODC Survey of Drug Treatment Facilities* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2019).

programme pilot (Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) continued with the additional, longer programmatic cycle, with 10 additional schools per country. The expansion of the programme is under way in Slovenia, and a new grant was received to continue the work in Croatia. On the basis of a strict evidence-based implementation modality, the programme proved to be effective and showed encouraging results in terms of substance use reduction, the reduction of the intention to use drugs and dissuasive effects on participating students with regard to substance use in their local environment.

45. In addition, UNODC is supporting Serbian practitioners in implementing family skills tools and programmes, in particular the evidence-based “Strong families” programme, which is backed by scientific evidence on its effectiveness in terms of developing family skills to support the healthy and safe development of children, regardless of their gender, and preventing drug use, violence (including against children), mental health problems and other negative social and health outcomes. The programme can be easily adapted to serve families in challenged and stressful settings in different contexts.

46. The UNODC “Listen first” campaign was implemented in Serbia with the support of the country’s national Office for Combating Drugs, which is responsible for implementing drug policies. The Office for Combating Drugs devised an ambitious plan involving various State administrative bodies and organizations that deal with drug use issues at both the central and local levels of government. The campaign reached people across Serbia with a consistent and engaging message on substance use prevention.

47. The positive prevention work in collaboration with UNODC in the Western Balkan region sensitized Slovenia to submit a draft resolution¹⁷ entitled “Promoting comprehensive and scientific evidence-based early prevention”, for consideration by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its sixty-fifth session in 2022. Slovenia remained engaged in mobilizing efforts to promote the implementation of the resolution and supported UNODC in the development of a discussion paper entitled “A call for action to positively redirect the developmental trajectory of children through ‘Promoting comprehensive and scientific evidence-based early prevention’” in the form of a conference room paper (E/CN.7/2023/CRP.8), for consideration by the sixty-sixth session of the Commission in 2023.

D. Recent UNODC regional initiatives for South-Eastern Europe

48. UNODC continues its cooperation with the Counter-Narcotics Training Academy of Türkiye and the Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organized Crime in relevant activities in South-Eastern Europe.

49. Under the auspices of its Regional Programme for South-Eastern Europe, UNODC continues to support regional and interregional law enforcement and multi-agency coordination and cooperation to tackle trafficking in drugs and other items and to combat transnational organized crime, including through the function of a Serious Organized Crime Adviser, based in Skopje. Since 2019, the Adviser has been focusing on addressing the issue of organized crime in the region and harmonizing UNODC projects in this thematic area while seeking to enhance the mandate of the Office’s “networking the networks” initiative and build the reputation of UNODC in the region as a key partner to interlocutors and beneficiaries.

50. UNODC has been working with a number of countries in the region to develop comprehensive strategies against organized crime following a regional multi-stakeholder event for South-Eastern Europe held in December 2021 under the auspices of the UNODC Global Programme on Implementing the Organized Crime Convention: from Theory to Practice, in close cooperation with the regional programme for South-Eastern Europe. That work is geared towards enhancing the law

¹⁷ Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 65/4.

enforcement and criminal justice response to organized crime while integrating prevention and the protection of the most vulnerable and relying on cooperation at all levels to fight organized crime more effectively.

51. UNODC continues to implement the European Union-UNODC joint action promoting the rule of law and good governance through targeted border control measures at ports and airports in South-Eastern Europe for 2020–2023. The joint action is being carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bijača and Gradiška land border crossings and Sarajevo International Airport), Montenegro (port of Bar), North Macedonia (Skopje International Airport) and Serbia (Belgrade International Airport), as well as in Kosovo (Vrbnica/Vermice land border crossing). The action is aimed at enhancing the capacities of authorities in the Western Balkans to fight organized crime by supporting more effective and coordinated responses to illicit trafficking implemented by border law enforcement at land and port border crossing points and international airports in the region. It is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Container Control Programme and the AIRCOP project of UNODC, WCO and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) in cooperation with the UNODC regional programme for South-Eastern Europe.

52. UNODC also continues to conduct its activities in the region with regard to applying passenger controls to support airports in tackling multiple threats, including all types of illicit drugs, illicit goods (e.g. wildlife, falsified medical products and weapons) and terrorism and trafficking in persons.

53. UNODC and OSCE continue to cooperate in a number of areas in South-Eastern Europe in line with the UNODC-OSCE Joint Action Plan for 2020–2022, which has been extended into 2023. Since 2018, OSCE and UNODC have been implementing a multi-year training programme on countering the financing of terrorism in Albania, and more recently in Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. In addition, UNODC and OSCE cooperate in the area of drug use prevention. In that regard, a technical tool aimed at strengthening police-public partnerships and community-oriented policing was developed, in follow-up to an expert meeting jointly organized by UNODC and OSCE.

III. Eastern Europe

A. Drug trafficking

54. UNODC continued to provide support to the Republic of Moldova in strengthening interdiction capacity and border control through the Container Control Programme by engaging law enforcement professionals in its regional training activities on strategic trade and export control. The training sessions were delivered in an online format.

55. In January 2018, Ukraine and UNODC signed a memorandum of understanding in which they confirmed the participation of Ukraine in the Container Control Programme and the establishment of a port control unit at the Odesa seaport and an air cargo control unit at Boryspil International Airport in March 2018. The participating national law enforcement agencies in Ukraine are the State Customs Service, the State Border Guard Service and the State Security Service. Prior to the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, those units demonstrated good progress. The seizures made by the units since their inception include more than 326 kg of cocaine, more than 29 tons of precursors, over 7.5 million packets of cigarettes and various military and dual-use goods, including weapons and parts for armoured vehicles, helicopters and jets. Owing to the suspension of activities at the airport and the seaport, the activities of the units are currently very limited, but recent controls at “green borders” have led to the seizure of 40 kg of cocaine.

56. In 2022, UNODC continued providing capacity-building activities to the members of the port control unit and the air cargo control unit in Ukraine, namely

study visits to the Hamburg seaport in Germany, and the Amsterdam Schiphol Airport and the Customs National Training Centre in Rotterdam, Kingdom of the Netherlands.

B. Terrorism

57. Under the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, a global initiative of the Office of Counter-Terrorism implemented in partnership with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, UNODC, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the Office of Information and Communications Technology of the Secretariat, INTERPOL and the International Organization for Migration, UNODC continues to support Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova in strengthening their legal frameworks and capacities to detect and counter the travel of terrorists and criminals by collecting, using, storing, sharing and protecting advance passenger information and passenger name records, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2396 (2017), relevant international standards and human rights obligations. As part of those activities, legal technical assistance is provided in connection with the review and development of regulatory frameworks and the required training for the establishment of a passenger information unit.

C. Drug prevention and treatment, HIV treatment and care

58. Under its Global Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNODC continues to provide HIV and harm reduction initiatives, to support access to HIV prevention and treatment services and opioid agonist therapy for people who use drugs (including women who use drugs) and people in prisons and other closed settings, and to provide capacity-building for and foster partnerships between law enforcement and civil society to improve access to services relating to HIV, hepatitis C and tuberculosis among vulnerable groups.

59. The restrictions introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the development of digitalized medical and social services for opioid substitution treatment patients. For example, video-guided medical and social services for opioid substitution therapy patients were developed to deliver psychosocial and medical services through a remote programme in the Republic of Moldova. A new model of web-based outreach service delivery was established in Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to offer HIV services to people who use new psychoactive substances and stimulant drugs.

60. In Belarus and Ukraine, the Office supported the continuation of treatment for opioid substitution therapy patients by providing transport to clinics for patients in need.

61. In the Republic of Moldova, to ensure the continuation of the justice process while minimizing the risk of COVID-19 infections, since April 2021, UNODC and the country's National Prison Administration have established four e-justice rooms in the country's most overcrowded detention centres. The rooms feature cabins fitted with videoconferencing equipment, enabling persons held in detention to remotely participate in their trials, to speak with lawyers or prosecutors and to communicate with family members, relatives and friends. Minors held in prison remand centres can also use the cabins to attend online classes and pursue their education.

62. UNODC developed tools for caregiving in conflict and displacement situations to support families impacted by the war in Ukraine. These tools included leaflets, booklets and video materials aimed at promoting positive parenting skills in the prevention of drug use and violence and at improving the mental health of caregivers and their children. The tools reached 11.5 million beneficiaries across Europe.¹⁸

¹⁸ UNODC, "The Ukraine parenting response project reaches over 11.5 million beneficiaries through interagency work", 22 September 2022.

IV. Paris Pact initiative

63. The Paris Pact initiative remains the only global cooperation mechanism dedicated to reducing trafficking in and the production and global consumption of opiates, including the cultivation of opium poppy, in a focused and coordinated manner. The importance of the Paris Pact initiative has been recognized in multiple resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, as part of a comprehensive approach to peace, stability and development in Afghanistan, the neighbouring region and beyond.

64. The Paris Pact global programme of UNODC continued to facilitate strategic dialogue among the 58 partner States and 23 partner organizations of the Paris Pact, supported the establishment of an interlinkage between policy and operations through a consultative mechanism, and involved national and regional partners, including those located in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, in all events organized in the framework of the partnership. In 2022, these events were attended by nearly 600 policy- and expert-level participants from 49 countries and 17 organizations from five continents (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania).

65. The meeting of the expert working group on precursors, related to the third pillar of the Vienna Declaration adopted in 2012, was organized jointly with the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center in Bucharest on 24 and 25 October 2022. At the meeting, attended by 100 participants from 31 countries and six international and regional organizations, the experts shared updates on the latest trends in trafficking in precursor chemicals and provided information about recently identified trafficking routes and techniques. Other main topics discussed included the alignment of legal frameworks for the improved use of special investigative techniques, controlled deliveries, the exchange of intelligence and parallel joint investigations. In addition, participants received updates on backtracking investigations for precursors, carried out in both source and transit countries, and shared information about new, Internet-based methods to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals. Lastly, the experts agreed on 11 priority recommendations for enhancing actions related to precursors.

66. Considering the continued high importance of the Balkan drug trafficking route, the Paris Pact initiative has three national liaison officers in the region, one based in Serbia, one in North Macedonia and one in Türkiye (as of January 2022), respectively. As the primary points of contact for the initiative and its consultative mechanism, they continued supporting the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Paris Pact partnership at the country level.

67. The liaison officers continued to facilitate other UNODC programmes covering a variety of inter-thematic issues in support of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration. For example, the liaison officers improved the availability of data and assisted States in complying with their reporting responsibilities to UNODC through the annual report questionnaire. In addition, the liaison officers collected data for the UNODC individual drug seizure database and the Drugs Monitoring Platform project and supported the dissemination of the *World Drug Report 2022* in the field. They also supported several UNODC global and regional programmes, including the Container Control Programme, the Global Maritime Crime Programme, the Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, the Regional Programme for South-Eastern Europe, and the Programme for Central Asia, facilitated relevant coordination and identified synergies with the Paris Pact initiative at the field level.

68. Furthermore, the liaison officers continued to update the Paris Pact country fact sheets, compiling the latest figures on drug and precursor indicators for 21 countries in Central Asia, South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and West Asia. The country fact sheets were made available on the Paris Pact web portal.

69. In the reporting period, the Paris Pact partners in the region observed rapidly increasing illicit manufacture of and trafficking in methamphetamine originating in Afghanistan and the diversion of its precursors and addressed these threats through operational expert recommendations.