

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME

Vienna

World Drug Report

2016



UNITED NATIONS

New York, 2016

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ISBN: 978-92-1-148286-7
eISBN: 978-92-1-057862-2
United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.XI.7

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Suggested citation: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,
World Drug Report 2016 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.XI.7).

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PREFACE

The *World Drug Report 2016* comes at a decisive moment, just months after Member States, at a special session of the General Assembly, adopted a comprehensive set of operational recommendations on the world drug problem.

The session was only the third in the history of the General Assembly to focus on drugs, and the resulting outcome document, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”, provides a concrete way forward to take action on shared challenges.

In the outcome document, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to addressing persistent, new and evolving challenges in line with the three international drug control conventions, which were recognized as allowing States parties sufficient flexibility to design and implement national drug policies consistent with the principle of common and shared responsibility.

The operational recommendations contained in the outcome document encompass measures to address demand and supply reduction, as well as to improve access to controlled medicines while preventing their diversion; they cover human rights, youth, children, women and communities and highlight emerging challenges and the need to promote long-term, comprehensive, sustainable, development-oriented and balanced drug control policies and programmes that include alternative development.

The text highlights the importance of drug abuse prevention and treatment; encourages the development, adoption and implementation of alternative or additional measures with regard to conviction or punishment; and promotes proportionate national sentencing policies, practices and guidelines for drug-related offences.

Now the international community must come together to make good on its commitments.

The *World Drug Report 2016*, which provides a comprehensive overview of major developments in drug markets, trafficking routes and the health impact of drug use, supports comprehensive, balanced and integrated rights-based approaches.

This year’s report offers insight into the wide-ranging impact of drugs not only on the health and well-being of individuals, but also on the people around them — families and communities. This can include such harms as HIV, as well as the threat of violence, faced in particular by women and children.

The report also flags the alarming rise in heroin use in some regions. While the challenges posed by new psychoactive substances remain a serious concern, heroin continues to be the drug that kills the most people. This resurgence must be addressed urgently.

The report looks at issues of gender, marginalization, stigmatization, violence and human rights, and considers how counter-narcotics strategies can be sensitive to environmental concerns such as deforestation and pollution. It examines the use of the “dark net” and new technologies for drug trafficking, as well as the potential of illicit drug profits to fund terrorism and violent extremism.

Moreover, the 2016 report’s thematic chapter focuses on the interlinkages between drugs and development and the importance of “development-sensitive” drug control policies. This is a topic of particular relevance: as Governments noted in the outcome document, “efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the world drug problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing”.

The research contained in the report can support effective drug and development policies. The evidence is clear: illicit drug cultivation and manufacturing can be eradicated only if policies are aimed at the overall social, economic and environmental development of communities; confronting drug trafficking and its associated violence requires strong, transparent and fair criminal justice institutions and targeted efforts to dismantle transnational organized criminal organizations; prevention and treatment of drug use work if they are based on scientific evidence and are gender-sensitive; and the excessive use of imprisonment for drug-related offences of a minor nature is ineffective in reducing recidivism and overburdens criminal justice systems.

There is clearly much work to be done to tackle the many evolving and emerging challenges posed by drugs. The outcome document and its operational recommendations offer a solid foundation, one built on agreed frameworks, informed by evidence and based on the principle of common and shared responsibility.

This report, as with all of the Office’s expertise and on-the-ground experience in addressing the many aspects of the world drug problem, is at the disposal of Member States as they strive to meet this call to action.



Yury Fedotov
Executive Director
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Acknowledgements

The *World Drug Report 2016* was prepared by the Research and Trend Analysis Branch, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, under the supervision of Jean-Luc Lemahieu, Director of the Division, and Angela Me, Chief of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch.

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The present report also benefited from the expertise and valuable contributions of UNODC colleagues in the Corruption and Economic Crime Branch and the Organized Crime and Illicit Trafficking Branch of the Division for Treaty Affairs; and the Drug Prevention and Health Branch, the Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Section, the HIV/AIDS Section and the Justice Section of the Division for Operations.

The Research and Trend Analysis Branch acknowledges the invaluable contributions and advice provided by the *World Drug Report* Scientific Advisory Committee, which was formed in 2015 with the following members:

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