

UNODC World Drug Report 2023

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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report 2023 warns of converging crises as illicit drug markets continue to expand.



[Ref: DTE]

About UNODC:

- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a **United Nations office** that was **established in 1997** as the **Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention** by combining the **United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP)** and the **Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division** in the United Nations Office at Vienna, **adopting the current name in 2002**.
- The agency's **focus** is the **trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs, crime prevention and criminal justice, international terrorism, and political corruption**.
- It has its **headquarters in Vienna, Austria**.
- It is a **member of the United Nations Development Group**.

Aims and functions of UNODC:

- UNODC was established to assist the UN in better addressing a coordinated, comprehensive response to the interrelated issues of illicit trafficking in and abuse of drugs, crime prevention and criminal justice, international terrorism, and political corruption.
- These goals are pursued through **three primary functions: research, guidance and support to governments** in the **adoption and implementation** of various crime, drug, terrorism, and corruption-related conventions, treaties and protocols, as well as technical/financial assistance to said governments to face their respective situations and challenges in these fields.

About UNODC World Drug Report:

- The World Drug Report is a **yearly publication** that presents a comprehensive assessment of the

international drug problem, with detailed information on the illicit drug situation.

- It provides **estimates** and **information** on **trends** in the **production, trafficking** and **use** of opium/heroin, coca/cocaine, cannabis and amphetamine-type stimulants.
- The Report, based on data and estimates collected or **prepared by Governments**, UNODC and other international institutions, attempts to identify trends in the evolution of global illicit drug markets.

UNODC World Drug Report 2023:

- **New estimates of people** who inject drugs are **higher than previously estimated** as treatment services and other interventions fall short, including for **record numbers of displaced people due to humanitarian crises**.
- **“Cheap and easy” synthetics** changing drug markets with **lethal results**.
- **Drug trafficking accelerating environmental devastation** and crime in the Amazon Basin.
- More monitoring of public health impacts needed amid rapid regulatory changes and clinical trials with psychedelics
- **Youth populations** are the **most vulnerable** to using drugs and are also more severely affected by substance use disorder in several regions.
- **Large inequalities** in access and availability of **controlled drugs for medical** use persist, particularly for **pain management**.
- The disparity is particularly prevalent between the **global North** and **South** and across **urban** and **rural** areas, making some people feel the **negative impact of drugs** more than others.

About synthetic drugs:

- **“Cheap and easy” synthetics** changing drug markets with **lethal results**.
- **Criminals producing methamphetamine** – the **world’s dominant illegally manufactured synthetic drug** – are attempting to evade law enforcement and regulatory responses through **new synthesis routes**, bases of operation, and non-controlled precursors.
- **Fentanyl** has drastically altered the **opioid market** in **North America** with dire consequences.
- In 2021, the majority of the approximately 90,000 opioid related overdose **deaths in North America** involved illegally manufactured **fentanyls**.

Negative impact on environment:

- **The drug economy in the Amazon Basin** is **exacerbating additional criminal activities** – such as **illegal logging, illegal mining, illegal land occupation, wildlife trafficking** and more – damaging the environment of the world’s largest rainforest.
- **Indigenous peoples** and **other minorities** are suffering the consequences of this crime convergence, **including displacement, mercury poisoning, and exposure to violence**, among others.
- **Environmental defenders** are sometimes specifically targeted by traffickers and armed groups.

Regions affected by drugs:

- **In the Sahel, the illicit drug trade finances non-state armed and insurgency groups,**
- **In Haiti, drug traffickers** take advantage of porous borders to bolster their businesses, fueling the

country's multiplying crises.

- **In Africa, 70 per cent** of people in treatment are under the age of 35.
- **The 2023 opium harvest in Afghanistan** may see a **drastic drop** following the **national drug ban**, as early reports suggest reductions in **poppy cultivation**.
- The benefits of a possible significant reduction in **illicit opium cultivation** in Afghanistan in 2023 would be global, but it will be at the expense of many farmers in the country who do not have alternative means of income generation.
- Afghanistan is also a **major producer of methamphetamines** in the region, and the drop in opiate cultivation could drive a **shift towards synthetic drug** manufacture, where different actors will benefit.
- **War in Ukraine** has **displaced traditional cocaine** and **heroin routes**, there are signs that the conflict could trigger an expansion of the manufacture and **trafficking of synthetic drugs**, given the existing know-how and the large markets for synthetic drugs developing in the region.