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**Twenty-seventh Meeting of Heads  
of National Drug Law Enforcement  
Agencies, Africa**

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*\*

**Current situation with respect to regional and  
subregional cooperation in countering drug  
trafficking****Current situation with respect to regional and subregional  
cooperation in countering drug trafficking****Report of the Secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. Since the Twenty-sixth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Africa, held in Addis Ababa from 19 to 23 September 2016, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has continued to formulate and implement programmes to address problems related to drugs and organized crime in Africa. Trafficking in drugs, and other forms of organized crime continue to affect economic and social development in many parts of Africa. The situation is exacerbated by other factors, including wars and intra-State conflicts, the after-effects of the uprisings in North Africa, weaknesses in the social and criminal justice system, corruption, limited opportunities for young people and disparities in income levels, all of which provide ample opportunity for the activities of organized criminal syndicates in the region. Moreover, over the past few years, countries in Africa have increasingly been used by international drug trafficking networks to trans-ship and stockpile illicit drugs on a large scale. Such illegal networks have proved to be very flexible and creative in their production and distribution processes.

**II. Africa-wide initiatives**

2. UNODC continued to support the implementation of the African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention 2013-2017 and has been providing technical assistance to countries of the African Union in the areas covered by the Action Plan, as described in detail in the following sections.

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

\*\* [UNODC/HONLAF/27/1](#).



### III. West Africa

3. The Regional Programme for West Africa (2016-2020), which is aligned with the new Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Regional Action Plan to Combat Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa, was launched on 19 September 2016, during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. The Programme takes into account the priorities identified in the new Plan of Action and contributes to its implementation. It also serves as a framework for regional and national activities, for promoting cooperation to counter drug trafficking and for supporting Member States in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals contained therein.

4. In West Africa, an alarming increase in cannabis plant cultivation and cannabis production, in terms of acreage and packaging processes, has been observed. In August 2016, customs officers in Mali seized 2.1 tons of cannabis herb concealed in a vehicle en route from Burkina Faso. In 2016, authorities in Chad seized 640 kg of herbal cannabis.

5. According to the database on Illicit Drug seizures with relation to European Airports (IDEAS), between January 2016 and April 2017, 11 seizures of heroin, amounting to 31.12 kg, took place at Murtala Muhammed International Airport, in Lagos, Nigeria. All of the couriers arrested in relation to those seizures were Nigerian nationals.

6. Cocaine trafficking remains a major concern for West Africa. The main modes of transport have evolved to use air assets (including couriers and parcels), a trend that is likely a result of the increased number of flights between South America and West Africa.

7. According to the IDEAS database, between January 2016 and March 2017, 16 cocaine-related arrests were made at European airports in connection with flights originating in West and Central Africa, and almost 20 kg of cocaine were seized. All of the couriers who were arrested were Nigerian nationals and had departed from Nigeria (13 of them from Abuja airport). Between January and May 2016, the Joint Airport Interdiction Task Force of Murtala Muhammed International Airport seized nearly 28.33 kg of cocaine. Of the 15 seizures made, 11 were made on the Dubai-Lagos route, and all the couriers arrested in relation to the seizures were Nigerian nationals.

8. Drug seizures made in 2016 by teams from the Container Control Programme in West Africa included 140 kg of cocaine and more than 33 tons of counterfeit medicines, including 10.32 tons of tramadol originating in India that were seized at the port of Lomé in June. In 2016, 8,157,732 tramadol pills were seized in the Niger, a country in the Sahel region that is particularly affected by tramadol misuse. In March 2017, another 187,200 tramadol pills were seized in the Niger.

9. In March 2016, the Joint Airport Interdiction Task Force in Lagos seized 4.7 kg of methamphetamine en route to South Africa and, in April 2016, the Task Force seized nearly 25 kg of methamphetamine en route to Kuala Lumpur. The couriers arrested in relation to both seizures were Nigerian nationals.

10. Official data provided by the Ministry of Finance of India indicate that approximately 1.75 tons of ephedrine were officially exported to Nigeria in March 2016, for legitimate purposes.

11. Law enforcement authorities in Mali and the joint airport interdiction task forces in Niamey and Bamako (set up through UNODC technical assistance) have been more effective in seizing drugs and initiating court cases following UNODC specialized training sessions.

12. UNODC provided technical assistance related to the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan during the tenth meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Drug Coordinating Committee of ECOWAS member States. Several training courses and missions have been

conducted to date. In partnership with its Sahel Programme, the UNODC Regional Office for West Africa conducted a training course for trainers in Niamey in June 2016 to strengthen field units mandated to fight cross-border drug trafficking.

13. Nigeria continued to face serious problems with regard to border control and management. The upsurge in terrorism and the financing of terrorism within the Sahel region, with its potential global impact, have been largely a result of the unchecked movement of criminal elements across weak national borders.

14. The European Union funded a project implemented by UNODC, entitled “Response to drugs and related organized crime in Nigeria”, under which support was provided to Nigerian national counterparts and States members of ECOWAS in a number of ways. In September 2015 and April 2016, in collaboration with the Regional Office for West Africa, two regional intelligence forums on drug-related crime involving representatives from 11 West African countries, as well as Brazil and Japan were organized. Since 2015, through the project, UNODC has delivered a number of law enforcement capacity-building courses.

15. In 2012, UNODC supported States members of ECOWAS in establishing the West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors against Organized Crime. The Network brings together prosecutors and central authorities to exchange ideas, experiences and best practices and participate in joint training. Members also benefit from training and experience shared by experts from France and the United States of America. There have been marked improvements in the handling of requests for international cooperation by countries participating in the Network, both among themselves and with countries outside the subregion.

16. The Container Control Programme, which is implemented jointly by UNODC and the World Customs Organization (WCO), currently has project sites in Africa, Central and South America and Central and South Asia. The core of the initiative is the establishment of inter-agency joint port control units that include customs, police and other structures, such as gendarmerie and drug law enforcement agencies.

17. The strategy of the Programme for the period 2015-2016 was as follows: (a) to increase the level of mentoring support provided to the existing units in Benin, Ghana, Senegal and Togo; (b) to promote information-sharing and cooperation between West Africa and source countries through planned operations; (c) to deliver specialized training in areas of particular concern, such as precursor control; (d) to make significant strides in launching the Programme in the port of Abidjan; and (e) to explore opportunities to expand the Programme into other key ports in West Africa, including Conakry, Lagos and Monrovia, as well as in Central Africa, namely in Douala, Cameroon, and Pointe Noire, the Congo. Discussions regarding the implementation of a joint port control unit in one of the dry ports in Bamako are under way. UNODC will ensure that its activities are coordinated with those of other donors and technical assistance partners.

18. In support of the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan, UNODC, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, together with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), are continuing to carry out activities in the framework of the West Africa Coast Initiative project, which is currently being implemented in five post-conflict countries in West Africa: Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The backbone of the project is the establishment and full operationalization of transnational crime units in the implementing countries, and the enhancement of regional cooperation.

19. The Transnational Organized Crime Unit in Sierra Leone is fully operational and has registered very good results to date. Since its establishment in August 2010, the Unit has investigated 491 cases, resulting in the prosecution of 317 criminals and the seizure of 20,592 tons of marijuana, 12,665 tons of cannabis resin, 142 kg of cocaine and 3 kg of heroin. The Unit conducts regular operations in vulnerable areas and has good outreach in the country, even at sea. It has participated in several

international investigations on transnational organized crimes, and has conducted joint operations and exchanges of intelligence with the Transnational Organized Crime Unit in Liberia.

20. The Transnational Organized Crime Unit in Liberia is fully operational and its results have been encouraging. Since its establishment in June 2011, the Unit has participated in or conducted investigations into 59 criminal cases, resulting in the prosecution of 59 persons and the seizure of 500 kg of cannabis, 1.5 kg of cocaine and 7.4 kg of heroin. A comprehensive package of capacity-building activities has been delivered, along with logistical and operational support.

21. Several joint operations were conducted under the auspices of INTERPOL, and exchanges of intelligence also took place with law enforcement agencies in Côte d'Ivoire.

22. The Transnational Organized Crime Unit in Guinea-Bissau became operational in June 2011. Since then, proactive investigations based on intelligence-gathering (intelligence-led policing) have been carried out in partnership with the judicial police, resulting in investigations into 50 cases of drug trafficking, the prosecution of 63 persons and the seizure of 36.2 kg of cocaine and 217 kg of marijuana.

23. Through the Airport Communication Project, UNODC continued to build capacity for the detection and interdiction of drug trafficking by passengers and through the use of cargo and postal mail in selected African international airports in origin, transit and destination countries. One key aspect of the Project is fostering cross-regional cooperation between the joint airport interdiction task forces established in Africa and other regions. The task forces are connected to the INTERPOL I-24/7 network and the WCO Customs Enforcement Network Communication Platform, to which law enforcement agencies outside the Project are also connected. That enables real-time, global information-sharing that can be critical to intercepting drugs. In addition, training and mentoring activities under the Airport Communication Project are conducted by law enforcement officers from Brazil, Canada, Mali, the Niger and Senegal, as well as Europe. The Project was involved in the preparation for the joint operation "Ailes Africaines" (control of small aircraft in West Africa), which will take place in the second half of 2017. Also under the Project, funding was provided for African joint airport interdiction task forces to participate in the fourth annual working group meeting of the Interflow Initiative, organized by INTERPOL in June 2017. At that meeting, discussions were held on the detection, identification and arrest of drug traffickers whose activities were linked to Africa through the sharing of investigative leads in a secure environment and the review of global drug trafficking flows into and across Africa.

24. In terms of achievements, as at June 2016, 12 joint airport interdiction task forces were operational in Africa, in Benin, Cabo Verde, Cameroon (Douala and Yaoundé), Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. Three additional task forces were trained and became operational during the second half of 2016 in Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau and Kenya.

25. In terms of results and seizures, 10 joint operations were conducted: "Cocair" III, IV and V; "Folosa", in partnership with INTERPOL; WESTERLIES I, II and III, in partnership with WCO; and "Ailes Africaines" I, II and III, in partnership with the French customs authorities. In addition, four best practice exchange programmes were carried out and two canine teams were established in Cabo Verde and Senegal. Results in terms of seizures are very promising, with 1,176 kg of cocaine, 863 kg of cannabis, 140 kg of heroin and 778 kg of methamphetamines being seized.

26. In the framework of their Joint Programme on Drug Dependence Treatment and Care, UNODC and the World Health Organization (WHO) supported relevant authorities and institutions in West Africa in general and Senegal in particular in their efforts to develop national drug observatories with linkages to ECOWAS efforts to establish the West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use.

27. UNODC continued to provide technical support to the specialized drug treatment centre that was opened recently in Dakar. The centre is the first specialized drug treatment service in West Africa to have launched a pharmacological treatment programme for opioid disorders.

28. In Senegal, under the UNODC-WHO Joint Programme on Drug Dependence Treatment and Care, the UNODC contribution, together with financial support from France and funding from other partners, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Ensemble solidarité thérapeutique hospitalière en réseau (ESTHER) (now part of the French Agency for International Technical Expertise) and the city of Paris, helped to build a comprehensive addiction treatment centre (CEPIAD) in Dakar. After 20 months of operations, a total of 651 drug users had applied to be enrolled in the opioid maintenance programme and 178 had been admitted into the methadone programme (as at 31 December 2016). Pharmacological treatment services have been initiated, along with management of comorbidities related to drug abuse, HIV prevention and care and harm reduction activities. CEPIAD has a multidisciplinary team and is also linked to a network of social workers and community volunteers developing outreach activities and referral interventions.

29. In the framework of its project to support the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan to Combat Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa, UNODC organized, for the first time in West Africa, a high-level scientific consultation on the prevention and treatment of drug use disorders. It was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 20 and 21 February 2017.

30. As part of the implementation of the aforementioned project, in 2016, UNODC, ECOWAS and the European Union launched a call for proposals in support of innovative and pilot prevention initiatives in six countries (Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Liberia, Mauritania, Sierra Leone and Togo).

31. In 2015 and 2016, in the framework of the UNODC-WHO Joint Programme on Drug Dependence Treatment and Care, UNODC provided support for national consultations organized in Côte d'Ivoire on the revision of the legal and administrative framework regarding drug issues. The main objective of the reform was to promote a health-centred approach to drug control. The new version of the country's 1988 drug law was finalized by national experts with the technical support of UNODC and the draft has been submitted to the Ministry of Interior and to the Parliament for validation. UNODC also provided technical support to West and Central African countries during several national and regional consultations in the lead-up to the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem held in 2016.

#### IV. Central Africa

32. At present, UNODC activities in Central Africa are severely limited by a lack of resources. However, potential programmatic initiatives in Central Africa include activities to strengthen maritime security and curb trafficking in the Sahel region. The geographical location of Central Africa, close to the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel region, puts the region at risk of being exploited by criminal groups involved in drug trafficking by land, sea and air.

33. With regard to maritime crime, pursuant to Security Council resolutions [2018 \(2011\)](#) and [2039 \(2012\)](#), UNODC has been mapping the national abilities of all of the coastal States in the Gulf of Guinea through intelligence and in-depth reports. Through its Global Maritime Crime Programme, UNODC developed a strategic framework (Strategy in Relation to Piracy, Armed Robbery Against Vessels, and Maritime Crime in the Gulf of Guinea Region) to enhance regional capacities to tackle piracy and armed robbery against vessels. Between January 2015 and June 2016, four training workshops for prosecutors, judges and senior legal advisers and five coordination meetings on law reform were held and four assessments with law reform proposals were issued. In addition, a mentor was placed in both Ghana and Sao Tome

and Principe. The legal framework of Cameroon was studied under the Global Maritime Crime Programme and an evaluation mission was carried out in the country in November 2016. Ten legal experts from Cameroon took part in a legal coordination meeting between Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Sao Tome and Principe that was held in Accra in September 2016. The experts shared national legal frameworks, studied case law and ended the workshop with a trial simulation. In Sao Tome and Principe, representatives of the Global Maritime Crime Programme evaluated the legal framework and presented their recommendations during a training workshop on piracy and maritime crime held in December 2016. Also under the Programme, support was provided to the coastguard of Sao Tome and Principe. For the first time in its history, and with the support of UNODC, Sao Tome and Principe carried out a patrol operation, together with the criminal investigation police and fishing experts, 45 nautical miles from the coast. Satellite images shared by the European Maritime Safety Agency were used for the operation.

34. UNODC and the Economic Community of Central African States signed a memorandum of understanding in Libreville on 16 January 2015 to enhance their cooperation, in particular in the fight against wildlife and forest crime. In April 2016, prosecutors and judges were trained on illegal logging in Cameroon; in July of that year the assessment of the Central African Republic mission was completed; and, in December of the same year, an analytical report on the toolkit against wildlife crime for the Congo was published.

## V. Southern Africa

35. In 2015 and 2016, UNODC continued to support the Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network for Southern Africa, which is modelled on the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network and provides support to the network of practitioners working in the field of proceeds of crime and asset forfeiture. The Network provides a platform for countries to trace and confiscate the proceeds of all major crimes, including drug trafficking. The Network also facilitates information requests for international and regional mutual legal assistance related to all major crimes, including drug trafficking.

36. Through the Network, a regional capacity of more than 2,000 judges, magistrates, prosecutors and investigators on asset forfeiture, money-laundering and all major crimes, including drug trafficking, has been built, using the legislation of the following countries: Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania (Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar).

37. UNODC has produced asset management manuals and carried out legislative reviews for the introduction of non-conviction-based forfeiture in Botswana and Namibia. The Office has also produced an operations manual for the Network, a handbook for financial investigators and the Network's annual report.

38. An ongoing programme that places mentors in the member countries of the Network has led to an increase in the number of prosecutions for money-laundering and asset forfeiture relating to all major crimes, including drug trafficking: more than 340 cases have been considered to date — an increase from approximately 30 over the previous reporting period.

39. A website was established for use by the Network and it has been recently upgraded. It consists of an open area, a secure platform for exchanging information and an e-learning platform. The Network's online community has more than 650 members from 18 countries and has been visited more than 120,000 times. The Network's annual general meeting was held in June 2017. Botswana currently holds the presidency of the Network, and Madagascar, Mozambique and Seychelles are the latest countries to have joined the Network. Representatives from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Uganda attended the annual general meeting and expressed their countries' interest in becoming members.

40. At the annual general meeting held in June 2017, countries reported a significant increase in the value of assets seized, with over 23 million dollars in assets seized and awaiting confiscation orders.

## VI. East Africa

41. UNODC launched the second phase of its regional programme for East Africa for the period 2016-2021, entitled “Promoting the rule of law and human security”. Drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, illicit financial flows and the use of transport networks for trafficking, including maritime crime, are priority areas under the countering transnational organized crime and trafficking pillar. Under the Programme, cooperation to counter drug trafficking is promoted, and Member States are supported in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals contained therein.

42. The Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime convened a high-level meeting of interior ministers of the Indian Ocean region on the subject of countering drug trafficking that was held in Colombo on 29 October 2016. The meeting was attended by representatives of 18 littoral States of the Indian Ocean region, including seven ministers and deputy ministers of the interior or of home affairs. Other States were represented by special envoys and senior officials. The East African region was represented at a high level by the Minister of the Interior of the Comoros, the Deputy Minister of the Interior of Mozambique, the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania and senior government representatives from Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and South Africa. The meeting was also attended by observers from seven international organizations and partner agencies and United Nations agencies engaged in initiatives to counter narcotics in the region. The ministers agreed on the urgent need for a coordinated approach to target drug trafficking along the “southern route”. In the Colombo Declaration adopted at the meeting, ministers called upon the littoral States of the Indian Ocean to meet on an annual basis within the framework of the Southern Route Partnership of the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime to assess and report on the drug trafficking threats in the Indian Ocean and develop a coordinated approach to counter such threats. The Southern Route Partnership will provide a coordination platform for national drug enforcement agencies and international partners to identify priority areas and coordinate support that enhances common objectives. It will also provide a platform for regular engagement and the conduct of research on the southern route, including the collation of statistical data.

43. During the period under review, major drug seizures were reported by Kenya and Mauritius. In Kenya, a consignment of 90 kg of cocaine was detected among sugar imports in containers at the Mombasa port in July 2016. In Mauritius, the police seized a consignment of 135 kg of heroin in a shipping container that arrived in Port Louis in March 2017.

44. In November 2016, UNODC, through its Global Maritime Crime Programme, conducted an advanced maritime law enforcement training session on visit, board, search and seizure. The two-week, intensive training course brought together 18 maritime law enforcement officers from Kenya, Seychelles and the United Republic of Tanzania. The course was held at the Regional Fusion and Law Enforcement Centre for Safety and Security at Sea in Mahé, Seychelles. The training enhanced the capacity of maritime police units and coastguard services in the region to combat heroin trafficking at sea.

45. Various forms of maritime crime, including drug trafficking, take place along the coastal border between Kenya and Somalia. UNODC, through its Global Maritime Crime Programme, supported the Kenya Maritime Police Unit in Lamu in April and July 2017 through the delivery of training courses developed specifically to build capacity to effectively fight maritime crime, including drugs interdiction. The maritime law enforcement training includes day-to-day mentoring in core skills, such

as seamanship, maritime policing and engineering, by experts embedded with maritime law enforcement authorities. In addition, specialized training is offered on specific crimes in the maritime environment, such as drug trafficking, through practical exercises in visit, board, search and seizure at sea to identify smuggling of narcotics in hidden compartments. The programme also focuses on improving communication capabilities between the Maritime Police Unit and the Rural Border Patrol Unit to ensure coordination between land- and sea-based operations.

46. In 2015, UNODC continued to work on comprehensively addressing HIV/AIDS and drug use prevention, treatment, care and support among people who use drugs and people who inject drugs, as well as people in prison settings. In that context, the Office started the implementation of a programme that is aimed at reducing morbidity and mortality among people who use drugs and people who inject drugs in Kenya. In the first half of 2017, 1,200 people who use drugs and people who inject drugs started methadone substitution therapy, with three opioid substitution treatment clinics in the coastal regions of Kenya providing follow-up. A fourth clinic will be operational in Kwale County in the next quarter and a fifth clinic will become operational before the end of the programme, in June 2018.

47. UNODC is currently providing technical assistance for the development of a national drug control master plan in Ethiopia and Mauritius. UNODC is also supporting the development of a protocol for a substance abuse assessment among police officers in the Kenyan national police service.

## VII. North Africa

48. UNODC work in North Africa is undertaken through the Regional Programme for the Arab States to Prevent and Combat Crime, Terrorism and Health Threats and Strengthen Criminal Justice Systems, in line with International Human Rights Standards (2016-2021). The Programme was launched in May 2016 and takes into account the new set of challenges faced by the North Africa and Middle East region, while ensuring close cooperation with the Arab League and its member States.

49. In 2017, the political and security situation in the North Africa and Middle East region continues to be shaped by several crises and issues. Not only do the ongoing conflicts and wars, namely in Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, have detrimental consequences for the countries and their citizens, but they have also created spillover effects for neighbouring countries.

50. Increasing quantities of cocaine, destined for the Middle East and North Africa, have been intercepted both inside and within the region. South American cocaine reaches North Africa through various routes.

51. During the reporting period, the North Africa and Middle East region was used as both a transit zone and a final destination for South American cocaine. The largest interception of cocaine in the region took place in Morocco, while Tunisia appears, for the first time, to be being used as a transit country by transnational criminal organizations.

52. In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia seems to be used both as a transit zone and as a final destination for South American cocaine. On 2 September 2016, Brazilian authorities seized 602 kg of cocaine concealed in 18 sacks in a container loaded with bags of organic sugar. The vessel had departed from the port of Santos in Brazil and the final destination was the port of Tunis, via Gioia Tauro, Italy. In March 2017, an unprecedented seizure of more than 31.5 kg of cocaine was carried out in the Mediterranean by the Tunisian Maritime Guard. When the traffickers, who were aboard a speedboat coming from Italy, noticed the presence of Tunisian forces, they threw the drugs, which were placed in 30 bags, into the water off Cap Bon, a peninsula of Tunisia that borders the Strait of Sicily, Italy. In May 2017, the Customs Office of Gioia Tauro in Italy, along with the Guardia di Finanza (a law enforcement agency responsible for countering financial crime and smuggling) of Reggio Calabria, in



coordination with the Prosecutor's Office of the same region, seized 25.7 kg of pure cocaine at the port of Gioia Tauro. The drugs were hidden in a container loaded with frozen chicken and packed into 23 loaves originating in Brazil and destined for the port of Um-Qasr, Iraq. In December 2016, Moroccan security forces, together with Spanish forces, seized 2.5 tons of cocaine 161 km off the coast of Dakhla, following a joint operation. The drug had been brought by ship and was later trans-shipped to a Moroccan fishing boat 100 miles off the coast. Twenty-four people were arrested in connection with the seizure of the cocaine, which reportedly originated in Suriname and had transited through Cabo Verde.

53. In another development, in January 2017, the Moroccan Judiciary Police made an inland seizure of 116 kg of cocaine in the district of Beni Makada in Tangier, and arrested two individuals.

54. In September 2016, a drug syndicate that specialized in the manufacture and production of and trafficking in psychotropic and other drugs was dismantled by the Prefectural Service of the Judicial Police of Oujda (Morocco). Seven individuals were arrested: two nationals of Peru, one national of France and four nationals of Morocco. In the drug laboratory, Moroccan police found 200 kg of cocaine as well as modern tools and equipment used in the manufacture of cocaine and of tablets containing psychotropic substances.

55. In April 2017, customs officials seized 46 kg of cocaine at King Abdullah seaport in Rabigh, Saudi Arabia. The drugs were concealed in a frozen chicken consignment loaded in a container being shipped through Saudi Arabia to an unknown destination.

56. In December 2016, Sri Lankan police made their biggest ever seizure of cocaine, amounting to 800 kg, on-board a ship that had arrived in Colombo from King Abdullah seaport. Official reports indicate that the drugs were likely shipped from Ecuador and were concealed in a container of timber that was destined for a company based in India.

57. According to the IDEAS database, two of the largest recorded cocaine seizures linked to the Middle East and North Africa region occurred in October 2016 and involved two drug couriers that had departed from Brazil, destined for Lebanon. On 19 October 2016 at São Paulo International Airport, Brazilian authorities arrested a Bulgarian national transporting 18 kg of cocaine in his luggage. On 29 October 2016, French authorities arrested a Brazilian national carrying 24.5 kg of cocaine at Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, where he was transiting.

58. Nigerian criminal syndicates appear to be active in the Middle East and North Africa. During the reporting period, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency of Nigeria reported the arrest of two female couriers at Murtala Muhammed International Airport. They were carrying cocaine to Saudi Arabia under the pretext of going on pilgrimage. One of the women was apprehended with 300 grams of cocaine in June 2017. She had been promised a payment of 950 dollars to smuggle the drugs. The second woman was a 57-year-old grandmother, who was arrested with 1.6 kg of cocaine in March 2017. The couriers were apprehended during the outward screening of passengers to Saudi Arabia.

59. During the reporting period, several major maritime seizures of heroin took place, mainly in the Middle East and in Egypt. In June 2017, Turkish authorities seized more than 1 ton of heroin in 40 sacks stored in hidden compartments aboard a cargo ship sailing under the flag of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The seizure took place as part of a raid in international waters off the Suez Canal. The ship was heading to Greece from Egypt when it was intercepted. In March 2017, law enforcement officers aboard a United States Navy destroyer seized 270 kg of heroin from a small, stateless dhow in international waters in the Arabian Sea. Prior to its interception, the dhow had been tracked by a helicopter of the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

60. The Anti-Narcotics Police of the Islamic Republic of Iran tracked an international drug trafficking network operating on the Indian Ocean route: the traffickers were intending to ship heroin from Jiwani, Pakistan, by fast boats to a vessel located 150 km out at sea from Chahbahar port, Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian coast guards apprehended the vessel and the delivery boat, which was fleeing the scene, and seized 685 kg of heroin and 150,000 litres of smuggled fuel. Ten people were arrested: two Sri Lankan nationals, two Indian nationals and six Iranian nationals. According to the Iranian authorities, the traffickers were planning to smuggle the drugs to Jordan before shipping them to Africa.

61. In December 2016, Egyptian naval forces intercepted *Abadan*, an Iranian vessel in Egyptian waters in the Red Sea. Upon inspection, they found 319 packages containing heroin weighing some 171 kg. All seven crew members (four Iranian nationals, two Indian nationals and a Pakistani national) were arrested.

62. In December 2016, 15 kg of heroin were recovered in Karachi, Pakistan, from a Pakistan International Airlines flight bound for Saudi Arabia. The Pakistani Anti-Narcotics Force and customs officials recovered the drugs from a secret compartment in the aeroplane.

63. In the last few years, several illicit laboratories manufacturing “captagon” destined for countries in the Middle East and North Africa have been dismantled in Central and Southern Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa. The most recent dismantling of such a laboratory was carried out by Greek authorities, who, in March 2017, reported the discovery of a laboratory manufacturing “captagon”. Related to that operation, one Albanian national, two Greek nationals and one Turkish national were arrested in Elefsina and Megara, two towns 17 and 33 km north-west of Athens, respectively. During the raid at a laboratory at Elefsina, authorities discovered and seized 635,000 “captagon” tablets.

64. Iraqi security forces suspect the presence of specialized laboratories for the manufacture of crystalline methamphetamine in the governorates of Basra and Maysan. In April 2017, Iraqi police raided a drug laboratory in Kirkuk where it was suspected that amphetamine was being produced. They arrested two suspects and seized 51 cartons of pills.

65. In another development, in October 2016, Lebanese security forces reported the interception of a shipment of “captagon” manufacturing equipment originating in Mumbai, India, which was seized at Beirut International Airport. According to the Lebanese authorities, the equipment was used in modern laboratories to manufacture amphetamine, the main ingredient of “captagon”.

66. During the reporting period, the largest seizures of “captagon” and tramadol (synthetic opiates used in treating pain and also actively used across the Middle East and North Africa as a narcotic substance) were made in May 2017 by the Italian authorities. Police in the northern Italian city of Genoa intercepted a significant shipment containing 37.5 tons of tramadol and “captagon”. The drugs were stored in three freight containers that had docked in Genoa from India and were bound for Libya. The drugs were initially shipped from India to Sri Lanka, where they were disguised as shampoo and synthetic fabrics.

67. In January and February 2017, French customs officials made their first seizures of “captagon”. In two operations at Charles de Gaulle Airport, they intercepted 70 kg and 67 kg of “captagon”, respectively. In both cases, the drugs were hidden within industrial steel mouldings destined for Saudi Arabia, via Czechia and Turkey.

68. In May 2017, border guards in Saudi Arabia reported the interception of 2.1 million “captagon” pills, disguised with rice, near the country’s border with Jordan.

69. In September 2016 in Kuwait, authorities reported the confiscation of about 3 million “captagon” pills hidden inside air compressors placed in a cargo container.

70. Also in September 2016, Jordanian authorities reported the seizure of a record haul of more than 13 million “captagon” pills. The pills were discovered hidden inside

tumble driers in a house near Amman. Three traffickers, including a foreign national, were arrested.

71. In April 2017, Lebanese customs officers based in Tripoli seized 800,000 “captagon” pills hidden in the metal base of a truck. The pills had been intended for smuggling into one of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In June 2017, police in the United Arab Emirates arrested two individuals in Raas al Khaimah who were in possession of 110,000 tablets of tramadol. In February 2017, police in the United Arab Emirates intercepted 116 kg of “captagon” in Dubai and arrested the owner of the drug. The drug had been destined for the United Arab Emirates market. In May 2017, Abu Dhabi police also made a seizure of 1 million “captagon” pills and 100 kg of cannabis resin that were hidden in the secret compartments of a boat docked at the Dubai Creek port. Five individuals were arrested. The traffickers had intended to sell the drugs within the United Arab Emirates.

72. It appears that most of the cannabis resin consumed in the Middle East and North Africa is produced locally or originates in Afghanistan, Morocco and, to a lesser extent, Lebanon. At the same time, cannabis is produced in most countries of the region.

73. According to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction,<sup>1</sup> the majority of cannabis resin consumed in the European Union is imported from Morocco through Spain.

74. During the reporting period, significant amounts of cannabis and cannabis resin were intercepted in the Middle East and North Africa. The biggest seizures of cannabis resin were made at sea, although there were a number of large inland seizures.

75. The largest maritime seizure of cannabis resin took place in September 2016, when the Spanish Civil Guard, supported by Europol, the French National Directorate of Intelligence and Customs Investigations and the Italian Guardia di Finanza, intercepted a vessel flying the flag of Panama that was sailing to Libya with 19.6 tons of cannabis resin on board. The crew of the ship (11 Ukrainian nationals and 1 Uzbek national) were arrested.

76. In April 2017, Moroccan police seized 578 bags containing 15 tons of cannabis resin, in addition to six cars carrying false licence plates that were used for drug trafficking.

77. In May 2017, following a 15-month operation, security forces in Spain seized 13 tons of cannabis resin. The seizure came after a long-term surveillance operation in the Campo de Gibraltar region, during which ringleaders of the group were identified in early 2016. The cannabis resin was being transported across the Strait of Gibraltar in high-powered dinghies.

78. In February 2017, Moroccan national security and customs administration officials at the Guergarate border post seized more than 3 tons of cannabis resin concealed in large bottles of cosmetic products on board a vehicle registered in Morocco. The cannabis resin was intended for export to Africa.

79. Intelligence officers from the Lebanese army seized 487.5 kg of cannabis resin hidden inside 1,639 soap boxes. The drug was supposed to be headed to the United Republic of Tanzania but, for unknown reasons, the destination had been changed to Canada.

80. With respect to the security dimension and to support North African countries to reinforce their response to cross-border trafficking, the UNODC Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa worked on several fronts during the period 2016-2017. Strengthening of border controls and regional cooperation in the region

<sup>1</sup> *European Drug Report 2017: Trends and Developments* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2017).

has been given special attention, including through the further strengthening of container and airport controls and enhancing capacities to secure selected land border crossing points and key hub cities along trafficking routes in the region. Strengthening investigation capacities throughout the region, in order to promote intelligence-led investigations aimed at dismantling criminal networks, rather than just carrying out individual seizures, has been another focus in that regard.

81. In order to respond to the alarming situation in Libya, UNODC has developed a “containment approach”, with the objective of supporting neighbouring countries in increasing their land border control capacities at both official crossing points and key hub cities along trafficking routes (i.e. cities that traffickers and terrorists have to go through in order to cross the Sahara or the Sahel region).

82. Under its regional project on land border control and regional cooperation, UNODC supported Egypt and Tunisia, and consultations are ongoing to start activities in Algeria in the second half of 2017. In Tunisia, UNODC supported the Government in establishing a border information management and data-analysis system. Furthermore, inter-agency cooperation and information-sharing was supported, which has resulted in a cooperation agreement between the customs and police authorities in the country. In cooperation with INTERPOL, UNODC delivered a series of training sessions on criminal information analysis and on pre-flight passenger data and the Passenger Name Record system. Experts from the United Kingdom and Canada trained officials from various relevant law enforcement agencies. Egyptian officials involved in the investigation of terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and other serious crimes have also been trained in the past year on criminal information analysis, including elements of inter-agency cooperation for information-sharing.

83. In Egypt, UNODC delivered training on drug-related investigations, focusing on judicial cases and undercover operations techniques, in cooperation with the French National Office for Combating Drug Trafficking. Effective exchange of know-how, challenges and the latest trends in drug trafficking was improved. As a result, operational information was exchanged between the Egyptian Anti-Narcotics General Administration and the French National Office on trends relating to tramadol trafficking from Charles de Gaulle airport to Cairo airport.

84. Under the Global Container Control Programme, UNODC supported the establishment of an inter-agency Port Control Unit at the port of Radès in Tunisia. The Unit was established in February 2017 and consists of customs officers, with focal points from the border police, the port authority and the container terminal. The Unit is tasked with profiling, targeting and inspecting high-risk containers and cargo being used by organized criminal groups for the transport of illicit goods, including for terrorism purposes. In that context, a cooperation agreement between customs and the border police was negotiated, which is an important basis for information exchange and investigations. Training and the procurement of equipment for the Unit is ongoing and is taking place in line with the results of the needs assessment that was carried out in September 2016. In Morocco, initial capacity-building on risk analysis and container profiling, selection and inspection was provided to the customs risk analysis units at the ports of Agadir, Casablanca, Rabat and Tangier-Med.

85. In 2016, the Airport Communication Project, a project implemented jointly by UNODC, WCO and INTERPOL, was extended to the Middle East and North Africa to build capacities in selected international airports for the detection and interdiction of suspicious passengers and trafficking by passengers or using cargo and postal mail. Morocco is an associate country to the project and discussions are ongoing with Algeria and Tunisia to adapt implementation to national contexts and needs. Through the project, UNODC is developing a training curriculum that will provide front-line officers operating at international airports in the region with the skills and knowledge required to detect and identify suspicious passengers (including foreign terrorist fighters) at international airports.

86. UNODC, in collaboration with the Dubai police, held the eighth regional meeting of States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to improve operational

and judicial frameworks for regional and interregional cooperation to combat illicit drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. Through the Council's Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs, which is based in Qatar, activities to improve the sharing of operational information between regional law enforcement centres in order to counter drug trafficking from Afghanistan continued. Other activities were aimed at increasing awareness of the benefit of cooperating with the private sector in the area of precursor control.

87. As rates of HIV transmission and drug use are still on the rise in the region, UNODC intends to support the development of laws, policies, strategies, guidelines and practices related to HIV and people who inject drugs in order to reduce obstacles to access to evidence-based and human rights-based HIV prevention, treatment and care services and to reduce the violence experienced by people who inject drugs. Furthermore, assistance will be offered to countries in the region in promoting access to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment and care services for people who use drugs, with a particular focus on the WHO, UNODC and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS package of 10 interventions.

88. As health in prisons and other closed settings is closely connected to the health of the wider society, UNODC has developed and launched a regional project on HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and care and support in prison settings in the Middle East and North Africa. The objective of the project is to promote and support the development of normative guidance, evidence-based HIV policies and programmes on HIV prevention, treatment and care in prisons in the region. Through the project, UNODC is currently providing technical assistance to three prisons in Egypt, five prisons in Morocco and six prisons in Tunisia.

## VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

89. On the basis of common and shared responsibility, countries in Africa should continue to take action against drug trafficking and organized crime through balanced and comprehensive responses. The transnational dimension of drug trafficking and organized crime underlines the need to strengthen regional cooperation in that regard. The main areas for enhanced cooperation should include increasing information exchange within the region, tackling financial flows linked to drug trafficking and preventing the diversion of precursor chemicals that are used to manufacture drugs.

90. In the light of the foregoing, States participating in the meeting may wish to consider the following:

(a) Developing regional strategies to counter drug trafficking that include linkages with other forms of organized crime, inter alia, trafficking in firearms and persons, for a better integrated response to the problem;

(b) Considering including cross-cutting issues, such as anti-corruption activities, in projects and strategies to counter trafficking;

(c) Calling upon UNODC to continue supporting countries undergoing political transitions and reforms in the field of criminal justice in general, and the law enforcement sector in particular, in order to ensure that the actions taken are based on the rule of law and respect for human rights;

(d) Inviting Governments to place increased emphasis on the dismantling of drug trafficking networks as a strategic approach in order to move beyond the seizures of drugs and arrests of low-level operatives, and in this regard make more systematic use of criminal intelligence and request UNODC support as appropriate;

(e) Encouraging Governments to continue their engagement in the Airport Communication Project so as to strengthen the response against terrorism and trafficking threats to civil aviation;

(f) Supporting and expanding the implementation of the Container Control Programme in the Middle East and North Africa in order to facilitate international

trade and prevent the exploitation of maritime containers for the purposes of trafficking, organized crime and terrorism;

(g) Promoting a balanced approach to drug control that also includes effective and sustainable drug demand reduction through the prevention of drug use, the provision of drug-dependence treatment and rehabilitation;

(h) Inviting States in the region to conduct national studies and assessments on drug-related issues and to work with UNODC in this regard, including on related capacity-building and information-gathering and analysis;

(i) Inviting States to develop and review alternative development initiatives and alternative crops to narcotic plants, with support from international partners;

(j) Further promoting and enhancing national, cross-border and inter-agency cooperation in order to unify and strengthen border controls regionally and streamline the gathering and sharing of intelligence;

(k) Enhancing support for the regional development of memorandums of understanding for multilateral cooperation and information exchange and mutual legal assistance and considering concluding regional memorandums of understanding for cooperation and information exchange with major global and European-wide agencies, such as INTERPOL, the European Police Office, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and Eurojust.

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