



INTERPOL



ILLICIT DRUG TRADE

Future-oriented policing projects



In keeping with its consistent support of international organisations to strengthen the global community, the United Arab Emirates – through the Interpol Foundation for a Safer World – is funding seven INTERPOL projects within seven crime areas, including Counter Terrorism, Cybercrime, Illicit Drug Trade, Illicit Goods and Global Health, Vehicle Crime, Vulnerable Communities and Protecting Cultural Heritage.



The INTERPOL Foundation for a Safer World is the rallying point for likeminded organizations to unite with INTERPOL to respond to today's crime challenges. It encourages an international commitment and partnership with the private sector to protect citizens, infrastructures, businesses and investments from the threats of terrorism, cybercrime and organized crime.



ILLICIT DRUG TRADE



THE ISSUES

The illicit drug trade remains one of the most dynamic criminal markets. With ample evidence showing the involvement of criminal organizations in all stages of the illicit drug trade, the issue remains a global concern, with different regions affected by emerging and escalating drug trafficking phenomena.

For example, of particular concern across the **Middle East Region** is Captagon, an amphetamine-based substance produced in the region or on its immediate border.

The market for Captagon across this particular region is large, with record seizures of Captagon tablets in recent years. Nonetheless, very little is known or documented with regard to the criminal organizations behind this trade, nor their activities, which range from the production of the drug to money laundering profits from its sale. Identifying and engaging with key law enforcement agencies within the region to share real-time criminal data remains a challenge.



Crystal methamphetamine trafficking and its domestic consumption has also become a primary concern in the Middle East, together with the related activities of organized criminal networks. The number of seized methamphetamine laboratories in the region has gone up consistently for the past five years. An increasing amount of the drug is also being trafficked into the region from other parts of the world, suggesting new trafficking routes linking previously unconnected crystal methamphetamine markets of different regions.

Africa has evolved from being a well-documented transit region for substances such as cocaine and heroin into a source production region for other drugs such as methamphetamines. The sale and use of such substances are now generating other types of local and national crime, as well as associated health and social issues, not unlike the experiences of Central and South America over the past decade. The illicit drug trade generates huge profits for West and East African

criminal organizations, with the eastern region having quickly evolved into a mass transit zone for bulk shipments of Afghan heroin. There is a strong need to increase awareness of the consequences on society, law and order and economic development if the crimes emerging from national drug abuse continue unabated.

Asia is home to the world's largest population as well as some fastest developing national industries and domestic and foreign markets. An unsolicited and undesirable side-effect of this economic boom is the production and diversion of precursor chemicals used to process ephedrine, coca and opium into methamphetamine, cocaine hydrochloride and heroin respectively. Exacerbated by the rise of the Internet and the Darknet, criminals have been quick to identify gaps in national and international chemical scheduling regulations, which have paved the way for the large-scale production of new psychoactive substances, creating serious health issues for young people around the world.

INTERPOL'S ROLE



Our criminal intelligence officers focus on the most commonly used and trafficked narcotic drugs – cannabis, cocaine, heroin and psychotropic substances – in addition to precursor chemicals.

We maintain close liaison with national law enforcement agencies and with non-governmental organizations that have a counter-drug mandate. This constant communication is crucial in fulfilling our mission of aiding the international community in curbing illicit drug trafficking and sales.

The Organization's primary drug-control role is to identify new drug trafficking trends and criminal organizations operating at the international level and to assist all national and international law enforcement bodies concerned with countering the illicit production, trafficking and abuse of drugs by:



› **COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA**

obtained from member countries for strategic and tactical intelligence reports and disseminating these reports to the concerned countries;

› **RESPONDING TO AND SUPPORTING**

international drug investigations;

› **HELPING TO COORDINATE DRUG INVESTIGATIONS**

involving at least two member countries;

› **ORGANIZING OPERATIONAL WORKING MEETINGS**

between member countries where INTERPOL has identified common links in cases being investigated in these countries;

› **ORGANIZING REGIONAL OR GLOBAL CONFERENCES**

on specific drug topics: the aims of which are to assess the extent of the drug problem, exchange information on the latest investigative techniques and strengthen cooperation within the law enforcement community.

LOOKING AHEAD

INTERPOL has developed a five-year activity plan to maximize the exploitation of its global network and policing capabilities, based on identified needs. The plan consists of five pillars:





- 1 › **Evaluation and coordination visits** to identified countries, so as to provide investigative support.
- 2 › **Organization of expert group meetings** and global conferences on specific areas, so as to promote information sharing and establish contact networks and cooperation mechanisms.
- 3 › **Capacity building**, so as to enhance investigative and operation skills of drug enforcement officers
- 4 › **Operations**, so as to promote information exchange increase drug seizures and arrest of drug couriers, and populate INTERPOL databases, and
- 5 › **Enhance cooperation and partnership** with international, regional, and where necessary, national organizations or agencies so as to enhance and consolidate cooperation and coordination.

INTERPOL will also look to undertake the following regional initiatives under the auspices of the INTERPOL Foundation:

AFRICA

Set up an INTERPOL-led multi-disciplinary and joint agency approach combining investigative support and capacity building. INTERPOL will work on the ground in the region, using its existing network of local law enforcement, investigators and prosecutors to facilitate operational exchanges focused on one or several targets in real-time in closed and secure environments.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Create an operational platform to address the increased production and distribution of illicit drugs including Captagon and crystal methamphetamine. The platform will provide a state-of-the-art, secure and real-time information sharing mechanism for drug investigators in the region and will focus on identifying and targeting the criminal elements behind this illicit trade about which very little is currently documented.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Coordinate the centralized collection, exchange and analysis of data related to industrial chemical producers and organized crime groups. This information will help INTERPOL and regional actors to identify links to illicit markets in other regions of the world.





A major global objective expected from the above is the establishment of a cross-border approach to tackle identified drug crime areas through the global coordinating role of INTERPOL, in contrast to bilateral arrangements or a decentralized, case-by-case approach.

Increased access to database information generated by INTERPOL member countries in different regions will also enhance investigations and prosecutions.

Moreover, the lessons learned from successful investigations in other regions of the world will help shape understanding of the full dimensions and implications of the illicit drug trade.



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