



XII<sup>TH</sup> EDITION



**UNODC**

*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*  
*Background Guide*

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*AGENDA: Deliberating on the challenges posed by new age  
synthetic drug trafficking.*

Greetings,

Welcome to MACEMUN'26! The Executive Board of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes is thrilled to have you on board and congratulates you on becoming a part of this prestigious event.

This introduction is intended to give you a rough idea of what to anticipate from the committee and to recommend areas in which you should focus your research at this time. Even if the guide is purposefully wide, you must not limit your research to only the areas that are highlighted. We invite you to exercise critical thinking, put your analytical abilities to use, and expand your investigation into relevant topics.

We do not expect you to rehash statements made by the leaders you represent or offer ideas that have previously been proposed. Instead, we are looking for innovative, out-of-the-box solutions that take into account the political and ideological constraints you may face.

Please understand that the purpose of this background guide is to provide a foundation for understanding the issue at hand. It is not intended to be exhaustive. If you find that the guide does not cover every aspect or could have included more detailed information or arguments, then we consider that a success. Our goal is to offer a 'Background Guide,' not a 'Study Guide.' We believe that study guides can sometimes hinder a delegate's growth by focusing too heavily on pre-packaged information rather than fostering independent research. This guide is meant to serve as a starting point for your research journey.

We are excited to see how this committee will unfold and are committed to ensuring a valuable learning experience, especially for those who are newer to MUN. Should you have any questions or need further clarification during your research, please do not hesitate to reach out.

We wish you all the best and look forward to an engaging and successful committee!

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## Research Guide

Research is possibly the most intimidating yet the most important part of preparing for any Model United Nations conference. Without proper preparation, not only are representatives unable to accurately represent their country's position in a global scenario but they also restrict themselves from gaining the most out of the memorable MUN learning experience. A delegate's aim at an MUN conference is to most faithfully represent their country's stand on a certain issue being debated and to do this, thorough research is needed. It goes beyond retelling speeches of national leaders and requires a genuine understanding of national policy, as only this can provide the basic foundation of role-playing at the MUN. Here you will learn methods and tips for researching, understanding your country's perspective and policies, and writing your position paper using critical information.

**Triple-Eye Research:** For any Model United Nations conference, your research should focus on a top-down approach on three levels which goes from the general to the specific, although the areas will naturally overlap on several occasions. The idea is to research each area thoroughly to develop a proper understanding of your country and the issues that will be discussed.

The three levels are -

- The UN Ecosystem;
- The Country Backdrop and;
- The Agenda.

### 1) **The United Nations Ecosystem**

Interestingly, this is an area that is often overlooked when researching for a MUN conference. MUNs aim to recreate the United Nations and so it is imperative that to do so, you know what the UN is, what it does, and how it functions. Successful and proactive participation in the simulation requires a level of understanding of the United Nations organization itself, regarding structures, functions, and protocols. The more conferences you attend, the less time you will find yourself spending on this aspect since the only new research required is if you are going to a committee you've never been in before. Delegates need to familiarize themselves with:

- The UN Charter: <https://www.un.org/en charter-united-nations/index.html>
- The history of the United Nations.
- The main bodies and committees of the UN.

- The functioning of your committee.
- Your country's history within the UN, its role, and reputation. Information on this can be found on the websites of the permanent mission of the UN to your country.
- Recent UN actions pertaining to your country or the agenda – including statements, press releases, publications, resolutions, etc.

Although there are countless publications and documents on the United Nations, the best source to study about the United Nations is the UN itself. Below are a further collection of useful links -

- [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)
- <http://www.un.org/en/members/index.shtml>
- [www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/online.html](http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/online.html)
- <http://www.icj-cij.org/>
- <http://treaties.un.org/Home.aspx>

## 2) Country Backdrop

Build a knowledge base of your country - delegates must be aware of their assigned country's historical, geographical, political, economic, social, and environmental aspects. Build a country profile on your government

- what systems, ideologies, political parties, and leaders represent your country?
- what is your country's foreign policy and how is this affected by important historical and domestic aspects?
- who are your allies and your adversaries? What other bilateral, regional, and international organizations is your country a part of?

After building a basic profile, you must study your country's broad stand on global issues, particularly at the UN. Develop a basic understanding of your country's voting pattern, its involvement in the UN – speeches given by leaders and delegates of your country at the UN and resolutions/treaties it has been a part of.

The following links should be of some help -

- <https://www.countryreports.org/>
- <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>
- <https://countrystudies.us/>
- [www.unausa.org](http://www.unausa.org)

- <http://www.un.org/en/members/>

### 3) The Agenda

This will form the bulk of your research – it will be what is used directly in committee sessions. You will be informed of the agenda of issues to be discussed at the MUN by your organizers before the conference. A thorough study of the tabled topic for debate and discussion with respect to your country, UN and the world as a whole will aid you to properly represent your country and actively participate in the simulation. You will be provided a study guide for your assigned agenda by your MUN committee, which you should use as your starting point. Within your agenda topic, the three areas that must be covered are -

- A background and overview of the agenda topic and your country's policy on it.
- Detailed information on important aspects of the topic.
- Broad information on where other main countries and blocs stand.

We delve into each one of them in detail below –

- Background - After the background guide, news articles relating to your topic can be a good place to find a brief overview of the most recent developments. While only verified news agencies such as Reuters and Al Jazeera are accepted in committee, news and op-ed articles can provide an entry point into deeper issues. However, you must be careful to look for writers' biases on the Internet in particular. The next step is to look for resolutions and treaties that are relevant to the topic – the most recent resolution from the The UN Documentation Centre should refer to the documents most central to your agenda. You must then look into your country's voting history on the matter, for indications on action, inaction, presence and absence, looking for changing policies and exploring their causal factors. Statements explaining votes can be found in records on the UN website.
- Details - Once your background research is done, you need to dive deep into the topic to understand the primary aspects, and try to logically 'frame' the agenda into main subheadings of sorts, under which all the important points can be organized. This can help you break down complex agendas into neatly manageable chunks, and score brownie points if your frame is accepted by the committee. It's important to make a clear distinction between facts, arguments based on those facts and opinions, particularly when reading on the Internet. At this stage,

sometimes as you're framing the problems, you're also coming up with innovative solutions to put in the proposal. Looking up implementation of past resolutions is a helpful starting point, but op-eds, blog posts, local and international NGO reports, think tank papers and academic papers will likely be more useful in shaping your ideas. Remember to focus on solutions that are politically, economically and sustainably feasible.

- Other Arguments - One of the most important lessons from MUNs is learning to accommodate differences – it is important to be aware of the arguments and facts used by those holding the opposite stand to yours. While as a delegate you are bound to espouse the views of your country, individually your opinions can be shaped through the push and pull of opposing ideas. Also, this research will help you logically counter the arguments put forth by radically opposed delegations, and bring the committee around to your point of view. In some conferences, delegates research countries other than their own in order to surprise other delegates with allegations and throw them on the back foot. Needless to say, this is not only undiplomatic but also entirely counter-productive to the cooperative purpose of the conference. While it is important to be aware of the policies of other countries, antagonistic behavior can only harm the atmosphere of the committee and hamper consensus-building, and thus is discouraged.

The most important part of research is being able to synthesize the data you've found in an organized way and identify the key pieces of information, including facts and figures, which you can use to illustrate and defend your position. If your country plays a central role in the agenda topic, it becomes all the more important to be able to explain your actions. Finally, all your research comes down to being able to justify your position, explain your ideas and convince the other delegates that these are the most valuable approaches to solving the problem.

## **MOTIONS (VERBATIM)**

### SETTING THE AGENDA

Delegate of \_\_\_\_\_ would like to raise a motion to set the agenda as \_\_\_\_\_

### ESTABLISHING THE GSL

Delegate of \_\_\_\_\_ would like to raise a motion to establish the general speakers' list with an individual speaker's time of \_\_\_\_\_

### MODERATED CAUCUSES

Delegate of \_\_\_\_\_ would like to raise a motion to suspend formal debate and move into a moderated caucus on the topic \_\_\_\_\_ for a total time period of \_\_\_\_\_ minutes with an individual speaker's time being \_\_\_\_\_

### UNMODERATED CAUCUSES

Delegate of \_\_\_\_\_ would like to raise a motion to suspend formal debate and move into an unmoderated caucus for a total time period of \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.

### EXTENSION TO INFORMAL DEBATE

Delegate of \_\_\_\_\_ would like to raise a motion to extend the current moderated/unmoderated caucus by \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.

### INTRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTATION

Delegate of \_\_\_\_\_ would like to raise a motion to introduce draft resolution [number].

### VOTING ON INTRODUCED DOCUMENT(S)

Delegate of \_\_\_\_\_ would like to raise a motion to table formal debate and move into voting on [document name].

## Delegate Dart

<i>Committee</i>
<b>Committee Website:</b> understand your committee's mandate along with functions; and analyze its resources.
<b>United Nations Charter:</b> be aware of your committee's powers and limitations

<i>Conference</i>
<b>Awards Policy:</b> know what the conference values and what your executive board is looking for.
<b>Rules of Procedure (ROP):</b> ROP tells you how the committee is going to operate.

<i>Country</i>
<b>CIA World Factbook:</b> location, neighbors, population size, type of government, type of economy, trade partners, and the multilateral group you're a part of
<b>Wikipedia:</b> information on your country's history, bilateral-multilateral-economic relations and its recent backdrop.



<i>Topics</i>
<b>Background Guide:</b> topics under the EB radar
<b>News Articles:</b> latest news on your topics, as well as your own country.
<b>Resolutions &amp; International Statutes:</b> non-negotiables in knowing what has already been discussed on the agenda. You can find past resolutions at the <a href="#">UN documentation center</a> .

<i>Foreign &amp; Allied Policies</i>
<b>Speeches &amp; Press Statements:</b> use speeches and press releases from people in the executive branch of your country's current government. Start with the website for your country's Ministry of Foreign/ Home Affairs
<b>Voting Stances:</b> infer how your country has voted on past resolutions, treaties, and conventions; or whether they abstained

<i>Solutions</i>
<b>OP-ED &amp; Blogs:</b> These particulars are from a personal or journalistic perspective and are useful in understanding the reasoning behind their arguments and biases.
<b>Think Tanks:</b> think tanks are who come up with solutions to the topics you discuss in Model UN because it's their bread & butter. They are great for potential solutions, although be aware of their biases.
<b>Academic Publications:</b> read the abstract and skim the paper for ideas that you can use in committee. These are tough reads but are insightful and rigorously edited. Use JSTOR, ScienceDirect & Google Scholar to find good publications.
<b>Our Ideas:</b> include in your binder your position papers, working papers, proposed solutions, notes, thoughts, as well as blank lined paper. This is the most important section of your binder and is what will help you survive and stand out throughout the committee.

### **Questions A Delegate Must Answer Before A Conference (QADMABAC)**

- Is your country historically isolationist or interventionist?
- Does your country cooperate with the United Nations?
- Does religion play a role in dictating political affairs in your country?
- What style of government does your country utilize?
- What kinds of internal issues is the government currently addressing, or not addressing?
- What are the prominent religions in your country? Official languages? Ethnic groups?
- What global alliances does your country have? What global enemies?
- Is your nation a member of any transnational/trans-regional organizations?  
(i.e. NATO, QUAD, I<sup>2</sup> U<sup>2</sup>, European Union, African Union, ASEAN)

## UNODC Mandate

The work of UNODC is guided by a broad range of international, legally binding instruments and treaties. The following three conventions form the basis of the work conducted by the organization, including the UNODC Drug Dependence Treatment and Rehabilitation unit:

- Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) - amended by a Protocol in 1972
- Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971)
- Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)

These three major international drug control treaties are complementary and aim at ensuring the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, whilst preventing their diversion and their abuse.

In June 1998, the twentieth special session of the General Assembly (UNGASS) was convened as the largest multilateral gathering ever held on combating illegal drug trafficking and abuse. With the adoption of a ten-year plan on countering the world drug problem, Member States recognized the strategic significance of the human rights dimension in both supply and demand reduction activities.

A decade later, at the high-level segment of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (March 2009), Member States evaluated progress made. Moreover they identified future priorities for drug control beyond 2009 and adopted the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem (2009):

*"....Member States should: Ensure that access to drug treatment [that] is affordable,*

*culturally appropriate and based on scientific evidence [is available] and that drug dependence care services are included in health-care systems, whether public or private, with the involvement of primary and, where appropriate, specialized health-care services, in accordance with the national legislation".*

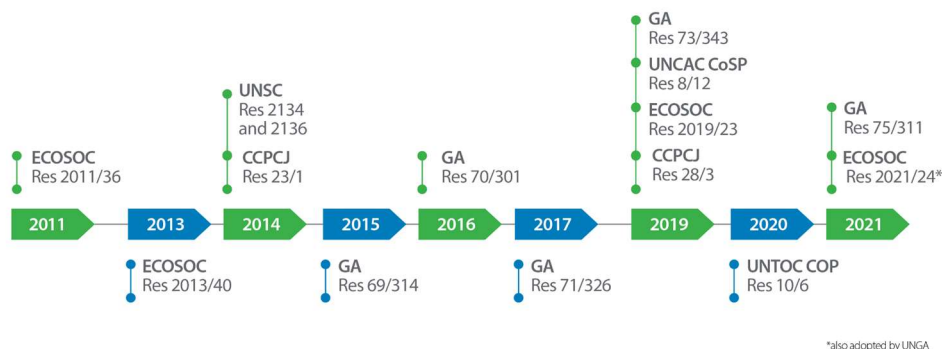
The paper Drug policy provisions from the international drug control Conventions (E/CN.7/2014/CRP.5), discussing the implications of the three Conventions for drug policy, was published at the 57th Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in March 2014. It gave great impetus to the work conducted in the area of drug dependence treatment, highlighting again... *"the right to be treated for drug use disorders, without stigma and discrimination is the same as the right to be treated for any other chronic disease in the health care system".*

UNODC and its partners continue to work towards achieving the targets outlined in the 2009 Political Declaration. In early 2016, a United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the World Drug Problem reviewed progress made so far.

Crimes that affect the environment are often serious, transnational organized crimes, and thus of direct relevance to the mandate of UNODC, notably in its role as Secretariat to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). In 2021, Member States further reiterated their commitment to addressing such crimes. ECOSOC resolution 2021/24 details practical actions for Member States and the international community to prevent and combat crimes that affect the environment. The resolution requests UNODC to support Member States in this regard, as well as in relation to corruption and money-laundering related to such crimes. The resolution further requests UNODC to expand coordination as well as cooperation with relevant organizations including the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC).

Since 2015, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted five resolutions on trafficking in wildlife, demonstrating a continuing and strengthened commitment of the international community to address this issue. Through these resolutions, UNODC is mandated to support Member States to address illicit trafficking in wild fauna and flora. For example, General Assembly resolution 75/311, adopted in July 2021, recognizes the important work of UNODC and ICWC and calls upon the United Nations to continue to support efforts by Member States to fight illicit trafficking in wildlife. Further, it requests UNODC to support Member States to prohibit, prevent and counter any form of corruption that facilitates illicit trafficking in wildlife and to continue to strengthen its research efforts. Resolution 28/3 adopted by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in May 2019 recognizes

UNODC's role and emphasizes the importance of its provision of technical assistance and capacity building to Member States.



## Agenda Dart

In the context of modern international drug control, a “drug” is any substance placed in schedule I or II of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. The United Nations (UN) Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines a drug in pharmacological terms, stating, “any chemical agent that alters the biochemical or physiological processes of tissues or organisms.” International efforts and treaties to control narcotics predate the UN. In 1912, the International Opium Convention was signed at The Hague, and adherence to its provisions was built into the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the First World War in 1919. The newly established League of Nations took over international narcotics control, primarily through the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs. The signature achievement of this committee was the 1933 Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs. These international entities and treaties reflected the scientific knowledge of their respective periods, and focused predominantly on opiate and coca derivatives, but established the principle of prohibition of the trade in narcotics, with the few exceptions being for internationally sanctioned medical or research purposes.

## Introduction

Synthetic drugs are defined as “any substance of synthetic origin with psychoactive effects available on the illicit drug market and/or used for non-medical purposes.” Within that category, Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) are a group of synthetic stimulants including amphetamine, methamphetamine, and ecstasy. The number of drug seizures are one of the most important indicators of the state of the synthetic drug market. Currently, the market for ATS is emerging with a significant increase in methamphetamine seizures from 100 tons in 2013 to 228 tons in 2018. The United Nations Office on

Drugs and Crime (UNODC) notes that close to 24,000 clandestine laboratories used to manufacture synthetic drugs were detected globally during the period of 2015 to 2019. New psychoactive substances (NPS) are drugs that pose a threat to public health since they are not scheduled by the United Nations (UN) conventions on drugs, but have the same negative effects of ATS from their consumption. Also, NPS are harder to identify for authorities, do not have geographical or environmental limitations for their production, and have a global market that is increasingly important.

In recent years, more than 1,000 NPS have been identified within 125 countries. As the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) is the main policymaking organ of the UN regarding drugs and drug trafficking, the emergence of synthetic drugs will ultimately affect the work of CND and the way it offers advice on policymaking. Through its mandate of ensuring the implementation of treaties and directing the programs under UNODC, CND can address emerging issues such as transnational trafficking and the availability of legal chemicals used to produce illegal synthetic drugs. These legal chemicals are called precursor chemicals and drug traffickers can find them through licit channels. Although the issues regarding narcotic drugs, substance abuse, and drug trafficking have been addressed by CND, the specific issue of synthetic drugs has its own challenges, including difficulties detecting illegal activity due to the use of legal precursor chemicals in the manufacturing process, health risks with synthetic drug abuse, and the widespread use of cryptocurrency and the dark web.

### Framework

The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) is the first international convention to propose drug policy and its objective is to deter substance abuse and limit drug trafficking through the criminalization of drugs. It resulted in the creation of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), an independent body that consists of 13 members elected by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The scheduling of drugs is a procedure established through the 1961 Convention and is the centerpiece of the normative mandate of CND. To schedule a drug, WHO or a Member State must submit a notification to CND through the Secretary-General.

After evaluating a substance, members of CND vote by simple majority.<sup>91</sup> Once the scheduling takes effect, ECOSOC may review the decision. However, since only drugs that have opium-, cocaine- and cannabis-like effects are regulated by the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961), the necessary provisions to address synthetic drugs were lacking. After NPS and ATS appeared on the market, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971) was adopted to extend the purview of the international normative system that was previously limited to drugs such as cocaine, cannabis, and opium. In 1988, the Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was adopted to

provide additional measures for scheduling drugs and combatting drug trafficking. To schedule a substance under the 1988 Convention, INCB may initiate a request instead of WHO.

Regarding synthetic drugs, this convention was also adopted in response to the prevalence of precursor and pre-precursor chemicals. In 2009, at ECOSOC's High-Level Segment, the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem (the Plan) was adopted. The Plan identifies emerging challenges such as the use of precursor chemicals in the production of synthetic drugs, and the diversion of legal pharmaceutical products towards illicit drug trafficking. It also proposes further surveillance of synthetic drug trafficking due to a lack of monitoring. Following the 2009 Plan, the Joint Ministerial Statement of the 2014 High-Level Review served as a midterm review of the implementation of the Plan. Because of new trends in synthetic drugs trafficking, Member States agree they should ensure shared-responsibility with all stakeholders and increase scientific-based decisions to implement their commitment to the Plan. Then, in 2016, the General Assembly convened for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS 2016). Regarding synthetic drugs, the outcome document of UNGASS 2016, Our Joint Commitment to Effectively Addressing and Countering the World Drug Problem, made several recommendations, namely, to include border enforcement agencies when sharing intelligence and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established in 2015 by General Assembly resolution 70/1, Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 1 ("end poverty and all its forms everywhere") as well as SDG 3 ("good health and well-being") are linked to the issue of synthetic drug trafficking. Providing economic alternatives to drug trafficking will limit illicit activities and promoting health-related solutions will limit public health consequences.

Finally, the 2019 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 was the result of a high-level segment to assess the results of the ten year completion of the Plan. Member States commit to the principle of shared responsibility, prioritize evidence-based solutions through knowledge sharing, and work to end the diversion of precursor substances to ensure they remain available for pharmaceutical research and medical purposes. More specifically, Member States are encouraged to expand monitoring capacities through inter-agency collaboration and integrating qualitative studies on new substances, market studies on global trends and forensic data with law-enforcement investigations. When addressing the problems of synthetic drug consumption, 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 (2019) suggests that Member States should focus not only on



demand reduction for high risk users, but also consider treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration for drug users. Such evidence-based systems can be accomplished through the collaboration of educational, judicial, and healthcare agencies.

## Role of International Systems

The scheduling process is a key mechanism in the international system for control of synthetic drugs and substances and is evolving continually following a comprehensive process with the collaboration of experts from WHO and INCB, followed by a review by ECOSOC, if needed. At its sixty-third session, the Commission considered 14 new substances to be scheduled, most of which were scheduled under the 1971 Convention. The process was initiated by the submission of these proposals by WHO and INCB as provided in the Conventions of 1961, 1971, and 1988. During this session, it was highlighted that the scheduling of substances with the collaboration of INCB, UNODC, WHO, and CND has greatly facilitated Member States' control of synthetic drugs nationally and international cooperation. Following the adoption in 2012 of CND resolution 55/1 on Promoting International Cooperation in Responding to the Challenges Posed by new Psychoactive Substances, which asked for an update on the Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends Programme (SMART), the UNODC produced a new report in 2013. The aim of the Global SMART Programme is to enhance the monitoring capacities of Member States through scientific information and knowledge sharing of synthetic drugs, as outlined in the Plan. In 2013, after CND resolution 56/4 on Enhancing International Cooperation in the Identification and Reporting of new Psychoactive Substances recognized the importance of global data and information sharing regarding the synthetic drug trafficking of NPS, the Early Warning Advisory (EWA) was established by the UNODC and managed by the Global SMART Programme. Early Warning Systems (EWS) collect data through an online platform that allows policymakers to track market trends and health impacts in order to adapt to emerging precursors and NPS that require an immediate response.

The main objective of conducting drug analysis is to find NPS and identify which chemicals pose a threat to public health and security to prioritize legislative work. Following the call for an innovative approach to tackle the global emergence of synthetic drugs in CND resolution 61/8 on Enhancing and Strengthening International and Regional Cooperation and Domestic Efforts to Address the International Threats Posed by the non-Medical use of Synthetic Opioids, UNODC created the UN Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs. It is a multidisciplinary platform that provides resources and guidelines for various fields that work with synthetic drugs such as law enforcement, health, and research. This initiative was then commended by CND resolution 63/1 on Promoting Efforts by Member States to



Address and Counter the World Drug Problem, in Particular Supply Reduction Related Measures, Through Effective Partnerships With Private Sector Entities, which called for Member States to operationalize the guidelines and information found in the toolkit in national policies and strategies. Lastly, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) has partnered with many international agencies by participating or coordinating 7 regional initiatives that target synthetic drug trafficking. These partnerships include many agencies such as UNODC, the World Customs Organization (WCO), Europol, and INCB. Project ION (International Operations on NPS) is another example of such collaboration and is coordinated by INCB. As a contributing member to Project ION, INTERPOL is facilitating the sharing of intelligence between national agencies to track NPS trafficking. This initiative also established IONICS, a digital platform that allows intelligence sharing and real time communication concerning NPS trafficking and production. UNODC also joined forces with WCO while establishing the Container Control Programme (CCP), a that facilitates cross-border trade while limiting drug trafficking by coordinating regional meetings and intelligence sharing. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations (NGO) involvement with CND, INCB, and UNODC has been made possible through the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs (VNGOC), a committee that represents 27 NGOs to high-level discussions such as UNGASS 2016.

### The Synthetic Drugs Market Supply Chain

The latest Global Synthetic Drugs Assessment published in 2020 by UNODC, analyzes the global synthetic drugs market and studies regional-specific drug markets. During the manufacturing process of synthetic drugs, precursor chemicals are widely used. For example, 14 out of the 22 precursor chemicals scheduled under the 1988 Convention are legal for pharmaceutical purposes, but are also used to illegally produce ATS. According to the Global Synthetic Drugs Assessment of 2020 substances can be limited by aligning drug policies and similar enforcement capabilities between neighboring countries. The diversion of precursor substances, as well as legal ATS or pharmaceutical drugs, occurs when they are initially found in legal channels and markets, but then are diverted to the illegal market to synthesize illegal drugs or for the distribution of pharmaceutical drugs. Synthetic opioids that are trafficked across borders are mainly from illicit manufacturing, while diverted substances are more likely to be sold within national borders. The manufacturing of ATS takes place in clandestine laboratories and over the period of 2010-2019, the number of dismantled methamphetamine laboratories has significantly decreased, going from 10,600 in 2010, to 1,600 in 2019. This decline is explained by a shift of production from small laboratories in North America and Asia towards high yield manufacturing in Africa, Europe, and Oceania. In their latest publication, the SMART initiative acknowledges that the monitoring and scheduling of precursor chemicals disrupts the production of ATS for a short period of time, but does not have lasting effects when studying global trends.

When regulating a substance, illicit manufacturers of synthetic drugs can overcome a disruption by using an alternative non-scheduled chemical or pre-precursor substance that is not scheduled. In response to this issue and the rapid development of pre-precursor substances, the SMART initiative suggests voluntary public-private partnerships can help law enforcement identify these chemicals with the valuable information private actors in the legal production, trade and financing can provide. Partnerships with the private sector can help law enforcement in the context of digital markets, since they are held on privately owned platforms and the delivery of illegal synthetic drugs is carried out by private delivery services and shipping companies. According to the World Drug Report (2021), ATS and NPS both are widely available in online markets, which is rapidly becoming the platform of choice both for supply and demand. Governments working with private actors such as internet providers are able to foster self-regulation and collaboration to detect illegal online markets. The financial flow of the synthetic drug market and payments are made on virtual platforms, using cryptocurrencies and the dark web. Often, these payments are made across borders, which stresses the need for joint investigations and align drug enforcement policies among Member States to prosecute illegal activities adequately. In 2019, the second INTERPOL Global Conference on Illicit Drugs underlined how cybercrime is intimately linked to the synthetic drug trade. INTERPOL's Contribution to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the World Drug Problem (2015) highlights in its recommendations the need to clarify what actions law enforcement can take when conducting online investigations on transnational criminal activity.

### Impact of the Pandemic

UNODC found that limits on legal trade and COVID-19 measures have significantly reduced the trafficking of precursor substances for manufacturing synthetic drugs, especially when importing from another region. However, unlike precursor substances, the overall market of synthetic drugs and the availability of ATS and NPS was not affected at the same level. Since most precursor chemicals are transported through licit channels and trade routes, limits on trade had an effect on the transportation of these substances as well. Despite these limits, the manufacturing was only briefly interrupted; most clandestine laboratories found local sources of precursor chemicals. Others like the South East Asian illicit drug market were uninterrupted by the pandemic due to the presence of an important chemical industry.

On the other hand, despite the COVID-19 crisis, the supply of synthetic drugs increased from 2019, mainly because these substances are distributed close to where they were manufactured, usually within the same region. For example, transnational criminal organizations in North America were not affected

by measures to counter the spread of COVID-19 and continued to transport synthetic drugs through trafficking corridors and started to produce their own precursor chemicals. Another major concern raised by the UNODC Global Research Network is the diversion of sometimes limited law-enforcement resources from counter-narcotics towards enforcing lockdowns and other COVID-19 measures. Healthcare and other services for people with drug use disorders, which are often considered as non-essential health services, can experience government budget cuts and staff shortages. At the 64th session of CND, Member States recognized that COVID-19 has limited health systems' capacities to limit health consequences of drug abuse and to provide treatment and rehabilitation to drug users. Encouraged solutions proposed to counter the repercussions of the pandemic include expanding healthcare systems that can be resilient to health crises, and collecting data on how the world drug problem is affected by COVID-19.

The COVID-19 crisis has caused an economic decline that worsened the financial situation for socioeconomically disadvantaged people, for whom substance abuse is prevalent. The economic impact of the pandemic has led to an increase in drug use and production, especially among poorer communities. Predictions made based on the global economic crisis in 2008 expect a decrease in law enforcement's budget to counter drug trafficking and an increase in the use of cheaper drugs, both which prove challenging to public health. While the demand for synthetic drugs used in a social setting recreationally dropped by 20 percent because of social distancing, the manufacturing, trafficking, and use of illicit synthetic drugs have all increased despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Inference

Collaboration between UN entities, national law enforcement agencies, and the private sector have proven to be a useful tool to share information on drug trafficking operations. The growing synthetic drug market means Member States face rapidly evolving challenges that require expertise in many fields including international law, public health, law enforcement, and scientific research. During the past decade, the focus was on supply reduction, demand reduction, and international cooperation for both scientific knowledge and intelligence sharing.

In the 2019 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, Member States suggest that future actions should include the protection of health, offering treatment for drug users, and safety to vulnerable communities. At their latest session, CND addressed the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of past commitments and encouraged continued efforts to counter the world drug problem despite the current pandemic by

adopting a joint Statement on the Impact of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic on the Implementation of the Joint Commitments of Member States to Address and Counter all Aspects of the World Drug Problem.

### Research Suggestions

- While preparing for this topic, delegates should keep in mind the following questions: What are additional challenges posed by synthetic drug trafficking that are not addressed by existing initiatives and programs and how can they be tailored to the current context?
- What legal frameworks can help enforcing transnational crime and solve jurisdiction challenges?
- What measures can the international system put in place to encourage states to increase human and financial resources for drug trafficking enforcement despite shortages caused by the COVID-19 crisis?
- How can inclusive treatment and overdose prevention help curb the negative effects of synthetic substance abuse? What could be implemented to materialize a comprehensive initiative to combat the online aspect of drug trafficking, based on the principle of shared responsibility, while respecting state sovereignty?

XII<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

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