

Forum: Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Affairs Committee

Issue: Combatting the distribution of illicit drugs

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Introduction:

Illicit drugs such as heroin, marijuana and cocaine are very dangerous to the human body, they have a large range of effects and unfortunately in high doses they can be quite fatal. These drugs often provide some sort of increased neural activity coupled with the increased concentration of dopamine, serotonin or similar neural transmitters in the brain's neural pathways. Due to this function these drugs are highly addictive, and those who use them often develop serious mental issues and become dependent to the point that it affects their daily lives. The distribution of such substances refers to the spreading/selling of drugs, which is mostly done illegally. Many crime syndicates and black market operations utilise drug peddling or dealing as means to fund their institutions. However there are many individuals that get recruited by these syndicates and some of the main causes are poverty/unemployment, as those who are really in need of money will try to sell these drugs to earn as much as possible.

The issue is prevalent in most countries across the globe, especially in lesser-economically developed regions along certain climates. These climates include regions in South America and places in the middle east where plants that are used to produce certain drugs can only grow in that climate. The UNODC educates people about the possible consequences of the usage of drugs, and has multiple task forces. While delegates should consider the wide-ranging effects that such drugs have, they should maintain their focus on methods to combat the distribution and international and nationally sanctioned efforts to do so. The UN has taken many actions to increase global co-operation of law enforcement to aid in the prosecution of illicit drug trades, but

also to advocate for greater sentencing for drug usage. Some possible solutions include addressing the legislative loopholes that allow for illicit drug distribution, reducing demand via education or better methods, increasing the punishments given to those who are caught dealing drugs.

Definition of Key Terms:

1. **Crime syndicate** : These are criminal organisations that often utilise drugs to raise funds.
2. **Illicit trade** : The trade of goods considered illegal by international government bodies.
3. **Addiction** : The process of being dependent on certain substances on a regular basis.
4. **Drug Trafficking** : Drug trafficking is the movement of drugs across national borders through illegal means.
5. **Extortion** : When individuals get addicted to drugs, drug traffickers use this to sell more products to them, and this forces them into being extorted, which is when they are forced to pay financially.

Background Information

The Americas

Within the North American and South American continent, there has been a considerable increase in drug trafficking dating back to the post war period. This is, in part, due to the lack of government regulation in certain regions of South America. There are regions where drugs such as cocaine and heroin can be quite easily produced due to the climate and the humidity, as well as the soil culture. These regions are also mainly under-developed and ravaged by the strong presence of gangs and other criminal organisations that often use their drug trafficking methods to collect money to develop political power in the region. Drugs that are produced also then move up into Northern America and down to the lower regions of South America. Due to the

large amount of money and a depression in the economy due to increased inflation. Northern America saw unemployment rise and in the 1970s, drugs had flooded the streets and this is when drug use had first peaked.. However, nowadays with regulation drug usage has started to fall.

Europe

Europe used to have a large drug epidemic with many people addicted to drugs produced in the Middle East, specifically Afghan opium. However at this time many governments had acted to divert the flow and crack down on the organisations that provided these drugs. In addition, since the founding of the United Nations the continent has been able to better control the flow of goods and are much better than other regions at tracking down drug traffickers. Drug operations have also become increasingly local in this region which arises a separate issue to deal with. Although from the 1990s these countries have also made the decision to make certain drugs legal as well as treating the use of drugs less as a crime and more as an issue that need to be solved with rehabilitation, essentially turning drug users into victims, this is relatively new but has shown some positive effects.

Asia

Asia, which includes the Middle East as its largest producer of drugs, due to its climate as well as the lack of government authority over large parts of the region, many militia groups and terrorist groups utilise drugs as a way to raise money for their organisations. Most notable groups like the Taliban in Afghanistan use drugs and especially heroin and opium as a way to fund their military activities, these drugs then move into more populous regions such as Southeast Asia, India and China. The lack of coordinated law enforcement in the region as well as a lack of checks on goods and services entering and leaving the region has led to increased drug trafficking. Ever since the region saw an increase in economic activity from the early 2000s it was followed by a larger consumption of drugs in the region. Specifically in the “golden triangle” a term

used to denote a region of southeast asia in which the drug trade is especially prevalent.

Current Situation

In 2015, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODA) estimated that 250 million people, or roughly 5% of the world's population, were using drugs. EU users spent upwards of €27 billion in 2016 on illicit drugs, and 29.5 million were dependent and required treatment. In the United States, addiction rates are at an all-time high due to the long standing availability of drugs in the market many individuals have gotten the chance to develop their addictions so whilst less drugs may be entering, due to more advanced anti-drug operations, the same people are still addicted to drugs if not more.

The main issue in the current day and age is the factor of the internet, whilst the internet has been around for a while, some more new additions to the internet such as social media and crypto currency have allowed for the drug trafficking industry to flourish in unimaginable ways. Social media allows for the users and the suppliers to reach each other more easily, out of the purview of law enforcement. This is equivalent to cryptocurrency which in most places do not have the necessary precautions and regulations to control its movement. The unregulated market of crypto currency allows for these drug transactions to happen outside of normal financial institutions, and due to their blockchain method everything is done very discreetly and at times incredibly difficult to catch.

Asia

The golden triangle is the area where the borders of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand converge, and has long been notorious for drug production, especially in Myanmar. Opium production in Myanmar is the world's second-largest source of opium after Afghanistan, producing some 25% of the world's opium, forming part of the Golden

Triangle. However, since 2015, opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar has declined year-on-year. According to the UNODC, since 2013, opium production has halved. Nonetheless, Myanmar is the leading global producer of methamphetamine, and there are growing signals that the issue is only worsening.

Middle East

The Golden Crescent region of South Asia - comprising Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan - is the principal global site for opium production and distribution. Since the late twentieth century, war, terrorism, and a turbulent political landscape have led to a sharp rise in opiate production and distribution. Of these three nations, Afghanistan produces the most illicit opium (over 90% according to Interpol), due to lengthy conflict having worsened already weak socioeconomic and political conditions.

South America

The illegal drug trade in Latin America concerns primarily the production and sale of cocaine and cannabis (marijuana), including the trafficking of these illicit drugs to primarily American and to a lesser extent, European markets. Coca cultivation (the plant from which cocaine is derived from) is concentrated in the Andes of South America, particularly in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia; this is the world's only source region for coca. Colombia is said to produce around 43% of the world's cocaine. Cocaine cartels are particularly vicious and notorious in Latin America, the most famous of which are most likely the Colombian cartels, especially the Medellin Cartel which was led by Pablo Escobar.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Golden triangle nations (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand)

None of the golden triangle nations have implemented effective policies against drug trafficking, although there have been sustained yet modest attempts. At the same time, however, corruption among civilian and military personnel and their involvement in narcotic trafficking reportedly continue as well. The US has in many instances become involved with aiding these nations in developing measures against drug trafficking due to their personal stake in the issue (much of golden triangle produced drugs are trafficked to the United States). Delegates are advised to keep in mind the nuance of the situation as many of these nations depend upon drug cultivation as a key part of their GDP and the possible negative effect upon millions of livelihoods if overly simplistic measures are taken.

Golden crescent nations (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan)

Each of the aforementioned are Muslim nations thus their national drug policies tend to be extremely strict, with each having the ability to exercise the death penalty against any serious offenses - due to the prohibition of intoxicants under Shari'a law. Even with this rigidity, the situation in these nations is still complex. In Afghanistan, the Taliban do not rely on opium income to operate, although it is a supplement to their revenue. Previous attempts to decrease opium cultivation may have led to the destabilising of the group's previous rule in 2001, but Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid at his first press conference after the group took control of Kabul said that "Afghanistan will not be a country of cultivation of opium anymore [...] the international community needs to help us." The US has also contributed to anti-drug measures in this region too, but to only modest effect.

Andean nations (Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador)

The Andean nations have strict drug policies yet the illicit drug trade has contributed to governmental corruption (the same can be said about corruption's effect upon the illegal drug trade). Hence, national responses are similar to nations in the

golden crescent and triangle - working to act against drug proliferation yet often dependent upon the illicit drug trade as part of their GDP and suffering from corruption which prohibits meaningful action. The US 'War on Drugs' has been particularly significant in this region due to its proximity and influence over American drug markets.

Interpol

Interpol is heavily active in regions of Europe and the Middle East, they are also very focused on the controlling of drug trafficking. This is an intergovernmental agency which means they have the ability to track various borders and carefully monitor the shipment of goods, especially drugs. This makes interpol uniquely suited to the job of tracking down drug trafficking operations. Due to the legal role of interpol as well as the governmental decree that it is provided they can also more easily apprehend suspects and also prosecute them. INterpol runs various task forces that combat certain illicit drug trade routes.

UNODC (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime)

UNODC is the official UN body that is in charge of the organisation of member nations of the UN in the drafting of legislation and policy that will help decrease drug trafficking on an international level. The UNODC is a very special agency as it has the decree of the United Nations and also has the co-operations of multiple member nations. It has the ability to influence the policies around drug trafficking which is one of the most effective ways to combat that issue. The UNODC is very critical in the formation of legislation with many countries to draft global solutions since the drug trade is a very global issue and requires the work of international institutions.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Below are treaties, resolution and events by the United Nations and their relevant bodies that tackle the issue of illicit drug trafficking:

- Realignment of the functions of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and changes to the strategic framework, 22 July 2010 ([E/RES/2010/21](#))

- Strengthening regional cooperation between Afghanistan and transit States and the contribution of all affected countries to counter-narcotics efforts, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility, 12 March 2010 ([Resolution 53/5](#))
- Report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on its fifty-third session and provisional agenda and documentation for its fifty-fourth session, 22 July 2010 ([E/DEC/2010/244](#))

Possible Solutions

There are a variety of possible solutions that can tackle this issue in a variety of ways that address the new difficulties that one can notice with this issue, notably the way in which crypto currency and social media have changed the drug trafficking landscape in irrevertible ways. These solutions include...

- Greater regulation of cryptocurrencies and the financial dark web, where drugs funding can be done with very little governmental oversight.
- More regulation on social media that prevents the connection of those associated with drug trafficking to those who are known drug users.
- Clearing legislative loopholes and border laws that allow for certain contraband to be moved without the oversight of correct law enforcement authorities.
- Stricter laws against those who traffic drugs compared to those who consume drugs allowing for drug users to be more complacent in investigations and decreasing drug trafficking simultaneously.

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Useful Links

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