

PREFACE

At the twentieth special session of the General Assembly in 1998, States Members agreed to make significant progress towards the control of supply and demand for illicit drugs by the year 2008. They noted that this objective could only be achieved by means of the 'balanced approach' (giving demand as much attention as supply), and on the basis of regular assessments of the drug problem. (General Assembly Resolution S-20/2 and S-20/3). The aim of the present report is to contribute to such assessments by presenting supply and demand statistics and analysis on the evolution of the global illicit drug problem.

However, reliable, systematic and comparable data to assess the drug problem, and to monitor progress in achieving the goals set by the General Assembly, is not readily available. The present report is based on data obtained primarily from the annual reports questionnaire (ARQ) sent by Governments to UNDCP in 1999, supplemented by other sources when necessary and where available. Two of the main limitations encountered by UNDCP in using ARQ and other sources are: (a) that ARQ reporting is not systematic enough, both in terms of number of countries responding and of content, and (b) that most countries lack the adequate monitoring systems required to produce reliable, comprehensive and internationally comparable data.

These limitations are particularly evident in the measurement of illicit crop production and drug abuse. As requested by States Members, in order to assist them with compiling data on these topics, UNDCP established a Global Illicit Crop Monitoring Programme and a Global Assessment Programme on Drug Abuse last year. Implementation of both programmes has now started and, provided they are given adequate support, they should contribute to more scientifically valid assessments of the drug problem.

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