

Agenda Item: Addressing the Global Surge in Synthetic Drug Production and Trafficking

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1. Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

It's an indescribable honour to welcome you to the AKA Model United Nations 2025. As the Secretary General of this conference, I am truly excited to witness your debates as you work to find meaningful solutions to global issues.

As you attend this conference, I strongly encourage you to open your mind to new ideas. This year, our academic team has worked diligently to provide you with guidelines that will support your MUN journey. We advise you to approach the agenda earnestly. Over many years, the world has changed in both bitter and hopeful ways, and through this conference, we aim to emphasize the importance of world peace more than ever.

AKA Model United Nations is a place where your voice can be heard. We believe that this conference is a great opportunity for you to express yourselves and discuss current topics. Our hope is that AKA Model United Nations will open new doors for you.

I look forward to meeting you all and witnessing the remarkable debates ahead.

Warm regards,

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2. Letter from the Under Secretary General of UNODC

Dear Delegates,

It is an honor to welcome you all to AKAMUN25 and the committee of UNODC. As the Under Secretary General of UNODC I must mention it is a great pleasure to have you all gathered under the roof of humanity and wisdom. Our agenda which is “Addressing the Global Surge in Synthetic Drug Production and Trafficking” is an active issue governments have been dealing for years and searching for an affective solution. Drug consumption and trafficking is a disastrous issue which has been poisoning communities, families and especially individuals who are a part of this crime web. Governments are creating conventions, courts and other legal organs to deal with this issue to minimize the future influence of these acts on our society. Speaking on behalf of UNODC Academy Team we have done the best we can while doing our research for this study guide. We hope for specific solutions from our delegates to solve this manner in the most affective way possible for both the governments and people.

As the Academy team of UNODC we wish all of you delegates a pleasant journey in these days ahead of us. I believe this guide will be a precious source for you to understand the agenda and the value it carries. Drugs not only effect the health of the people but also the communities we have created over hundreds of years are getting destroyed while getting intoxicated. I am most excited to meet you all and witness your debates in the committee.

Best regards,

Yağmur GÜRBÜZ

Under Secretary General

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3. Introduction to the Committee

a. What is UNODC?

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime, in addition to being responsible for implementing the United Nations lead program on terrorism. Established in 1997, UNODC has approximately 500 staff members worldwide. Its headquarters are in Vienna and it operates 20 field offices, as well as liaison offices in New York and Brussels.

UNODC works to educate people throughout the world about the dangers of drug abuse and to strengthen international action against illicit drug production and trafficking and drug-related crime. To achieve those aims, UNODC has launched a range of initiatives, including alternatives in the area of illicit drug crop cultivation, monitoring of illicit crops and the implementation of projects against money laundering.

UNODC also works to improve crime prevention and assist with criminal justice reform in order to strengthen the rule of law, promote stable and viable criminal justice systems and combat the growing threats of transnational organized crime and corruption. In 2002, the General Assembly approved an expanded program of activities for the Terrorism Prevention Branch of UNODC. The activities focus on providing assistance to States, on request, in ratifying and implementing the eighteen universal legal instruments against terrorism

4. Introduction to the Agenda Item

a. The definition of Synthetic Drug Production and Trafficking

i. What is a synthetic drug?

Synthetic drugs or new psychoactive substances (NPS), aim to create the effects of existing illicit drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, MDMA and LSD. Synthetic drugs have

different chemical structures from the illicit substances they are trying to mimic. Manufacturers of synthetic drugs constantly change their chemical structures to try and stay one step ahead of the law.

Some synthetic drugs can be marketed as 'legal', safe and acceptable alternatives to illicit drugs. However, this does not mean that they are legal or safe. There is no recommended dosage on a packet of synthetic drugs. The chemicals can also change from one packet to the next. Two packets from the same batch can affect those who use them in different ways. Synthetic drugs are not quality controlled or regulated, so there are concerns over what is actually in them. Given how often synthetic drugs emerge, it is hard to know how harmful these drugs are in any dose. There is limited research on the short- and long-term effects of these substances.

ii. How does a synthetic drug gets produced and trafficked?

It is unfortunately safe to say "The Golden Triangle" – the remote, jungle-covered border region where Thailand, Myanmar, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic meet – has seen an exponential surge in the illicit manufacture and trafficking of synthetic drugs.

The Golden Triangle provides ideal conditions for opium cultivation. Heroin became a major component of the opium trade after World War II, and the demand for heroin by United States troops during the Vietnam War helped transform the opium economy of the Golden Triangle into a large and profitable heroin economy. Drug trafficking now influences every aspect of politics in the region. Crop eradication efforts conducted since 1964 have had no significant impact. Believing that equipment it provided to help the Burmese government combat drug trafficking has been diverted to counterinsurgency operations, the United States has cut off this assistance. The lack of enforcement, good weather, and increased cultivation have sharply increased opium production since then, making reduced prices and a spread of heroin use possible.

iii. What is the role of UNODC in the matter?

UNODC supports more than 180 border control units in 87 countries to intercept drug flows. In 2024, UN-facilitated seizures included 300 tonnes of cocaine, 240 tonnes of synthetic drugs and 100 tonnes of precursors. UNODC cooperates with many countries and organizations which are sharing the same mindset of getting rid of these toxic substances that are destroying both the health of the people but at the same time their values.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched the Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends (SMART) Programme in 2008. The initiative supports targeted Member States by strengthening laboratory, law enforcement and research capacities, enabling countries to generate and use reliable information to design evidence-based policies and interventions.

Since its inception, the Global SMART Programme has been instrumental in identifying and monitoring NPS trends, with a focus on priority regions such as South-East Asia and Latin America. Its efforts have helped raise awareness of the dangers of synthetic drugs and promote a more coordinated, informed global response to this complex and evolving problem.

The international precursor control system is grounded in article 12 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 (1988 Convention).

Under the treaty, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) has a responsibility to monitor and promote measures taken by Governments to prevent the diversion of substances frequently used in illicit drug manufacture and to assess such substances to determine whether there is a need for changes in the scope of control of Tables I and II of the 1988 Convention.

INCB supports Governments' efforts worldwide in the areas of international legitimate trade monitoring, precursor-related investigations and real-time intelligence-sharing on precursor incidents.

The UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme (CCP) was established as a joint initiative of the UNODC and the WCO in 2004. Faced with such a complex and globalized problem, the CCP embraces a refined, holistic and multi-sector approach by providing continuous monitoring and oversight, offering a majority of context-specific training programs and strengthening cooperation between state agencies and with the private sector. The mission of the CCP is to build capacity in Member States seeking to improve risk management, supply chain security and trade facilitation in seaports, airports and land border crossings in order to prevent the cross-border movement of illicit goods.

5 . Relevant Legal Terms

Analogue Laws: Applying and existing law to rule a new situation that is not fully covered by law based on similarity in the proven facts or legal principles.

Countries have updated their narcotic laws to include new psychoactive substances(NPS) which are drugs that are not fully banned yet but have similarities to those that are banned. So these NPS are treated as if they are fully banned because of their chemically or affects on the brain being similar to those that are banned, the legal term used in the matter is “Analogue Legislation” or “Analogue Laws” which may both state the same thing in the matter.

Precursor Chemicals: A chemical or solvent that is used in the manufacture of controlled substances which is regulated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) under the Federal Controlled Substances Act is referred to as a precursor chemical. These chemicals are not ranked among illegal chemicals however they are the basic chemicals needed to produce those that are illegal.

Illicit Trafficking: Someone who traffics in something such as drugs or stolen goods buys and sells them even though it is illegal to do so.

Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties(MLATs): A mutual legal assistance treaty (MLAT) is an agreement between two or more countries for the purpose of gathering and exchanging information in an effort to enforce public or criminal laws. A mutual legal assistance request is commonly used to formally interrogate a suspect in a criminal case, when the suspect resides in a foreign country.

Paraphernalia: Equipment or products used to produce, distribute or consume drugs. Possession of paraphernalia can also be a criminal offense.

Schedule I Substance: A category of drug with no accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse such as many synthetic cannabis and fentanyl analogs.

Analog: Under laws like Federal Analog Act(USA) a substance that is chemically similar to controlled substance and intended for human consumption can be treated as Schedule I drug.

Free Trade Zone: Areas often exploited for trafficking and diversion due to reduced customs oversight. The 1988 Convention urges parties to ensure these zones are not used for illegal drug activities.

6.Affects on Society and Economy

a. How does drug trafficking work?

Drug trafficking is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws. UNODC is continuously monitoring and researching global illicit drug markets in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their dynamics. Drug trafficking is a key part of this research.

i. Key locations in the Matter

The global heroin flows through Asia, most of the heroin was seized in the Near and Middle East and South-West Asia. The global increase in heroin seizures over the period 2006-2008 was driven mainly by continued burgeoning seizures in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. In 2008, those two countries accounted for more than half of global heroin seizures and registered, for the third consecutive year, the highest and second highest seizures worldwide.

South America is also considered a key location due to its current borders that lead to the US and Canada. For the North American market, cocaine is typically transported from Colombia to Mexico or Central America by sea and then onwards by land to the United States and Canada. Cocaine is trafficked to Europe mostly by sea, often in container shipments. Colombia remains the main source of the cocaine found in Europe, but direct shipments from Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia are far more common than in the United States market.

ii. The Golden Triangle of Drug Trafficking

The so called “Golden Triangle” which the guide also mentioned before is located in Southeast Asia. The Triangle involves the northeastern part of Myanmar, northwestern part of Thailand and northern Laos the trafficking is centered on the confluence of the Ruak and Mekong rivers. Most of the world's heroin came from the Golden Triangle until the opium production in Afghanistan increased.

Due to the area being remote and mountainous it is hard to monitor for the police or the responsible teams. The countries involved are also not particularly strong in their law reinforcement so the unfortunate weakness makes it almost impossible to block the trades that are happening in the triangle.

iii. The Golden Crescent

The Golden Crescent involves Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. The internal disturbances they faced and are facing ravaged the countries in many aspects however these implications also led to an ideal conditions for the cultivation of opium poppies. In 1988 Afghanistan produced approximately 800 tons of raw opium compared to 130 tons produced in Pakistan. Heroin is still shipped from Iran to the West in large amounts despite the Iranian government's efforts to eradicate such trafficking. A frightening development in drug trafficking in the Golden Crescent is underway.

iv. Drug Trafficking in Europe

Drug trafficking in Europe is suspected to start in South America. These large amounts of toxic substances are being transferred through the sea in containers. Large quantities of cocaine are trafficked through Europe's seaports, which has led to unprecedented availability of cocaine in the European Union and a growing consumer market. Record quantities have been seized in the European Union every year since 2017. Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain report the highest quantities seized, reflecting their importance as entry points for cocaine.

b. Economic and Social Consequences of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

i. Economic Consequences

Drug abuse has many negative effects on the countries and individual budgeting. Drug users are in need of much more medical treatments compared to a non-user due to overdoses, injuries and illnesses they may endure. The drug usage also effects the individuals personal life in the matters of family and work life. Users tend to lose their jobs or they are simply not able to work due to being under the influence. Crime rates often rise due to the crimes such as theft or other offenses done by those who are in "need" of drugs, this leads to a urgent need of police forces, courts and prisons that all cost money for the government

ii. Social Consequences

Families and overall society is badly affected by drug abusers due to the offenses and crimes they commit. Crime rates increasing makes people feel unsafe. As mentioned in "Economical Consequences" part of the guide this also leads to homelessness due to people not being capable of working or losing their jobs due to their addiction. Parents who are not able to care for their children may slowly affect their children in the way of addiction also the children may be placed in foster care due to not being taken care of properly. In both cases drug abuse is destroying families and may cause rising problematic individuals in the long run. Overall drug abuse harms the social environment and causes long term harm to individuals and society.

7. International and Regional Frameworks

United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 : An international treaty intended to fight illegal drug trafficking globally. The Convention establishes a framework for countries to monitor narcotics, psychotropic substances and other illegal substances. Countries that are signatories are mandatory to criminalize drug trafficking, to implement great penalties to offenders of the law and take caution to prevent money laundering related to drug money. It also implements cooperation and information sharing among the signatory countries to effectively get rid of these drug networks around the globe.

1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances: UN addresses its concern for the abuse of psychotropic substances and the results that may occur such as public health and social problems the society may endure. UN takes great precautions in the matter and restricts the usage of such substances to prevent abuse however recognizing that the use of psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes is indispensable and that their availability for such purposes should not be unduly restricted.

Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961)

The 1961 Convention is an international agreement monitored by UN to control the flow of drug related crimes and use of drugs. Main goal of the agreement is to limit the drug use to medical and scientific purposes only and to prevent drug abuse and trafficking. It encourages the signatory countries to create national drug control laws and systems depending on the rules the convention set about how drugs should be classified and monitored. In the end International Narcotics Control Board was established to oversee how countries follow these rules.

a. Europe

Eu Drugs Strategy(2021-2025)

The EU Drug Strategy plan is created by the European Union to deal with drug related issues in a coordinated way. The Strategy focuses on reducing the demand on the drugs in the meantime while focusing on reducing the supply of drugs that make their way into European soil. It supports healthcare, therapy and other treatment methods for addicts in a humane way while encouraging law enforcement to take its place when needed. The Strategy promotes working together as a union to fight drug trafficking and addiction while focusing on reducing the organized crime drugs and other factors may have created. It also provides data and research on drug use.

b. Africa

The African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention

The AU Plan is an inter-governmental organization comprising all 55 countries on the continent of Africa. It launched in 2002 to promote political and economic integration and deliver prosperity, inclusive growth and sustainable development through its

several organs. It aims to building sustainable capacities and expertise at national and sub-regional level of skills and competences, leveraging technical capacity through strategic and multi-lateral partners such as UNODC, WHO etc. Its main goal is to reduce the demand in drugs and health issues associated with drug use, availability and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and to reduce the drug supply and trafficking.

c. American States

Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission(CICAD)

The CICAD is an agency of Organization of American States(OAS) established to help countries in the Americas cooperate in the fight against drug abuse and trafficking. It has 35 signatory countries from North, Central and South America as well as the Caribbean. The CICAD helps countries develop drug control policies while encouraging law enforcement cooperation, promotes education, prevention and treatment. It also supports and provides data collection and research about drugs in the region.

d. Asia

Association of Southeast Asian Nations(ASEAN)

It is a regional organization formed in 1967 to promote peace, stability and economic growth while supporting cooperation among Southeast Asian countries. ASEAN also focuses on education, trades, security, environmental issues and drug control. The goal of the Association is to build a united region where countries are able to work together for a better place. ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs is a part of the association which focuses on reducing drug supply and demand, strengthening border control and promoting education, rehabilitation to make the region drug-free in the long-run.

This agreement was created by South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation(SAARC) which include 8 countries. It aims to strengthen regional cooperation, improve law enforcement and to make sure all countries have the necessary policies to control narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. It promotes drug prevention, treatments and rehabilitation.

8. What are the risks?

i. How can governments prevent the usage of drugs efficiently?

Government movements on the matter should start even before individuals start using drugs. Education in school is crucial to inform people about the risks it carries on their personal life and health. Limiting the supply that enters the country is also an important step on the way to prevent the usage. Cracking global trafficking networks should be the starting point of the operation. Additionally offering social programs such as youth engagement groups and medical services will address the root of the problem. By focusing on prevention, treatment, education and reintegration rather than relying on punishment only is a much more effective way to combat drug usage and abuse in the long term.

ii. What are the effective methods in treatment and how to raise awareness?

Effective methods in drug rehabilitation involve a mix of different methods to help the individual from all sides. The rehabilitation program should be tailored to the attendees needs in order to have successful results and minimum chance to relapse. Detoxification is considered the first step to eliminate the toxic remedies from the body. Detoxification is usually followed by behavioral therapy to help individuals change their harmful thoughts and behavioral issues that may or may not be related to drug use. Group therapy sessions are essential for support from peers and people with similar backgrounds to let them know that they are not going through the process alone. Medicine can also be implemented into the program the former addicts follows to reduce the craving and other symptoms they might suffer from. Other counseling options also should be present to help the patient rebuild their life the best they can possibly build. After the program is completed there should be frequent follow-up sessions to make sure the individual doesn't relapse or suffers from any other symptom they could go through. Governments can reintegrate their citizens back into the society as health people both physically and mentally via such programs.

Raising awareness about drugs involves a multi-faced approach that includes education in schools, community involvement and media outreach. Programs on educating people should be done in a frequent manner to inform each and every person especially the youth about the risks addiction and being involved in the crime

of trafficking carries. Local survivors and authorities can also have public discussion and awareness campaigns to break the stigma and encourage open dialogue. Social media platforms can also be of use. Public services, posters and such things can be used to spread the powerful messages widely and fast.

9. Questions a Resolution Should Address

- How can education and awareness campaigns help prevent people from using synthetic drugs, how should they be implemented?
- What kind of a role can communities play to keep youth away from getting involved with drugs?
- How can governments improve access to treatment and rehabilitation centers for drug users?
- What laws or policies can be introduced to better control the production of synthetic drugs?
- How can countries work together to end drug trafficking across borders, what kind of policies can be implemented
- How can law enforcement detect and shut down secret drug production centers and labs in the given key locations?
- What role can organizations like the UN or UNODC play in the matter?
 - What financial and technical resources are needed, and how can they be secured?
 - What policies can encourage the regulation and monitoring of precursor chemicals?
 - Should harm reduction strategies (like safe-use centers or needle programs) be part of national policy, if yes why?
 - How can the containers containing drugs be detected?

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