

AAMUN'26

UNODC

Topic 2: The Expansion of Methamphetamine Production in the Golden Triangle: Combating Synthetic Drug Economies in Myanmar.



Dear Delegates,

Regarding the use of ChatGPT in AAMUN'26, we will allow its use as a **research engine only**. Please be aware it was last updated **August 2026**. We encourage you to fact check the information to prevent any issues throughout the debate.

COMMITTEE

As the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) we are profoundly distressed by the ongoing situation in Myanmar and the swift expansion of methamphetamine production in the Golden Triangle. The rise of drug production, distribution and trafficking are all contributing to risking the safety of affected areas and communities simultaneously strengthening organized crime and weakening governmental authority. The persistent development of the methamphetamine economies and illicit activities such as organized crime, human and drug trafficking jeopardize regional security and the safety of affected areas. The sheer extent and intricacy of this topic requires urgent international action to address the underlying illicit drug market and economies.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last several decades, Myanmar and the Golden Triangle have witnessed a rise in methamphetamine production and drug trafficking. Narcotics networks have developed into organized transnational crime groups threatening regional stability and erode the power of government institutions.

Myanmar's efforts to fight these networks have been tainted by political instability, armed warfare and regional challenges. Despite law enforcement operations and the seizing of drugs, adaptable criminal organizations continue illegal activities regardless of increasing violence and tension in Burmese communities.

As a result, methamphetamine production has become larger than a matter of national security and developed into a matter of transnational crime. Solving this issue requires stronger international cooperation and the disruption of trafficking networks.

TIMELINE

1990s — Rise of Drug Production

Methamphetamine production begins expanding significantly in Myanmar's Shan State and the wider Golden Triangle.

2000s — Expansion of Trafficking Networks

Methamphetamine becomes increasingly important to the region's illicit economy, with trafficking networks expanding across Southeast Asia.

2015 — Increasing Production

Law-enforcement efforts increase across the region, but criminal organizations adapt and production increasingly concentrates in areas of Myanmar.

2017–2019 — Record Seizures

Myanmar and neighboring countries report major increases in methamphetamine seizures, demonstrating the growing scale of production and trafficking.

2021 — Political Instability

Myanmar's military takeover contributes to increased instability, creating conditions that criminal and armed groups can exploit.

2022 — Record Production

UNODC reports continued growth in synthetic-drug production and trafficking, particularly in Myanmar's Shan State.

2023 — Major Regional Seizures

Authorities seize approximately **190 tons of methamphetamine** across East and Southeast Asia.

2024 — New Record

Regional methamphetamine seizures reach approximately **236 tons**, highlighting the continued expansion of the synthetic-drug economy.

2025–2026 — Continued International Concern

UNODC continues to identify Myanmar and the Golden Triangle as major sources of methamphetamine, emphasizing the need for stronger regional cooperation and international action.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Golden Triangle, is an area where Myanmar, Laos and Thailand intersect that has become popular for methamphetamine production and trafficking. A majority of the production is centered in Myanmar's Shan State creating regional instability, erosion of governmental institutions.

The production of methamphetamine has grown into a transnational security issue, with drugs being produced in Myanmar and trafficked to neighbouring countries and markets across South East Asia, contributing to the development of organized crime, violence, drug trafficking and expanding regional security threats.

Tackling this dilemma demands international coordination between Myanmar and neighbouring South East Asian countries. Intelligence sharing, increased border patrol and control of precursor chemicals and providing countries with alternate economic development opportunities are vital to disrupting criminal organizations and reducing the influence of growing illicit drug economies.

MAJOR PARTIES

Myanmar:

The hub of methamphetamine production in the Golden Triangle is centered in the Shan State where all the arms groups and criminal networks operate.

Thailand:

A major drug trafficking path and endpoint for methamphetamine produced in Myanmar, with Thai authorities detaining large amounts of drugs.

Laos:

A major transit hub for drug transportation between Myanmar and South Asian countries, and trafficking routes have grown throughout previous years.

China:

Its proximity renders it a major party, since its large economy contributes to combating drug trafficking and organized crime in Myanmar.

PREVIOUS EFFORTS

In 1993, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand and the UNODC signed the **Memorandum of Understanding on Drug Control**, developing a regional framework for cooperation against drug trafficking and production.

In 2001, China and Myanmar advanced bilateral cooperation in regards to narcotics while exchanging intelligence and law enforcement collaboration.

In 2002, the Chinese government provided officials in Myanmar and Laos with alternate development projects in Myanmar to decrease dependency on unlawful drug markets.

Between 2004-2010, Myanmar worked with Laos, China and Thailand through regional systems to improve law enforcement in border areas, intelligence exchange and drug seizures.

GLOSSARY

Methamphetamine:

Powerful synthetic stimulant that impacts the central nervous system. It is commonly found in illegal drug markets in the form of (crystal meth) or tablets.

Golden Triangle:

A region between Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet that is commonly known as a drug production area known for opium production.

Shan State:

A large area in Northeastern Myanmar bordering Thailand, China and Laos.

Drug Trafficking:

The unlawful production, distribution and selling of illegal substances in domestic or international markets.

Drug Economy:

The method of economic activity connected to production, distribution and sale of illicit substances.

Transnational Organized Crime:

Organized crime that operates across international borders such as drug trafficking.

HELPFUL LINKS

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