

Mauritius and Seychelles the world's largest heroin users

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"Mauritius and Seychelles have the highest per capita rates of heroin use in the world." This observation is drawn up by the Eastern and Southern Africa Commission on Drugs (ESACD). It will hold its next meeting on 10 and 11 August at the Victoria Hotel in Mauritius. It will be opened by Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth. This includes identifying an effective strategy to combat the scourge of drugs in the countries of the region.

The commission, chaired by former South African President Kgalema Motlanthe, is an independent lobby group advocating for drug policy reform and capacity building in Eastern and Southern Africa. Its other commissioners are former President of the Republic of Mauritius Cassam Uteem, Joaquim Chissano, former President of Mozambique, James Michel, former President of Seychelles, South African epidemiologist Quarraisha Abdool Karim and Willy Mutunga, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Kenya.

ESACD notes that "the region is facing serious and multifaceted challenges related to the distribution and consumption of illegal drugs. It has become an established transit and destination corridor for large-scale intercontinental drug flows. It is also widely recognized that current strategic and policy responses to drug trafficking and

consumption in the region are not achieving their objectives and need to be systematically reviewed."

The commission believes that "the long-standing maritime trafficking channels of opiates from Afghanistan to the eastern and southern coasts of Africa are recognized as a significant challenge for the region, with drug shipments destined for European and American consumer markets. Illicit synthetic substances such as methamphetamine accompany heroin shipments along this sea route. Since the 1990s, the seaports of South Africa and Mozambique have also become hubs in the global supply network of cocaine produced in South America."

As a result, many countries in the region have seen a significant increase in drug use at the national level. "Mozambique, Mauritius, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya are the top countries in the region according to the ENACT Africa Organized Crime Index for their heroin markets. The high levels of drug use in Indian Ocean island states are also of concern."