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In Africa drugs are a problem and one more obstacle to development. This is the opinion of international bodies charged with fighting international drugs trafficking. "After experience in hashish and heroine smuggling West African drug cartels are looking for new contacts in Latin America to expand cocaine trafficking to the entire sub-Saharan region of Africa" the International Drugs Control Body said in a report in 2001.

This is a fundamental turning point in international drug trafficking which sees Africa as one of the world's "key" drug distribution areas. Up to the 1990s Africa was on the margins of the drugs route. The change came in 1993, when the Nigerian police confiscated 300 kg of heroine coming from Thailand. This was the sign of a change which transformed many small African smugglers, mostly Nigerians, from carriers for third parties into members of gangs led by Africans capable of negotiating on equal terms with similar organisations on the other continents.

The presence of these criminal organisations, widespread urbanisation, loss of traditional African value, diffusion of a hedonistic culture are factors which created the premises for an African drugs market. So Africa is no longer a transit point for drugs it is also a 'virgin' terrain for drug peddling.

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