

Statement by
Minister for Health and Prevention
Mr Jakob Axel Nielsen
General debate
As delivered

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

First I would like to congratulate you and your colleagues on your election and assure you of my delegation's full support during the deliberations of this High-Level Segment of the fifty-second Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

I refer to the statement of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union – a statement which my delegation of course fully supports.

Progress has been made since the General Assembly in 1998 decided to address the world drug problem by adopting the Political Declaration, the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction and the Measures to Enhance International Co-operation to Counter the World Drug Problem.

However, the drug problem continues to pose a serious threat to the individual drug abuser and to the society as a whole.

On this background, the Danish delegation welcomes this opportunity for the Member States of the United Nations to reaffirm the documents adopted by the General Assembly in 1998 as well as the Joint Statement adopted at the Ministerial Segment of the forty-sixth Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2003.

The Danish delegation also welcomes the strong commitment reflected in the draft Political Declaration and Plan of Action before this Commission.

Madam Chairperson, please allow me to dwell on one particular aspect which has attracted much attention in the preparations for this High-Level Segment. I am talking about the aspect of harm reduction as part of a comprehensive drug policy.

Some Member States are sceptical about the concept of harm reduction. Denmark does not share this scepticism about the concept as such. And according to the Danish Government's Action Plan on Drugs, harm reduction is and should continue to be an integrated aspect of the drug policy.

Harm reduction measures may – in the light of an uncompromising fight against drugs – appear paradoxical. But nevertheless, some of these measures are considered pragmatic and reasonable.

However, other harm reduction measures are considerably more far-reaching in a qualitative sense and they do give rise to the very basic question of whether there should be any limits to harm reduction measures.

Madam Chairperson, we certainly need such limits if we do not want to contradict the very core of the drug policy: To counteract all non-medical and non-scientific use of drugs. And the limits as they are defined in the provisions of the international drug control treaties are in our view adequate.

The treaty provisions are wide enough to adopt and implement a comprehensive drug policy which is able to meet the present and future challenges. In other words; within these limits, it is possible both to improve existing harm reduction measures and to develop new ones with the aim of helping some of the most marginalized individuals in our societies.

To conclude, the Danish Government does not hesitate to integrate the concept of harm reduction in our national drug policy. But no harm reduction measure will be introduced without a test of its compliance with the very core of the drug policy as defined in the international drug control treaties. Any measure which fails this test will be rejected by the Danish Government.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.