



European Union

Statement on the occasion of the

**Special segment on the preparations for the UNGA Special Session on the World Drug
Problem of the 58th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

Vienna, 9-17 March 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States¹. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey[§], the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland[‡], Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Norway[†], Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Andorra.
2. UNGASS 2016 will be a prominent platform and a very useful opportunity for the international community to take stock of the achievements of the international drug control system to date, to elaborate on the immense challenges that remain in the global, local and national response to the world drug problem and to find workable, operational and sustainable solutions for the longer term within the framework of the international treaties.
3. The EU strongly believes that UNGASS should not be a mere *replica* of the High Level Review of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action carried out in March 2014. Of course, the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement shall serve as a very important basis for the debate, but we should seize the opportunity to discuss within UNGASS 2016 challenges that remain and possible solutions that respond to the evolving nature of the problem.

¹ The way the EU statements are delivered in this Commission is subject to ongoing clarifications in the context of the ECOSOC reform Resolution 68/1

[§] Candidate Country

* Candidate Countries former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

[‡] Candidate Country Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

[†] Norway is a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

4. We appreciate the efforts undertaken to guarantee an inclusive preparatory process leading to UNGASS 2016 and emphasise the need to ensure the most effective involvement of all relevant UN agencies and bodies, in particular dealing with public health, human rights, development and security both in the preparations for and during UNGASS 2016 itself. GA Resolution 69/200 invites all relevant UN agencies and bodies to contribute fully to the preparations for UNGASS and we welcome their active role.
5. We welcome the consensus for a strong engagement of the NGOs in all debates. We also support the proposal of a formal civil society hearing prior to UNGASS, the outcomes of which should contribute to the UNGASS processes.
6. As far as the draft agenda of UNGASS 2016 is concerned, we support the proposal to have a three-day Special Session and to focus on achievements and challenges in addressing the world drug problem, in the framework of a more effective implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action.
7. We welcome the idea to organise High Level Workshops during the UNGASS 2016 in parallel to the high level general debate and the suggestion that these workshops should be interactive, including involvement of all stakeholder, namely civil society and scientific community.
8. We believe that any document to be prepared by the CND and adopted as outcome of the UNGASS 2016 should be concrete and focused, providing solid input as a stepping stone towards the target date of 2019 and beyond. We support the proposal to reflect in a Chair's summary the salient points raised during each of the High-Level Workshops.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The EU and its Member States believe that the outcome document of the high level workshops to be discussed at UNGASS 2016 should consequently include the following recommendations:
 - a. UN Conventions which provide the international legal framework for addressing the drugs phenomenon and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights are the cornerstone of the global response to the world drug problem. The drug control treaties must be acknowledged and respected in developing and implementing national drug policies and laws, as well as regional and international programmes;
 - b. the key objective of the international drug control system is to protect public health, to protect citizens against social and societal damage caused by drug use to tackle marginalization and stigmatization and to contribute to reintegration in society. In this sense, dependant drug users should be considered as people who need treatment and care. These objectives can be achieved by improving the implementation of provisions agreed upon the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International

Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem;

- c. an effective drug policy should be based on a global and a balanced approach, comprising drug demand reduction, including prevention, treatment, risk and harm reduction and care, and drug supply reduction, including prevention and dissuasion and disruption of drug-related crime as well as international cooperation;
- d. the initiatives of developing methods aiming to achieve experience based knowledge and evidence in order to attain a measurable reduction in illicit supply and demand of drugs as well as drug related harm should be welcomed and supported, if these initiatives are undertaken in line with the principles of an integrated and balanced strategy to counter the drug problem, international law and common and shared responsibility;
- e. the new challenges such as the spread of non-scheduled new psychoactive substances for the purpose of consumption by humans, the use of new technologies in drug trafficking and related money-laundering, and the growing use of substitute or alternative precursor chemicals used to replace traditional precursors under international control must be addressed internationally under the framework of international drug control policies;
- f. civil society, including the scientific community, has much to offer and can facilitate the works of policymakers and represents a valuable asset in terms of their field knowledge, resources and commitment. Therefore their meaningful participation in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug demand reduction policies should be promoted and encouraged;
- g. there is a need for full implementation of the relevant international legal instruments related to the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life, and the inherent dignity of all individuals, when addressing the world drug problem, assessing current policies and elaborating national and international solutions;
- h. from the perspective of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the absolute priority is the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances, including for drug-related crimes, as well as the abolition of other practices which are not in line with the principles of human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, solidarity, the rule of law and human rights;
- i. there is an urgent need for improving access to and availability of controlled medicines, and avoiding unnecessary obstacles to access to essential medicines, as a result of the response to illicit drug trafficking, by looking at possible obstacles within the framework of the Conventions, by supporting the development of health systems, and stressing WHO's important role to strengthen health system capacity globally;

- j. drug demand reduction should be based universally on effective, targeted and efficient evidence-based programs and best practices in prevention, early detection and intervention, access without discrimination to treatment, therapeutic plan, risk and harm reduction services, social reintegration and recovery; whenever new methods or approaches are tested in order to gain evidence on the effectiveness of such new services human rights and the protection of human dignity shall be duly respected;
- k. the general requirements of best practice are high level of coverage, easy access to services, continuity of care over different settings, and patient satisfaction;
- l. the drug problem has a gender dimension that must be highlighted both regarding drug demand and supply reduction;
- m. national drug strategies should guarantee access to prevention, risk and harm reduction, diagnosis, treatment, care, support services relating to blood-borne diseases associated with drug use but not limited to HIV and viral hepatitis for dependent drug users, taking into account the humanitarian interventions outlined in the technical guidance documents of WHO, UNODC and UNAIDS;
- n. facilitating access to research, evaluation and monitoring findings is vital to ensure that well-informed decisions are made on priority measures to be taken and interventions to be implemented;
- o. These findings are required to provide policymakers and the professionals working in the drugs field with solid information on evidence-based interventions and best practices in the diverse and complex field of drug use;
- p. the application of contemporary practices based on the principles of “restorative justice” and “alternatives to coercive sanctions” will bring significant benefits in terms of cost-effectiveness, in both public health and society as a whole;
- q. strengthening of international cooperation to prevent and counter drug - related organised crime, including drug trafficking, should be promoted by:
 - intelligence-sharing and the exchange of best practices;
 - strengthening counter-narcotics capacity and developing expertise of origin and transit countries;
 - working with international partners to tackle drug trafficking;
 - implementation of law enforcement and judicial cooperation mechanisms and mutual legal assistance instruments applicable to drug trafficking and related crimes;
 - promoting closer cooperation between existing law enforcement coordination centres and platforms;
 - further developing of multi-disciplinary training and awareness activities at national, regional and international level;

- improving the technical capacity of Judges, Public Prosecutors and Law Enforcement Officials in the field of drugs as well as creating, strengthening and developing the mechanisms for the identification, freezing, seizure and confiscation of property obtained through or derived from drug trafficking and related crimes;
 - r. alternative development measures should be promoted as a long term approach to tackle the root causes of drug crop cultivation such as poverty, weak statehood, lack of food security, poor infrastructure and limited access to sales markets for licit products, lack of access to land, lack of technical capacity to grow alternative crops, local conflicts and violence;
 - s. alternative development proves to be successful and sustainable if the corresponding programs are non-conditional, non-discriminating and, if eradication is scheduled, properly sequenced;
 - t. there is a need for strengthening of cooperation between financial institutions, regional banks, development organizations and UN specialized agencies so that alternative development becomes part of the sustainable development agenda.
10. We conclude by reiterating our commitment to provide further inputs as regards the preparation process for the UNGASS 2016.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.