



European Union

Statement on the occasion of the Opening of the Ministerial Segment of the 62nd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Vienna, 14 March 2019

It is an honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Ukraine, Iceland*, the Republic of Moldova, Andorra, Armenia, Georgia and San Marino.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10 years after the UN Political Declaration and Plan of Action on drugs and 3 years after the adoption of the Outcome Document of the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS), the EU and its Member States welcome this opportunity to addressing the world drug problem.

The drug situation remains challenging in many parts of the world. We cannot ignore this longstanding and continuously evolving threat affecting the life, directly or indirectly, of millions of citizens around the world. The human, social but also economic costs of drug addictions are very high.

Our meeting is of great importance for our society and especially our youth, our future, and we welcome the Ministerial Segment today and tomorrow.

In a constantly evolving drugs market, reducing drug use and demand as well as drug supply requires an adequate and effective response through coordinated actions at international level. The international community needs to strengthen its action, reinforce cooperation and accelerate the implementation of our joint commitments to address and counter the world drug problem.

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

* Iceland is a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area

The 2018 World Drug Report published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is clear: both the range of drugs and drug markets are expanding and diversifying as never before. The drug problem is a health and security concern, with increased risks of health problems for people who use drug and heavy challenges for law enforcement:

- Almost half a million people died in 2015 as a result of drug use according to the World Health Organisation. The illicit use of drugs also heavily contributes to the global burden of disease. Chronic problems include dependence and drug-related infectious diseases, while there is a range of acute harms, including drug overdose.
- The illicit supply of drugs, worth billions of euros each year, is a catalyst for organised crime groups. It forms one of the most lucrative parts of their profit generating activities linked also to violence, corruption, money laundering, exploitation of people, trafficking of firearms and other forms of serious crimes.

Developing policies based on evidence and best practice, supported by objective monitoring and evaluation systems, is at the heart of EU action on drugs. Building on experience, we emphasise that drug policies based upon an integrated, balanced and evidence-based approach, proved to be most effective for addressing the drug phenomenon. Designing responses to new trends and developments, including new psychoactive substances and online markets, require determination and political commitment from all of us.

The EU and its Member States would like to recall the importance of the UNGASS Outcome Document. With its seven chapters, the Outcome Document better reflects the complexities of the drug situation and enables all countries to address a broader range of policy issues. It puts a focus on the health side of the drugs problem, including prevention, treatment, and risk and harm reduction, on vulnerable members of society, on Human Rights, on proportionate sentencing for drug related offences, and the strong link with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals rebalanced global drug policy. At the same time, the Outcome Document reaffirms the unwavering commitment to supply reduction and related measures, including effective law enforcement; countering money-laundering and promoting judicial cooperation. Therefore, the EU and its Member States consider the UNGASS Outcome Document as a milestone - the most comprehensive policy document.

Its implementation requires essential conditions to improve the current situation in international drug policy:

- Enhanced cooperation between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant UN entities and regional and international organisations;

- Further involvement of the civil society, the scientific community and academia: without their insightful input, we would not have enough information on daily life with drug use;
- Anchoring drugs policy in a wider socioeconomic context, in line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The EU has a longstanding commitment to all these issues.

The EU Action Plan on Drugs for the period 2017 to 2020 enhances and updates existing actions while it identifies new priority areas such as: online awareness raising activities, targeting young people in particular, or evidence gathering on the potential connection between drug trafficking and financing of terrorist groups, migrant smuggling or trafficking in human beings.

As regards precursor control and monitoring system, the EU is taking a leading role in developing new approaches and we are investing considerable resources in it - this is a cornerstone of any successful drug supply reduction policy.

With the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime, we have been successful in dismantling a number of organised crime groups active across all crime areas, including drugs trafficking. The EU is also very active in the worldwide fight against the illicit supply of drugs together with its global partners.

Recently, we have renewed our political engagement on alternative or additional measures to coercive sanctions in order to prevent crime, reduce recidivism and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system, while also looking at a possible reduction of health-related harms and minimisation of social risks.

We have reviewed our approach to Alternative Development as an important strategy to address the underlying root causes of illicit drug economies through an integrated approach, combining efforts on rural development, poverty alleviation, the promotion of access to land and land rights, environmental protection and climate change, the promotion of the rule of law, security and good governance in full compliance with international human rights obligations and a commitment to gender equality. We thus contribute to the implementation of the UNGASS Outcome Document and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

A few months after the celebration of the 70 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the EU and its Member States would like to reiterate our commitment to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals and the principles of rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies.

Bearing in mind that the Ministerial Declaration, as the UNGASS outcome document, do not contain any reference to the abolition of the death penalty, we would like to recall, once more, that the death penalty should be abolished globally, and we condemn the use of capital punishment in all circumstances and in all cases.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A firm commitment to accelerate the implementation of all the recommendations contained in the UNGASS Outcome Document is essential to embrace an effective and sustainable drug policy towards 2030. We all want to achieve substantial progress by the mid-term review in 2024.

The international community needs to step up its responses to cope with the challenges at stake, and we welcome this Ministerial Segment as a good opportunity to reinforce cooperation and agree upon effective solutions.

The EU and its Member States will continue working relentlessly on addressing the drug problem, using all the instruments at our disposal: legislation, operational actions, and cooperation with the international community.

We have no time to spare: we need to show determination and commitment.

Thank you!