



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

52nd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
High-Level-Segment

Statement by Mr. Alois Stöger, Austrian Federal Minister for Health,

11 March 2009

Dear Madame President,
Dear Executive Director, Esteemed Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Minister for Health of the Republic of Austria and representative of a state the capital of which is the official seat of important international organisations and institutions, it is a special honour and privilege as well as a matter of great importance to me to attend this high-level meeting during the 52nd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the United Nations.

Today and in the next few days, our main priority will be to finalise the intensive process, started by us some time ago, of taking stock of those developments that the international community could implement in connection with the - highly ambitious - objectives set by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem in 1998.

The findings and conclusions of this very ambitious approach should be the basis for how we set our course in view of the necessities in our endeavour to further develop the international narcotic control system, so that we can adequately tackle the international drug problem in the future as well.

As Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa put it so aptly in his contribution "Making drug control 'fit for purpose': Building on the UNGASS decade", we must now look back to be able to have a clearer view of the future!

In doing so, we should identify future challenges based on the experiences made over the last decade; above all, however, we should "sharpen" the tools of our multilateral drug-policy so that we are prepared and ready for these challenges and, above all, to be able to tackle them by appropriate means.

The decisions made by the International Community a bit more than 10 years ago on the occasion of the UNGASS in New York were undoubtedly an important and future-oriented step in our joint effort to deal with the international drug problem efficiently and united.

The efforts that have been made since then deserve our full recognition and respect; progress made during this period should also not be ignored.

Nevertheless, the results of a realistic review make it evident that we are still facing major and difficult tasks if we wish to find suitable answers on how to deal with the drug problem in a worldwide, consistent and successful manner in the future as well.

New forms and developments of the drug problem, like those which have been witnessed during the last decade and which can also be expected in the future, deserve our full attention in our joint effort to orient the drug control system in a manner that is progressive and up-to-date, and in line with realistic objectives.

In this regard, we are facing the challenge of setting clear and unambiguous targets to tangibly reduce the demand for and the supply of drugs, which also includes reducing the health-related and social consequences of drug consumption.

The drug problem is a complex phenomenon; changes can only be achieved in the long run. The experiences we have made and scientific findings show that only an integrated, multidisciplinary and balanced approach that simultaneously reduces supply and demand can be the basis for successful efforts by the International Community of States when trying to tackle the drug problem successfully.

The respective conventions of the United Nations in this regard are just as fundamentally important for the measures that are required in this regard as the principle of "shared responsibility", the principle of "proportionality", and the observance of human rights and the respect for the corresponding basic values.

Even though our endeavours are a long-term venture, we must not tire in our efforts; firstly, to work towards effective cooperation in criminal prosecution in the fight against drug production and drug smuggling, and secondly, to enhance the effect of measures to reduce drug consumption and its consequences by constantly querying and - where necessary - by optimising the scope, quality and efficiency in the areas of prevention, therapy and harm reduction.

Only the best possible knowledge of the drug problem will enable us to find the best possible solutions to it. Therefore, we must further improve our knowledge of all aspects of the drug problem and, to this effect, must refine our instruments for monitoring the drug situation and the effectiveness of measures in place to control the drug problem. Only comparable data of good quality will allow us to get a clearer picture of the extent and the facets of the drug problem in the future and thus enable us to find suitable and promising solutions.

We have already achieved a lot through our joint efforts, and we have successfully overcome some of the challenges!

There is still a lot to be done, and where improvements are needed, we should address these openly and clearly!

Dear Madame President,

In view of what I have said, I trust that the constructive dialogue and, above all, fruitful results of the 52nd CND can make a valuable contribution!

Thank you very much for your kind attention.