

**57th Session of the CND, 13-21 March 2014**

**Item 4. General debate of the high- level segment; “Progress achieved and challenges in implementing the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem”.**

**Statement by State Secretary Astrid Nøklebye Heiberg**

**To be delivered Thursday 13 March 5.00 pm**

**Thank you Mr. Chairperson**

**Let me first congratulate you on your election as chairman of the CND and to commend the UNODC and many delegations here in Vienna for their preparations up to this High Level Segment of the CND. I have read The Draft Ministerial Statement and listened to the debate with great interest.**

**I am fully aware that drugs policy by nature is comprehensive and several components have to be in place. To orchestrate all this in a balanced and prioritized manner is challenging. It is easy to get lost in all objectives, purposes and considerations. That is where I find the statement could have been more focused; when everything becomes important, little is neither less nor most important.**

**I am afraid this reflects a polarised climate with predictable and inflexible positions and status quo as the best achievable result. With respect for the costs and all those suffering from drug related problems we need to better from now on. And that is also part of our shared responsibility.**

**What really concerns is the high homicide rates and widespread violence some regions have faced due to drug trafficking. These countries are paying a disproportionate high price.**

**Based upon this grim picture, it necessary to discuss more thoroughly how we analyze and consider this situation for the way forward. Is this acceptable, does it indicate more of the same or do we see a need for change? - is it a success or a failure? And from there formulate some core realistic and achievable goals for the most serious threats.**

**Let me also express my support to Mr. Fedotov's point on the need for international cooperation. In addressing the world drug problem, we must keep on reminding that the original spirit of the conventions and the overall object for drugs policy undoubtedly is health and well-being. Any means, regardless of sector or objective must be measured towards this objective and terminated if they are in conflict.**

**With this in mind I will also express my full support and contentment with the INCB's statement last week to encourage States to consider the abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offences. The very unfortunate use of capital punishment and breach of fundamental human rights in some countries represent an impediment to efficient international cooperation.**

**We need an open and bold debate and acceptance of more flexible solutions in compliance with the drug conventions. The conventions are the most important international tool we have to counter The World Drug Problem.**

**To safeguard their value and importance it is a responsibility for every Member State and relevant parties not to put to a risk the conventions in any direction, neither by violating them nor by trying to choke upcoming and legitimate discussions.**

**I hope and I believe that we can ensure a fruitful outcome of the UNGASS in 2016 the preparations must be based on transparent discussion and inputs and participation from all relevant actors within and outside the UN system, including civil society. And unlike the Joint Ministerial Statement we now are discussing, the process hopefully will end up in a much more focused and forward-looking statement.**

**Thank you.**