

**DRAFT REMARKS FOR
UN COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS (CND)
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT**

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(519 words; 5 minutes timed delivery)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a pleasure to join you all today.

Protecting our citizens from the harmful consequences of illegal drugs and transnational criminal organizations is a shared responsibility.

There is consensus around the goals: improved public health; increased citizen security; and the rule of law. How we achieve them will engage our governments leading up to the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs.

The three drug conventions are the starting point. Their goals – facilitating access to medicine, while protecting citizens from the consequences of harmful drugs – are universally acknowledged. The international community also welcomes the important role of civil society in achieving these goals.

The international drug control system is not perfect. Some argue the conventions cannot handle problems this big and complex. I disagree: over the decades, these conventions have been flexible and resilient, evolving to help member states grapple with these challenges. We believe it is more prudent to advance evidence-based reform within the framework of the conventions than to embrace unproven ideas that undercut the system and risk greater drug abuse. We welcome the chance to discuss reform at this CND and during preparations for the 2016 UNGASS.

The United States will inform this dialogue with three lessons:

First, historic neuroscience advances have proven addiction is a disease of the brain that can be prevented and treated. We must look at what drives individuals to use drugs, identify ways to prevent drug use before it begins, and expand access to treatment. We continue to share examples of effective practices with partners facing similar challenges, while supporting capacity-building and training for drug prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery.

Secondly, we need a holistic approach to combat the criminal drug traffickers that wreak havoc on communities. It is not our task to incarcerate everyone who consumes or possesses illegal drugs, but to take down the multinational criminal enterprises that profit from them. Criminal networks thrive in underserved spaces. Basic governance must squeeze crime out of these areas. When the criminal justice system and the treatment community work in tandem, such as through alternatives to incarceration, we can stop the revolving door of criminal justice and save lives. Alternative development is another tool for helping good governance and prosperity take root.

Third, international cooperation among UN member states is essential. New psychoactive substances are an excellent example of this. Some estimate as many as 200 new uncontrolled substances hit the market last year, posing increased public health and law enforcement challenges. Member states have developed mechanisms to share information and responses to protect our citizens from these substances, demonstrating the value of the drug conventions, UNODC, WHO, and the INCB.

A focus on public health and the science of addiction; an innovative approach to criminal justice; and a commitment to international cooperation. These are the future of drug policy. The three drug conventions provide the framework for this holistic, balanced approach to reducing the global drug problem.

Looking to the future, our efforts must be guided by reason, evidence, and – above all – a common desire to safeguard the health and well-being of our citizens.