Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Special Segment – Fifty Ninth Session

Statement of the State of Israel on the "Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016"

Mr. Chairman, Executive Director, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, we would like to thank you and the board, for your work in the preparations towards UNGASS and for your efforts to ensure that we will produce a final agreed upon version of an operational outcome document to be adopted in UNGASS which will also reflect on our joint commitment to implement the SDG’s.

The State of Israel considers UNGASS an important opportunity for the international community to review what has been achieved and to assess what remains to be done in order to effectively address the world drug problem. UNGASS presents a unique opportunity for member states to engage in an open dialogue and work together in order to ensure that by 2019, the goals of the political declaration and plan of action can be reached and new challenges can be tackled. We reiterate that the three international drug conventions should remain the cornerstone of the international drug policy, as their main goal is to protect the health and welfare of mankind. We also reaffirm our support for the role of the CND and the INCB as leading the international drug control effort in the UN.

The world drug problem needs to be addressed in a comprehensive and balanced approach. Drug abuse must be treated as a multifactorial and public health issue, requiring a comprehensive approach which places those most affected in the center, in respect of human rights. We call for member states to develop demand reduction policies tailored to the unique needs of target populations. Effectiveness of programs requires adapting them to gender, education, age and cultural sensitivities. The State of Israel has developed a wide range of evidence based interventions and programs, beginning with prevention activities for very young children focusing on promoting positive and healthy life skills and encouraging parental involvement. Treatment infrastructures are also available and accessible to prisoners, homeless people and patients suffering from comorbidity.

We believe that when dealing with young people suffering from drug use disorders, it is necessary to develop a broad range of treatment options that address their unique needs to ensure their reintegration into normative society. Early interventions are implemented inside the schools. Special therapeutic communities are home to young patients only, separating them from the adult patients. Efforts are made to create a multi-stakeholder approach and involve relevant governmental authorities and organizations, among them health, welfare, education and justice ministries, to provide treatment options that address all aspects of drug use disorders.
A comprehensive approach is incomplete without granting those in need access to risk and harm reduction measures as such measures have proved effective in reducing the spread of HIV and other blood borne diseases.

We call for member states to ensure that all programs and services are delivered by skilled and trained staff.

Furthermore, we encourage the development of services tailored for women only, particularly when focusing on women's treatment and rehabilitation. Israel has various services focusing on women only, including a therapeutic community, addressing the issues which are unique to women suffering from drug use disorders, such as sexual abuse, problematic relations with males, motherhood, etc.

Mr. Chairman,

The world drug problem requires a global commitment and is a common and shared responsibility, and it is our job to offer and share best practices and exchange information with other members of the international community. Over the past years, Israel has offered annual training courses for enhancing the capacity of professionals working in the field of drugs, in developing countries, in collaboration with UNODC. Such collaboration took a giant leap last summer, when the training course was geared towards UNODC staff working in the regional offices around the world, and jointly delivered by Israeli professionals and UNODC staff from Vienna headquarters.

Mr. Chairman,

International cooperation is also essential in order to effectively address the new challenges posed by NPS. There is a need for timely sharing of information ranging from control measures to effective treatment. In 2013, Israel enacted legislation to combat NPS, to protect young people and our society from these dangerous substances, allowing temporary or emergency control. The key to this approach is the focus on the sellers and manufacturers rather than criminalizing the users. In respect to the challenges presented by NPS, it is also essential to emphasize the misuse of the internet for the selling and distribution of these substances. Since 2013, 8 emergency declarations were made, comprising a total of 67 new substances, some of which are controlled generically to include the chemical derivatives. 59 of these substances are already permanently controlled under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance.

We must raise awareness of young people, as well as their parents, to the harmful effects of NPS, and promote cooperation with the private sector to prevent illicit trafficking over the internet. Despite the challenges new technologies may pose, we must promote use of the internet, particularly for creating positive dialogue with the young generation and even for treatment purposes.

Mr. Chairman,

While respecting the sovereignty of every State, we advocate that countries need to employ the principle of proportionality for sentencing in their judicial systems. In Israel the principle
of proportionality stands by law as the main principle of sentencing, as there needs to be a proportion between the severity of the crime and the sentence. When appropriate, the criminal justice system also employs alternatives to incarceration, including treatment programs, public service or fines. A pilot drug court is also being evaluated. Particular attention is given to minors in the criminal justice system, which puts the treatment and rehabilitation of the minor as its top priority. The main goal is removing minors from the criminal cycle and promoting their reintegration into normative society. All measures are taken to promote that goal, including erasing traces of criminal records.

Finally, the lack of crucial access to pain medication demands immediate attention. It is critical that the international community and member states take all necessary measures for ensuring the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion.

Israel remains committed to actively participating in the global efforts to curb the scourge of drug abuse and reiterates its confidence in the success of the CND in achieving a significant outcome document for UNGASS.

Thank you.