Commission on Narcotic Drugs Sixtieth Session

Opening Statement delivered by H.E Ambassador Talya Lador-Fresher, Permanent Representative of Israel to the U.N, OSCE and International Organizations in Vienna

Vienna, 14th March, 2017

Thank you Chairperson,

We would like to congratulate you on your election as chairperson as well as other members of the board. We also commend the work of Amb. Moitinho de Almeida in his capacity as the CND facilitator of the Post UNGASS process.

UNGASS was an opportunity to review what has been achieved and to assess what remains to be done, in order to effectively address the world drug problem. Israel remains committed to the global efforts to achieve those important ends, particularly as we approach the 2019 milestone and must think of our way forward.

It is important to emphasize that effectively addressing the world drug problem is part of the broader effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and implementing the 2030 Agenda. This needs to be a joint effort between all sectors: the government, civil society, scientific community and private sectors.
The world drug problem is a public health issue, and Israel implements a comprehensive balanced approach, which places those most affected in the center, in compliance with the three international conventions and in full respect for human rights.

A wide range of differential demand reduction interventions begin as early as kindergarten with prevention programs emphasizing healthy life skill approaches. The continuum of programs includes age appropriate prevention interventions as part of the school curriculum along with interventions in the community. An important aspect in the prevention strategy is parent involvement and empowerment. The formal education system also has a special early intervention program targeting risk students and those who already began using drugs, to prevent progression to severe drug use disorders. Furthermore, outreach services in the community target youth at risk.

In this continuum there is an array of treatment services from detoxification, psycho and social treatment and harm reduction approaches. The needs of target groups are addressed based on age, culture and gender sensitivities, tailoring services accordingly.
Unfortunately, women are less likely to enter treatment programs, and have fewer opportunities to be helped and reintegrated into society, creating gender inequality.

SDG goal no. 5 to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is being reviewed in depth this year. Women affected by drug use are more vulnerable and face greater social stigma than men. Women’s only facilities can provide safe, trigger-free environments in which women can recuperate and receive proper treatment. Israel established different types of recovery centers including: an ambulatory centers, a residential center, special clinics, post-treatment recovery hostels, harm-reduction and low threshold programs and in-patient detox units all designed for young women and girls.

Chairperson,

Regarding the operational recommendations on proportionality, when appropriate, the Israeli criminal justice system also employs alternatives to incarceration, including treatment programs, public service or fines.

In this respect, a new reform was approved last week by my government decriminalizing the use of cannabis for first-time offenders. They will be fined and criminal charges will be pressed only for fourth time offenders. Money from fines will be used towards education, prevention and treatment of drug use. This new
policy represents a shift from criminal enforcement of users to an emphasis on education, prevention and treatment of users.

Israel is one of the countries with the highest number of patients of cannabis for medical use, with over 28,000 people being treated. However, it is necessary to stress that there is no legalization of cannabis in the country but rather, medicalization.

Israel continues its efforts to control NPS and since the NPS law from 2013, over 60 dangerous substances have been controlled.

Finally, Israel believes in the importance of trained and skilled professionals, and is committed to sharing our experiences with other countries. Every year, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Agency for International Development Cooperation – MASHAV – with IADA and the UNODC hosts a course to this effect.

Thank you for your attention.