

PRESENTATION OF THE WORLD DRUG REPORT 2019

REMARKS BY AMB. ACCILI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY

26 June 2019

Thank you Mr. Chair for giving me the floor

Mr. Executive Director, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish first of all to congratulate UNODC, and in particular the Research and Trend Analysis Branch, for producing yet another remarkable publication. Every year we look forward to the presentation of this report, which sheds light on the world drug problem and contributes to make informed decisions. We are particularly glad to see improved data and new information from some countries, which allow us to have a more accurate picture and confirm the importance of enhancing **data collection**.

What stands out in reading this report is the **growing complexity** of the phenomenon. This, in itself, should advise policy makers against offering simplistic answers to the problem, which unfortunately does not present any easy fix.

Indeed the 2019 report offers a **mixed picture** and confirms that **challenges are manifold and diverse**: illicit drug crop cultivation and plant-based manufacture remain at record levels, with cocaine manufacture reaching an all-time high and global opium production following a long-term upward trend; there are signs of increased purity of cocaine and heroin and growing potency of cannabis; the market for synthetic drugs is expanding and is getting more diversified; the number of people who use drugs is 30% higher than in 2009; the number of deaths attributable to the use of drugs is rising and in some countries the death toll is simply appalling.

Against this difficult backdrop, we **should not underestimate the progress** which has been made in several areas and which has often come as a result of enhanced **international cooperation**, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility. Some major darknet platforms have been taken down, resulting in a change of behavior among users; the accelerated scheduling by the CND and the focused attention of the international community has allowed to check the growth of new psychoactive substances; global seizures of cocaine and opium have increased at a faster pace than production, suggesting an increase in the efficiency of law enforcement efforts.

In this regard, allow me to confirm the unwavering work of **Italy's law enforcement** agencies to counter drug trafficking and organized crime, which last year resulted - also thanks to the cooperation with foreign counterparts - in exceptional achievements, for instance an increase of 60% in the seizures of heroin and 318% for cannabis resin.

Despite this progress, much remains to be done to address the gaps identified in the report. It is of particular concern to see that, despite the commitments made by the international community, **public health responses continue to fall far short of need**, as shown by the fact that only one in seven people with drug use disorders receive treatment every year. The situation is particularly serious and alarming in **prison settings**, where more interventions are needed to minimize the adverse health consequences associated with drug use.

In this respect, allow me to say that the promotion of a **health-centered approach to drug dependence** is very dear to my country, where access to treatment is a right of each individual and as such it is provided by the national public health system to all people in need, through a network of 570 centers for addiction which offer services ranging from prevention to treatment, from risk and harm reduction interventions to rehabilitation and re-integration in school and employment, from social assistance to legal protection. This is the cornerstone of our multi-disciplinary, public-health oriented, human rights and scientific evidence-based approach to the drug problem.

To conclude, Mr. Chair,

As we celebrate the UN international day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking, let's remind ourselves that in order to deal with the world drug problem, **it is not sufficient to speak about drugs only**. Public policies should aim to reinforce protecting factors, especially for children and adolescents, with a view to promoting healthy lives and lifestyles and reducing the chances of experimenting drug use: protecting them from abuse and neglect, both physical and emotional; protecting them from exploitation, early labour, trafficking; keeping children in school; engaging adolescents in volunteering for their community, building the perception of perspectives in life, creating bonds to the school and the community; supporting families and in particular those most vulnerable.

If we are to safeguard our future, as we have committed in the Ministerial Declaration, addressing these issues is inescapable.

Thank you.