

Round Table 4
Salient Points by the Co-Chairs

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to present the Co-Chairs summary of the salient points of Round Table 4 “Cross-cutting issues: new challenges, threats and realities in preventing and addressing the world drug problem in compliance with relevant international law, including the three drug control conventions; strengthening the principle of common and shared responsibility and international cooperation” which was held on 20 April 2016 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.. Round table 4 was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Urmas Reinsalu, Minister of Justice of Estonia and myself.

The salient points summarized by the Co-Chairs are as follows:

Many speakers reaffirmed their strong commitment to the three international drug conventions emphasizing their flexibility in addressing evolving challenges of the world drug problem in accordance with their national needs and circumstances.

Many speakers welcomed the section dedicated to NPS and ATS in the outcome document of this special session. There was broad consensus that new psychoactive substances were a collective challenge that required immediate and effective response. In particular, the fast evolving nature of the NPS market and the high number of substances entering the market were highlighted as a threat to public health and to the capacity of law enforcement responses. Some speakers referred to the fact that packaging and the continued chemical evolution of the compounds allowed drug traffickers to circumvent legislation. The challenges posed by the trafficking in chemical pre-cursors were also highlighted.

Many speakers reported on their national legislative responses to addressing the challenge of NPS and in this regard it was emphasized that legislation alone would not solve the problem. It was mentioned that investments were needed in developing public health policies targeting NPS with prevention strategies based on scientific evidence and effective treatment responses. Many speakers offered to share their expertise and experience with the international community.

The need to strengthen the capacity of Member States in forensic and toxicological analysis and reporting was also mentioned. In this regard, several speakers made reference to the need for cooperation between health authorities, laboratories and law enforcement agencies in order to identify NPS and to develop technical and forensic information for prevention, treatment and enforcement purposes.

Many speakers recognized the need for establishing national early warning systems for NPS and called on all countries to share information on public health forensic data through the UNODC Early Warning Advisory. Several speakers recognized the important role of international organizations such as UNODC, WHO and INCB in supporting Member States in addressing the NPS threat and in timely alerting the international community of harmful groups or single substances entering the market.

Many speakers highlighted the importance of a balanced, integrated and comprehensive approach in responding to the evolving threats and challenges, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility. There was a broad consensus for the need to enhance international and cross-border cooperation in addressing and countering the world drug problem. In this regard, the importance of capacity building, technical assistance, intelligence sharing as well as law enforcement cooperation and judicial cooperation was highlighted.

Few speakers highlighted that with the globalization of synthetic drug markets, the traditional distinction between producing, transit and destination countries within developed and developing countries became less valid. The importance of enhancing cooperation to address drug-related issues at the regional and international levels was stressed, as was the importance of partnerships with civil society.

Many speakers referred to the transnational challenge posed by the increased use of the Internet and social media for the purposes of drug trafficking, selling, advertising and recruitment of drug couriers. Difficulties faced in implementing drug control policies with regard to postal services was also mentioned. At the same time, the internet was recognized as an opportunity to reach out to a wider audience for drug prevention purposes.

It was also emphasized that drug policies should be people- and public health-centered, respecting human rights and human dignity with due consideration for proportionate sentencing. Some speakers underlined the need to further discuss whether the existing international drug control system would adequately address the current challenges and threats posed by the world drug problem and referred in this regard to new approaches, including the decriminalization of possession for personal use.

Many speakers recognized the need to increase investment in data collection and analysis with a view to better inform the policy responses to the current challenges.