



**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR JANUSZ S. URBAŃCZYK
HEAD OF THE HOLY SEE DELEGATION
MINISTERIAL SEGMENT OF THE SIXTY-SECOND SESSION
OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS
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Mister Chairman,

The Holy See is pleased to participate in this Ministerial Segment of the 62nd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and congratulates you, Mister Chairman, and the Bureau of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for the extensive work you all have carried out in preparing for and now leading this Ministerial Segment.

The Holy See welcomes the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on “*Strengthening our actions at the national, regional and international levels to accelerate the implementation of our joint commitments to address and counter the world drug problem*”. This Ministerial Segment seeks to take stock of the implementation of the commitments made jointly to address and counter the world drug problem. In this regard, the Holy See wishes to express its perspective and offer a few considerations on the ten years now behind us, as well as on the way forward.

Ten years of efforts to combat the world drug problem, 2009-2019

The last decade has seen the elaboration and adoption of three important policy documents: the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action,¹ the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement,² and the 2016 UNGASS outcome document.³ These documents collectively underscore the crucial point made by the 1961 Single Convention, namely that “universal action calls for international co-operation guided by the same principles and aimed at common objectives”.⁴

The Holy See strongly believes that if the world drug problem is to be confronted and overcome in an effective and lasting manner, then we must advance our efforts and hoped for progress on the principle of common and shared responsibility. Such responsibility needs to be founded on increased international cooperation taking an integrated scientific evidence-based, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing and balanced approach. The broad and

¹ High-level segment of the 52nd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 11-12 March 2019, *The Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem*.

² High-level segment of the 57th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 13-14 March 2014, *Joint Ministerial Statement of the 2014 High-Level Review by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the Implementation by Member States of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem*.

³ 30th Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 19-21 April 2016, *Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem*.

⁴ *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol*, preamble.

encompassing nature of such an approach ensures not only that all efforts come together and pull in the same direction, but also that all resources are utilized to their fullest potential. In this regard, the mandates entrusted to the CND, UNODC, INCB and WHO continue to remain crucial.

While recognizing that this past decade has in fact witnessed progress in global efforts to tackle the world drug problem, the Holy See fully concurs with the Ministerial Declaration's concern about persistent and emerging challenges related to the world drug problem. Expanding drug markets, record levels of production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and the increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and criminal activity, even terrorism, all call on the international community to recognize that much more remains to be done. In addition, the low availability of those internationally controlled substances used for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain, and the shortcomings in drug treatment and healthcare, evidence that both pillars of the drug control regime are under significant pressure.

The way forward

The implementation of all commitments, goals and targets requires as a first step the re-affirmation and protection of the three drug control conventions. These three conventions were, are, and must remain, the foundation of all efforts to tackle the world drug problem and establish the fundamental principles for these efforts. As in 1961, the international community must today begin with the acknowledgement that “addiction to narcotic drugs constitutes a serious evil for the individual and is fraught with social and economic danger to mankind” and that “the medical use of narcotic drugs continues to be indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and that adequate provision must be made to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs for such purposes”.⁵

In this regard, the Holy See must express its concern over the increasing divisions among States concerning drug policy. The discussions during the annual sessions of this Commission suggest not only that opposing views are making concerted, focused and truly common efforts more difficult, but also that the principles and guiding ideas that sustain our common efforts are being questioned and even re-negotiated. While this reality could be seen as reflecting that “relationships within the international community, and the multilateral system as a whole, are experiencing a period of difficulty”, we must never lose sight of the fact that the “indispensable condition for the success of multilateral diplomacy is the good will and good faith of the parties”.⁶

Recognition of, respect for, and protection of universal human rights are also crucial principles of the international community that must be incorporated into all efforts to tackle the world drug problem. This means that responses to drug-related crimes from law enforcement and the judiciary, as well as all other State actors and stakeholders, must be in line with universal human rights obligations, thereby promoting authentic justice, health and well-being that

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings, 7 January 2019.

respect the dignity of the human person. Recently, Pope Francis called on judges to exercise a justice that is “attentive to the least and their integration: indeed, with the duty of giving to each person what is due to them, one cannot forget the extreme weakness that afflicts the lives of many and influences decisions”.⁷ In this regard, the Holy See feels compelled once more to call for the complete abolition of the death penalty. The commandment “thou shall not kill” and a consistent ethic of life means that recourse to capital punishment for drug-related offences can never be tolerated.

The Holy See also believes it to be necessary to step up data collection and analysis. The root causes of both supply and demand of illegal drugs need to be studied more carefully to increase knowledge and understanding of these factors. Building on lessons learned and good practices will fortify and guide the co-ordinated efforts of States and the international community.

On prevention efforts, States should engage not only with academia and international organizations, but also with local and regional communities, schools and educational institutions, civil society organizations, religious organizations and communities, as well as the family. Taking a broad approach will facilitate a balanced preventative approach: avoiding both a permissive attitude towards drugs and a punishment-centered approach devoid of mercy and compassion.

In closing, the Holy See reaffirms its support for the efforts described in the Ministerial Declaration’s final part – outlining a way forward that will spare no efforts to promote the health, welfare and well-being of all individuals, families, communities and society as a whole.

Thank you, Mister Chairman.

⁷ Pope Francis, Address to the National Association of Magistrates (Italy), 9 February 2019.