

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Arsen Torosyan,  
Minister of Health of the Republic of Armenia**

**Ministerial segment of the sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs  
15 March 2019, Vienna**

Chair,

On behalf of the Armenian Delegation, allow me to warmly congratulate you on your election to the chair of the 62nd Commission on Narcotic Drugs and to thank you and your predecessors for all the work you've done on preparing for this 62nd session and its ministerial segment. You have our best wishes and our full support.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and pleasure to address this audience today.

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”** unanimously adopted yesterday in this hall is not yet one stock-taking document, but a document which clearly indicates the necessity to take action immediately, to do the utmost we, as high representatives of the United Nations family, can do to save millions of lives. Young lives. Lives of our children, our future.

Our international and regional cooperation is an imperative given the complexity and the scope of drug trafficking and its interconnectivity with transnational organized crime. The affordability of drugs, including the newly emerging psychoactive substances, record high levels of misuse of narcotic drugs and substance abuse, all cause grave health consequences which must not be neglected. Latest editions of the World Drug Report and Annual Report of the International Narcotics Control Board- both state explicitly how grave and increasingly complex the world drug situation is.

In these circumstances we join our voices in highlighting the leading role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in addressing and countering the world drug problem to eliminate the illicit drug market, in promoting efforts to stop organized crime and protect human rights. We underscore

the importance of support received from relevant United Nations entities and first and foremost- the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We appreciate the indispensable role and continuous guidance provided by the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization.

May I take this opportunity to express my Government's sincere gratitude the UNODC, WHO and INCB for the effective and fruitful cooperation, the expertise and assistance extended to us through years.

We strongly believe that our shared goal of a world free of drugs could be reached only through raising awareness, strengthening cooperative efforts on both- international and regional levels. **In this regard, the promotion of the Agenda 2030 for the Sustainable Development Goals in general and the proper implementation of SDG 3 (good health and well-being) specifically is of high importance. I would like to make it clear: Armenia regards fostering of the implementation of SDGs as one of the important instruments for delivering the all-encompassing internal reforms based on the principle of non-discrimination as reflected in our collective pledge of "leaving no one behind". Ensuring an integrated, multi-disciplinary, balanced and scientific evidence- based approach to drug-related issues in a priority for my Government.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Besides the three Drug Control Conventions, Armenia has acceded to a large number of international legal instruments within the framework of the UN, Council of Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States, Collective Security Treaty Organization and others in the fight against illegal circulation of narcotic drugs, psychotropic (psychoactive) substances and their precursors. Measures envisaged by that set of documents include inter alia complex operative-preventive actions that are carried out every year, trainings in order to increase the professional knowledge and qualifications.

In 2018, the Armenian law enforcement agencies registered a 7-fold increase of seizures of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors as compared to 2016. **Such a clear evidence of the fact that Armenia can not stay immune from the global trends of the increasing use of drugs and new psychoactive substances, has given additional impetus to the relevant national authorities to engage in programs aiming at the reduction of their supply and demand.**

In 2014 the Government of Armenia has approved the National Strategy for combating drug addiction and drug trafficking. One of the priorities of the Strategy is strengthening of the regional and international cooperation in combating illicit trafficking of drugs, psychotropic

(psychoactive) substances and fight against drug abuse. Each year a National Programme of Action and the **schedule of its implementation are** devised and adopted.

Armenia is currently engaged in a process of reviewing the corresponding legislation and has adopted a more “health-based approach” in this regard. The process has started in 2008, when the illegal use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances without a medical prescription was decriminalized, shortly after that, with the support of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria the methadone substitution treatment was introduced to patients suffering from opioid abuse. Currently the number of patients undergoing the treatment remains relatively low and we in Armenia are exploring ways to improve the situation to meet the needs of all patients.

Distinguished colleagues,

New psychoactive substances (NPS) and the illicit use of prescription drugs constitute a serious threat to public health. In this regard several important changes have been introduced in Armenia. My country is a part of the International Anti-Drug Action Program (ION), on the basis of which the names of newly emerged drugs are periodically updated in the national legislation. In 2018 the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Armenia which defines the list of more than 800 names of narcotic drugs was adopted.

Within the last two years the procedure of prescription of narcotic drugs and psychoactive substances for pain treatment purposes has been significantly simplified.

Chair,

We are determined, in close cooperation with national human rights institutions and all relevant stakeholders, to reinforce our efforts on national level, to further our engagement in international efforts to counter the world drug problem – a challenge and threat to the health, security and wellbeing of our societies.

Finally, Chair, I would like to wish every success to the Commission’s 62<sup>nd</sup> session and thank everybody for the attention.

Malta