

STATEMENT OF THE HEAD OF GHANA DELIGATION MR. AMBROSE DERY (MP), MINISTER FOR THE INTERIOR TO THE HIGH LEVEL MINISTERIAL SEGMENT MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS IN VIENNA
14-15 MARCH 2019

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Ghana Delegation and on my own behalf I congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of this meeting. I also join others before me to express our sincere appreciation to H.E Ambassador Okeke of The Federal Republic of Nigeria for her leadership in facilitating the negotiation of the ministerial declaration.

I also thank you for the opportunity to address this High Level Ministerial Segment meeting.

Ghana acknowledges the World Drug Problem with all its attendant menace to governance, socio-economic development, democracy, human rights, Public health as well as safety and public security at the global, continental, sub regional and country-level.

We also in the same vein and context acknowledge global and regional efforts at addressing the situation as a common and shared responsibility.

Ghana is conscious of the outcome document of UNGASS 2016 and fully appreciates this Ministerial meeting coming after UNGASS 2016 and to look at progress since the 2009 Plan of Action.

For us, the CND provides a useful space and platform for each member-state, and civil society to interact, share our diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences as we boldly tackle the world drug problem. It affords each of us partners in this global networking to inform each other of context-specific country-to-country approaches.

Mr. Chairman, since the 1990s, Ghana has had the privilege of support of the United Nations as we embraced the approach detailed in the multi-disciplinary outline in addressing the drug problem in Ghana.

This allowed for a balanced approach between supply reduction and demand reduction efforts.

Furthermore, since the late 1990s Ghana has worked closely with ECOWAS in adopting the very first, as well as the latest ECOWAS Plan of Action. Ghana was also active in developing the African Union Plan of Action which we remain committed to.

We in Ghana believe in proven health interventions such as treatment, prevention and education which are essential components of any effective drug policy. We recognize that the greatest harms of prohibition are high levels of crime, corruption and violence as well as massive illicit markets. It is against this background that we intend to replace our existing legal framework on drug policy and law enforcement governance.

The Narcotics Control Commission Bill 2019, which has received Cabinet approval and is about to be laid before Parliament is the first attempt to amend the PNDC Law 236, (1990).

This new Bill recognizes the Public Health approach, since one of the functions of the Commission is to ensure that problematic

substance use (substance addiction) is treated not as a public security and safety issue, but a public health issue. This we believe will address the harmful health consequences of drugs produced in the absence of a health regulatory system. This is significant because the operators of the law, the Narcotics Commission is under the Ministry of the Interior, responsible for Internal Security and Public Safety.

With regard to human rights in drug policy governance, Chapter Five of Ghana's Fourth Republican constitution (Constitution, 1992) has elaborate provisions on the rights of all Ghanaians. Until recently, narcotic offences were not bailable. Ghana's Supreme Court has however ruled that narcotic offences are now bailable.

Mr. Chairman, supply reduction efforts, particularly arrests and seizures make sensational news, more than any efforts made in the area of demand reduction.

This has the tendency of overshadowing the significant far reaching strides made in the area of drug-demand reduction.

Ghana is expanding its education interventions. In 2015, Ghana embraced the Universal Treatment Curricula of the Colombo Plan. After a slow start, Ghana finally signed, in 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding with the Colombo Plan so Ghana now has fully embraced both the Universal Preventive Curricula, and the Universal Treatment Curricula.

In addition, Civil Society Organisations are active in delivering demand-reduction services in institutions and communities. NACOB, as a government agency also embarks on education programmes in institutions and communities.

In the new Bill, there is specific mention of a committee each on alternative development, demand reduction and harm reduction.

The alternative development (or alternative livelihood) schemes will feed into government-of-Ghana flagship programmes such as **“One-District-One-Factory”** and **“Planting-for-Food and Jobs”** will reduce the cultivation of cannabis and the production of cannabis by engaging the youth in food-security programmes.

Mr. Chairman, permit me to express Ghana's profound gratitude to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for its magnanimous support. Through UNODC, Ghana and Nigeria signed an MOU for a joint operation dubbed "**Operation Eagle**". The exercise led to the interception of several illicit drugs via the courier/postal system. The operations reinforced the assertion on how the courier/postal system is exploited by drug traffickers and the dark logicians of the drug trade to facilitate their illicit trade. The increasing seizures of Khat is mainly because the traffickers use the courier/postal system and Ghana as a transit country for Public destined markets in Europe and North America.

Mr. Chairman, Ghana remains committed to the implementation of the outcome document of UNGASS 2016 as well as to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030).

Mr. Chairman, Ghana is as with other international commitments ready to embrace and adopt international best practices, conscious of our common and shared responsibility in addressing the world drug problem.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the attention.

