

**62ND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS,
VIENNA, AUSTRIA**

14 – 15 MARCH 2019

STATEMENT BY HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH

PRIME MINISTER

FRIDAY 15 MARCH 2019 AT 10.00 Hrs

VENUE: VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Colleague Ministers;

Executive Director, Commission on Narcotic Drugs;

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning

I would like to thank the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for having invited me to this high level meeting.

As we are all aware, the drug problem is one paramount issue facing our countries at the moment, so let me get to the subject right away.

As indicated by the World Drug Report of the UNODC in 2016, nearly 6 per cent of the global population aged 15–64 years has consumed drugs at least once. Both the range of drugs and drug markets are expanding and diversifying as never before according to its 2018 Report.

This world-wide escalation of the drug phenomenon has not left Mauritius unscathed. The past 15 years have witnessed a surge in the number of new psychoactive substances. Today, the consumption of synthetic drugs has reached alarming levels. The drug scourge has a clear impact on public health, affecting mostly the youth and adolescents.

One of our main challenges in Mauritius is the establishment of a well-structured psycho-social support for drug users. We see drug users as fellow citizens who deserve our support. We want to help them to overcome their addiction. Our ultimate aim is the rehabilitation and social reintegration of drug users. Thus it is imperative to alongside repressive actions to develop and implement a health-based and a person-centred approach to support those in need with social and economic measures

As far back as in the mid-eighties, Mauritius took the bold step of setting up a Commission of Inquiry on Drugs and enacted thereafter a Dangerous Drugs Act.

In 1986, we set up an Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit to combat drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking.

Our Police Force has constantly been provided with equipment and training to counter illicit drug flows. Officers of the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit have attended courses sponsored by friendly countries and workshops organized by agencies such as the Southern African Region Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (SARPCCO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), African Union, Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Interpol.

In spite of these steps, the drug situation still gained momentum. In September 2015, the Government

established a new Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking. It inquired into the extent of the illicit drug consumption, its economic and social consequences and the availability of new types of drugs, including synthetic drugs. The Commission also investigated the linkages between drug trafficking and money laundering or other financial crimes. It made several recommendations to address institutional, legislative, policy and operational issues. Some of the recommendations have already been implemented while others are being analysed by a high level task force.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our country has with the assistance of the UNODC developed a National Drug Control Master Plan 2019-2023 which expresses Government's firm commitment to implement the appropriate drug controlled strategies.

A High Level Drugs and HIV Council, under my chair, has been set up to propose, formulate, review and validate national policies on Drugs and HIV. It will coordinate and monitor the national Drugs and HIV response by overseeing the implementation of the National Drug Control Master Plan encompassing prevention, rehabilitation, harm reduction and enforcement. The National Action Plan for HIV and

AIDS 2017-2021 will also be implemented with the help of all stakeholders, including civil society as a partner..

The issues facing us transcend national borders. Thus, regional and international cooperation is essential to act against drug-related crimes. In 2017, following a record seizure of 119 kgs of heroin, Mauritian authorities benefitted from the help of South African and Mozambican law-enforcement agencies to arrest the main suspect, a Mauritian National.

Similarly, the Mauritian and Malagasy authorities are working in close collaboration to dismantle the drug network between our two countries. As the Narcotics Control Board mission noted in its 2018 Report, Mauritius has made efforts to deepen cooperation with

other countries in the Indian Ocean to combat drug trafficking.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius is honoured to have received a proposal to host the next meeting of the Heads of Narcotics Law Enforcement Agencies Africa, (HONLEA). The implications are being looked into before sending a reply to the UNODC, hopefully by the end of this month.

When I see around me this strong will to jointly address the looming danger of drug abuse, I can say that there are grounds for optimism for a safer world.

I thank you for your attention.
