

UK NATIONAL STATEMENT – OPENING CEREMONY

Chair, Excellencies and distinguished guests.

It is my honour to address the Commission on behalf of the United Kingdom.

Let me start by welcoming you, Ambassador, into the chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and express our appreciation for the work of the CND Facilitator, who has expertly led the preparations for this High-Level Segment.

This meeting marks an important milestone in our combined efforts to address the world drug problem. We must build upon our history and achievements here at the Commission to ensure that we send a strong message to our nations, that the global community remains committed to strengthening international cooperation to address this common and shared issue.

LAST DECADE – INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

As the Ministerial Document recognises, over the last decade progress has been made in addressing the world drug problem.

The global community has taken considerable steps to address the issue through the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action and the 2014 Ministerial Statement. The 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document built upon this progress and broadened the international response to ensure key

elements on human rights and health are now a central part of our work. At the same time it recognises the continuing importance of restricting supply of illicit drugs and preventing the diversion of precursors, while also recognising the new challenges we face including new psychoactive substances and the criminal misuse of the internet.

We would like to recognise and thank the UNODC, WHO and INCB for their ongoing work to ensure that international controls are in place for the most harmful substances. We welcome the increasing number of new psychoactive substances controlled under the UN drug control conventions over recent years. It is important that we continue to have robust international controls in place for the most harmful substances and the UK remains fully committed to the UN drug control conventions and the wider rules based international system.

CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM

Nevertheless, we face unprecedented challenges in countering the world drug problem:

- As the 2018 World Drug Report set out, the range of drugs and drug markets are expanding and diversifying as never before – the production of opium and the manufacture of cocaine are at the highest levels recorded and over 800 new psychoactive substances have been reported since 2009. These drugs have devastating impacts on all our nations and the international community must step up its responses to address this issue.

- It must be the first duty of every government to keep its people safe and drug trafficking and other forms of organised crime pose a significant threat to the safety and security of all our nations. The UK is determined to prevent serious and organised crime, defend against it, track down perpetrators and bring them to justice. We must strengthen international cooperation to ensure there is no safe space – online or offline – for these people and their networks.
- The health consequences of drug use continue to be significant, and the number of drug related deaths across the globe tragically continue to rise. HIV transmission amongst injecting drug users remains alarmingly high and international efforts to reduce HIV transmission among people who inject drugs by 50 per cent by 2015 have fallen short. We must therefore, redouble our efforts to combat HIV among people who use drugs, and in so doing support delivery of the Global Goals.
- The UN drug control conventions are founded on the dual goals of reducing the illicit use of dangerous substances and ensuring access to controlled substances for medical purposes. Despite this, up to 5.5 billion people live in countries with low or no access to controlled medicines. No-one should have to live or die in avoidable pain. We must therefore strengthen efforts to make material progress here, in accordance with the Global Goals 2030 roadmap and World Health Organisations’s Roadmap for Access to Medicines (2019-2023).

- Finally, human rights violations continue to be committed in the name of drug control. In this regard, the UK oppose the use of the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. We urge all Member States who still use the death penalty for drug offences to abolish this unacceptable and ineffective practice.

In light of the challenges we face, it is now crucial that we take concerted and sustained action to accelerate the implementation of the commitments set out in the Ministerial Document adopted yesterday and monitor these efforts through enhanced data collection.

We must also ensure that our work here at the Commission, is fully integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Development Agenda and our efforts to minimise drug harms are complementary and mutually re-enforcing.

UK RESPONSE

The United Kingdom is delivering a modern, balanced and evidence-based response to drugs within the UN drug control conventions.

Our Drug Strategy sets out a balanced approach which brings together police, health, community and global partners to tackle the illicit drug trade, protect the most vulnerable and help those with a drug dependency to recover and turn their lives around.

While drug misuse in the United Kingdom is relatively flat compared to a decade ago, we are absolutely committed to reducing it and the harms it

causes. That is why the UK is currently undertaking a major independent review of drug misuse. The Review is an opportunity to deliver a critical appraisal of the challenges faced on drugs and will point us towards further action we can take, building on our current Drug Strategy, to tackle the harms of drugs head on.

Through this work, the United Kingdom is implementing the Outcome Document's recommendation to take a truly comprehensive approach to addressing drug misuse, which is in line with the commitments adopted in the Ministerial Document of this session.

CONCLUSION

Chair,

The global community have collectively addressed the world drug problem for over seventy years through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility. We trust that over the next decade, we can consolidate and build upon the progress already made to deliver the drug control treaties' objective of ensuring the 'health and welfare of humankind'.

Thank you.