Distinguished Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As representative of UNODC’s host country, I would like to welcome you all wholeheartedly in our capital.

We are meeting here in the **Vienna International Center (VIC)**, which is celebrating its **40th anniversary**:

- In 1979, Austria has handed over this building to the United Nations as their **Vienna Headquarters**
- With the inauguration of the VIC, Vienna has become the "**capital**" of **international cooperation** against the drugs trade
and of efforts to proactively tackle the world drug problem - something we are really proud of.

In 2016, we managed, all of us together, to decisively set international drugs policy on a new course

- in the form of the Outcome Document of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs.

**Important elements** of it are:

- Strengthening national and international efforts in the interest of the health, security and wellbeing of our people, especially also in the field of prevention;
- The necessity for effective tools of prosecution to take into account the linkages between drug-related crime, corruption, human trafficking and terrorism
- and due regard being given to aspects of development cooperation

Taken all together, this requires an effective coordination of global drugs policy:

- I therefore appeal to all to commit themselves to providing the necessary financial resources for all relevant bodies to be able to work effectively
- Furthermore, I express my appreciation to all states, who – like Austria – support the implementation of international drugs policy through voluntary contributions, especially to UNODC
The **Ministerial Declaration** before us is an important step in our common policy on drugs:

- **Main pillars** of our engagement in this context are:
  - Countering the *illegal cultivation and production* of drugs and the illicit transnational *trade in drugs* AND
  - A holistic solution of the global drugs problem in all its ramifications

In order to achieve this, we need **appropriate instruments** to analyse the status quo and to foresee future developments

- The **EU and its Member States** have a *leading role* in this field.
- For instance, **Austrian authorities** have very good capabilities for the identification and evaluation of data, statistics and trends.
  ➔ **We actively contribute** with our expertise to **improve the data collection and processing instruments** of UNODC.

For me as Minister of the Interior, UNODC is a central partner in **countering global drugs-related crime**:

- I want to thank UNODC for their longstanding, excellent cooperation!
• Together with our international partners, we have been able to achieve great successes,
• for instance 2018 in the framework of the successful “JIFTdrugs/fair” project to counter organized drugs and arms smuggling,
• resulting in 150 arrests and the confiscation of 2.5 tonnes of drugs.
• This is an excellent example for the national and international concentration of the resources of police and customs authorities.

In the face of new and dynamic phenomena like the drugs trade in the darknet, one thing is absolutely clear to me:

➔ In the future, we must rely even more on a close and integrated cooperation on national, European and international level.

However, the problem of drug addiction as a whole cannot just be reduced to aspects of criminality:

• We are dealing with a chronic disease and its consequences for its victims and society as a whole.
• Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the medical and social dimension as well as aspects of health economics.
In general, we put a strong focus on intensive prevention efforts, given that one thing holds true also in this sector:

- **Health-related action** is most effective if undertaken at an early stage. A speedy reaction by health authorities can also contribute to avoiding the criminalisation of drug users.

- In Austria, we put a special emphasis on the protection of children and adolescents in this context.

Before I close, I want to pay tribute to the commitment of all those around the globe who dedicate themselves every single day to countering drug abuse and to assisting its victims,

- in the security forces,
- in the judicial authorities,
- people working in the health system
- as well as volunteers in civil society

What they accomplish, regardless of adversities of every kind, is extraordinary and many of them have to take great personal risks upon themselves in their work.

Also because of this, it is our common responsibility to provide the necessary framework, on national as well as international level, for their efforts to be successful.