



STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. Aurelijus Veryga

Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania

on the occasion

the Ministerial Segment of the 62nd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Vienna, 14 March 2019

Mister Chair,
Mr. Executive Director,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join you and the other distinguished delegates here today.

Lithuania fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos on behalf of the European Union.

We believe, that the UNGASS Outcome Document is placing its strongest emphasis on promoting a shared vision on how to create benefits to health and well-being of humankind. While understanding that all countries are facing their own drug policy transformations, we feel encouraged to promote evidence-based policy with balanced and human-centred approach, which can change the world drug situation.

Therefore, our firm position that death penalty is contrary to international law and have to be abolished in any circumstances, including for drug related offences. Abolition of the death penalty contributes to enhancement of human dignity and progressive development of human rights.

Lithuania regrets that the world drug problem remains a major challenge for the international community despite the progress made. Effective multilateral cooperation remains utmost important element in solving drug related problems. To succeed in this challenge, we should act globally and take leadership at national level.

Last year, Lithuania found itself at significant crossroads while evolving its own national drug strategy. We went through the challenging cycle of drug policy evaluation and development. Discussions on the possibilities to make the UNGASS Outcome Document a reality, empowered our country to find a way forward.

A shift from punishment towards a more health-oriented approach became the most important aspect of our Strategy, and led to science and evidence-based drug policies with a strong focus on human rights. Extremely close and fruitful co-operation with civil society was of the essence while creating our vision for the next decade.

For the first time in history Lithuania has taken an adequate focus on all of the drug policy cornerstones: an equal importance of drug demand, supply and harm reduction, as well as an improved monitoring system.

At national level, we have agreed that drug demand reduction, including prevention, intervention, treatment, rehabilitation, reintegration, will be based on different needs, quality standards, principle of accessibility to everyone and focused on the development of healthy and safe society.

Furthermore, we have agreed that supply reduction will integrate modern, innovative solutions to reduce the availability of drugs and to address the growing challenges and threats posed by new psychoactive substances phenomenon.

Moreover, the benefits of harm reduction approaches, as another important element of our Strategy, will lead us towards zero overdose related deaths and significantly reduced HIV incidences in the community. Equally, accessible measures are also foreseen to be implemented in detention facilities.

Nevertheless, let me emphasize that it takes time to bring the UNGASS Outcome Document operational recommendations into concrete actions. Certainly, the story of Lithuanian drug policy is not over and next step is to bring policy into the practice. Still we have to strengthen our efforts to combat world drug problems, especially protecting our young generation.

Distinguished colleagues,

Human-centred approach makes us responsible for the consequences of our decisions to every human being. In responding to the upcoming drug related challenges, we call world's community for common understanding and support: world drug problems could be solved only through international co-operation and in coordinated manner. Our joint efforts will lead to a comprehensive and humane drug policy. We have to remain united on this issue to make a change.

Thank you, Mister Chair.