

Mr Chairman, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Strategy for the Prevention of Drug Abuse in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014-2021 is based on five pillars:

- 1) Drug demand reduction;
- 2) Drug supply reduction;
- 3) Coordination;
- 4) International cooperation;
- 5) Research, monitoring and assessment.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia seeks to implement a comprehensive drug policy through the application of balanced, integrated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary and scientific evidence-based approaches to the drug problem, respecting human rights, gender equality, freedom and security. The drugs policy is being implemented through a balanced approach, both by protecting the health and by increasing the security of individuals and the society as a whole.

A balanced approach to the drug policy in the Republic of Serbia is being implemented both through strengthening the capacities and services in the field of treatment, reducing the risk of mortality associated with drug use, infectious diseases associated with drug use and preventing the harmful consequences of the use of new psychoactive substances, as well as through the strict penal policies for the illegal cultivation and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, illicit trafficking in these substances and precursors, corruption and other forms of organized crime and money laundering.

The Ministry of Health is the national contact point for monitoring the situation in the field of drugs in the Republic of Serbia. The monitoring is carried out through the continuous collection, processing and analysis of drug data at the national level. These data contain information on both drug supply indicators and drug demand.

The Ministry of Health collects and analyzes data on the situation in the field of drugs in cooperation with all relevant ministries and institutions in the Republic of Serbia, civil society and the academia. In line with the results of the

analysis, the Ministry puts forward the most effective policies in reducing the risk of drug abuse.

In addition, the Ministry of Health has established an Early Warning System on New Psychoactive Substances. As a result of the cooperation with all institutions in the Republic of Serbia as well as international organizations, the Ministry of Health included 15 new substances in the List of Psychoactive Controlled Substances last year, including the substances proposed for consideration at the 62nd session of the CND (5 fentanyl, 4 synthetic cannabinoids, 1 substituted cation, and tramadol). The List of Psychoactive Controlled Substances is in line with the UN conventions.

The Law on Psychoactive Controlled Substances is based on all three UN conventions and the EU Directives. The Amendment Law on Psychoactive Controlled Substances (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 57/18) were adopted in July 2018. In accordance with the Law on Psychoactive Controlled Substances (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 99/10, 57/18) the Ministry of Health is the contact point for cooperation with the INCB, the EMCDDA, as well as the WHO, UNODC and the Council of Europe’s Pompidou Group.

In particular, we would like to emphasize the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for a comprehensive approach to the prevention of drug use, especially among young people. Bearing in mind that in June 2018 there were 5 deaths of young people associated with drug use, the RS Government established the Ministerial Commission for the Prevention of Drug Use. This Commission consists of 7 ministers, with the task of adopting a program to strengthen youth awareness of the adverse effects of drug use.

The Commission has a comprehensive approach, based on scientific evidence and prevention standards. Accordingly, the Commission has adopted a methodology for working with students, teachers and parents, and launched a drug campaign. From September 2018 to February 2019, 31057 students, 5459 teachers and 1501 parents participated in interactive forums. The forums include health professionals, teachers, social workers, judges, prosecutors, police officers and representatives of the Youth Office, in order to present all aspects of the harmful effects of drug use to the young people.

The Commission's work program aims at raising awareness among young people about the harmful effects of drug use, strengthening their self-confidence, allowing them to resist a group of drug-using peers, finding alternatives and

creating positive examples. But the Commission also seeks to tighten the penal policy for the manufacture and sale of drugs, especially for repeat offenders related to the manufacture and sale of drugs, and to persons offering and selling drugs to minors and abusing them in drug trafficking. According to official data from the Ministry of the Interior, the number of seizures of, especially cocaine, heroin and tablets of psychoactive substances, increased in 2018 (in 2018, a total of 3.9 tons of seized drugs resulted in the seizing of 3.6 tonnes of marijuana, 37 kilograms of heroin, 13 kilograms of cocaine and 54 kilograms of amphetamine). The number of offenders who committed the criminal act of illicit production and trafficking in narcotic drugs was 180, the number of offenders who committed the criminal act of illicit drug possession was 1,068, and the number of those who committed the criminal act of allowing the abuse of narcotic drugs was 19.

The Ministry of Health, with the support of the Commission for the Prevention of Drug Use in Schools, initiated an initiative for the Ministry of Justice to amend the Criminal Code related to stricter penalties for the sale of drugs to minors, as well as the abuse of juveniles in drug trafficking.

The Republic of Serbia, in cooperation with Iceland and the Council of Europe's Pompidou Group, has the honour of presenting this program on the prevention of drug use among elementary school students on 19 March. It is being implemented by the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The program for the prevention of drug use through continuous work with students aims at reducing the risk-prone behaviour of young people through sports and education. The aim of the program is to ensure proper psychological and physical development through sports and education to young people, to strengthening their self-confidence and the ability to resist negative influences that surround them.