



Slovenia calls for action to address the challenge of psychoactive substances

Statement by Ambassador Andrej Benedejčič, Permanent Representative of Slovenia and Head of Delegation, at the 62nd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, General debate, Vienna, 14 March 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

Slovenia highly appreciates the role of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. In our view, it enables the important exchange of experience in the search for joint ways to resolve the problem of production, trade and use of illicit drugs at the global, regional and national levels. It also treats this complex challenge in a comprehensive manner and from the viewpoint of fundamental human rights. In addition to what has been said on behalf of the EU, I would therefore like to make several remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. Chairperson,

Like other countries around the world, Slovenia is not immune to drug abuse. In responding to this problem my country employs an approach that is interdisciplinary, comprehensive and balanced. The Slovenian Ministry of Health therefore systematically promotes scientifically proven measures and cooperation among different stakeholders, ranging from governmental experts to non-governmental actors. It is currently in the process of harmonizing the final version of its operational action plan, which covers the last two years of the National Program on Illicit Drugs for the period from 2014 to 2020. In this context, Slovenia supports further development and application of the Annual Report Questionnaire. This is because the data collected in this way and other accessible scientific findings make possible a comprehensive and objective assessment of the implementation of all relevant legal, strategic and political processes within the UN system in the field of illicit drugs.

Mr. Chairperson,

Slovenia advocates free access for all drug users to programs for infection prevention, harm reduction, treatment, social rehabilitation and the integration of former drug users into society. We also support addiction treatment programs in prisons on the basis of good clinical practice. We strive for proportionate sanctioning and support alternative sanctioning of drug users. We regard addiction as a difficult illness and the person suffering from it as requiring particular medical and social assistance, as well as rehabilitation. We therefore support destigmatization of drug users and their reintegration into society.

Slovenia also supports the monitoring of new psychoactive substances. By this I mean the operation of and exchange of information within the early warning system and other activities needed to manage the consequences of NPS. In recent years, almost 200 new psychoactive substances have been classified on the list of controlled substances or drugs. It is also for this reason that my country is organizing a side-event next Tuesday, March 19, on the topic of psychoactive substances and the sustainable development goals. The aim is to explore ways to make preventive solutions available and to galvanize action on implementation, in line with the outcome document of UNGASS 2016.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is also within this context that I wish to highlight the importance of the global environment when forming national policies. The processes we are witnessing, particularly the legalisation or deregulation of cannabis in certain parts of the world, have a certain impact on these policies, and to an extent also on the effectiveness and success of drug prevention programs. In this connection, my country has observed that timely and substantiated informing and action in the broader society is essential to resolve the issue of drug abuse. We therefore believe that the entire international community should come to a united position regarding these processes as soon as possible, and also to adopt and introduce such rules for the benefit of all countries.

Before concluding, I would like to underline the great importance that my country attaches to regional cooperation in tackling the challenge of illicit drugs. Slovenia therefore intends not only to maintain, but also to enhance its cooperation with countries of the Western Balkans. One of the main priorities of our programs of bilateral technical assistance will be the implementation of measures to resolve the issue of drug abuse and illicit drug trade. In light of the global nature of the drug challenge we also call on cooperation among other countries, both in Europe and around the world.

Finally, let me say that Slovenia appreciates all the work that has been done in preparing the Ministerial Declaration and hopes that our joint efforts will further strengthen a comprehensive and humane drugs policy.

Thank you.