

**Remarks of the UNODC Executive Director
Opening of the Ministerial Segment at the 62nd
Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
14 March 2019**

**Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

There is so much that unites us in this room here today.

That is the simple truth that drives our work together under the United Nations, here in Vienna through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

And that has brought so many high-level officials here to forge a common path.

The importance of shared solutions to shared challenges is the central insight and thread that runs through the Ministerial Declaration you have agreed upon to strengthen action to accelerate implementation of joint commitments to address and counter the world drug problem.

Through this you have further reinforced a solid foundation for collective action, based on the flexible framework of the three conventions, which constitute the cornerstone of the international drug control system.

Together, we are taking action that is informed by our experience and scientific evidence, respectful of human rights and that contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

I trust the international community will use this major meeting to renew our commitment to multilateral solutions and strengthen international cooperation to prevent and address drug threats and challenges in the decade ahead.

We cannot afford to do less.

Challenges are proliferating while responses struggle to keep pace, with rising production and trafficking of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and new psychoactive substances; record opioid overdose deaths; and shortfalls in treatment and medical and social services for all those who need them.

At the same time, the international community has made progress.

We have increased understanding of multifaceted drug problems and the balanced responses need to confront them. We have continuously strengthened international cooperation and operational coordination.

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs remains the main UN forum for dialogue on drug policy, to address ever-evolving challenges and agree on global solutions.

Through the Commission, countries can further strengthen data collection and analysis to shed light on drug threats and trends, and in this way inform more effective responses.

The regional bodies of the Commission also provide an important means for accelerating implementation of commitments and expanding cooperation domestically, regionally and globally. I urge all countries to make full use of their potential.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime is here to support you.

From building cross-border cooperation and state-of-the-art law enforcement responses to curb trafficking of precursors and illicit drugs, as well as to prevent and counter related organized crime, firearms trafficking, violence, money laundering and corruption;

And stopping criminal exploitation of the global supply chain, air travel and freedom on the high seas;

Empowering those trapped by illicit cultivation of opium poppy and coca leaf to develop alternative livelihoods;

And increasing access to essential medicines;

To advancing criminal justice and public health responses to enable appropriate, age- and gender-responsive treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration;

Including through alternative or additional measures with regard to conviction or punishment in appropriate cases, in full compliance with the conventions;

Building a coordinated response to the global opioid crisis; and

Strengthening prevention and the resilience of young people, and treating drug use disorders, HIV and related diseases with science, respect for human rights and compassion.

UNODC supports these comprehensive responses through our network of field offices and regional and global programmes; through international standards for prevention and treatment, as well as guidance on alternatives to conviction or punishment; and through world-leading research.

We do this work in close cooperation with the World Health Organization, the International Narcotics Control Board, and equally, and increasingly, with partners in the wider UN system, as well as civil society.

Your deliberations and resolutions are vital to guide the technical assistance and capacity building we provide on the ground.

In this regard, I call on Member States to contribute the necessary financial resources to enable all countries to advance balanced drug control.

Excellencies,

This year we mark forty years of the Vienna International Centre, the home of this UN headquarters. Next year we celebrate seventy-five years of our United Nations.

The Vienna spirit of consensus has helped to forge comprehensive approaches to the difficult and complex problems posed by drugs, responses that put people first and seek to safeguard their health, well-being and future.

Looking to the decade ahead of us, let us take this opportunity to expand on the common ground and positive momentum we have achieved, and keep striving to do better for the people we serve.

I thank Ambassador Bakhet for his chairmanship of this session, and Ambassador Okeke for facilitating the 2019 preparations.

I wish you fruitful deliberations over the next week.

Thank you.