STATEMENT BY MR. JAMES AGAGLA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND DEPUTY MINISTER FOR INTERIOR OF GHANA TO THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 57TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS.

Mr. Chairman,

Your Majesty,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the government of Ghana and of my delegation, I wish, from the outset, to congratulate your Excellency on your election to chair this high level segment and to assure you of the support of my delegation in ensuring the successful outcome of our discussions. I also wish to thank the UNODC for organizing this meeting and for the excellent arrangements put in place.

Mr. Chairman, the cultivation and production of narcotic drugs and other psychotropic substances, their abuse and illicit trafficking, are all major threats to the stability, security, socio-political and economic development of all vulnerable countries such as Ghana. Ghana’s strategy in tackling the threat derives from the Political Declaration and Plan of Action that was adopted by this Commission at its fifty-second session in 2009. The strategy has four goals:

The first is the development of a demand reduction strategy as part of our National Integrated programme by reducing drug abuse and dependence through a comprehensive approach, including engagement with national stakeholders to improve the exchange of experience and skills in order to enhance capacity and ownership at the national and community levels. The overall goal is to mainstream community involvement and participation; develop and adopt quality standards and training of staff; and create a pool of resources for strategic advice, expertise and experience as
well as provide readily deployable capacity to strengthen national demand reduction efforts.

Our national strategy on demand reduction includes the implementation of programmes that enhance the prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims of drug abuse, and prevent the health and social consequences of drug use. Our policies also recognise that drug use and drug dependence are matters that need to be treated as health disorders, and not as issues within the domain of the criminal justice system. To reinforce this policy, last year the government of Ghana passed the Mental Health Act that aims to strengthen the regime for the treatment and rehabilitation of those dependent on drugs.

Ghana continues to make progress in its drug demand reduction activities. Drug abuse sensitization programmes have been extended to cover more schools, faith-based organizations and communities. The Narcotics Control Board of Ghana, the lead agency in drug law enforcement in Ghana, has expanded its multimedia outreach with radio and Television programmes on drug demand reduction across the country. The Board has also produced a documentary on the dangers of drugs to the youth and the country as a whole. Short educational adverts in more than ten (10) local Ghanaian languages have also been produced for airing on local radio stations. Drama presentations in four local Ghanaian languages on the consequences of drug abuse that were produced by the Board have also been screened on local television stations in the country.

The idea is to ensure that drug education should be carried to the door steps of the ordinary Ghanaian. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to inform that recent national statistics confirm that our efforts are yielding results.

However, drug trafficking remains an enormous challenge in our region. Recent reports have highlighted the illicit production and increase in trafficking of methamphetamine in our sub region. Meanwhile we continue to struggle with the traditional threats posed by the cultivation and use of cannabis, and the trafficking
through our region of cocaine. We are also witnessing continued seizures of cocaine and heroin in our part of the continent.

The second goal of our national strategy therefore aims to reduce supply and enhance international co-operation through effective coordination between law enforcement agencies in the planning of counter-narcotic operations; by analysing new trafficking trends; addressing supply and demand reduction together; enhancing capacity-building; and control of precursors and of amphetamine-type stimulants. Over the past two decades Ghana has partnered with the international to combat the drug menace. We continue to rely on a network of sub regional, regional and global partners. This networking, within the context of the principle of common and shared responsibility, has resulted in significant and some dramatic successes.

In countering the threat posed by the world drug problem, we in Ghana are also aware of the dangers posed by the use and trafficking of precursor chemicals and other new psychoactive substances. We are of the view that while international efforts continue to establish scientific, evidence based approach as a basis for action, a balanced and precautionary approach must also be taken to control these substances without inhibiting their availability for licit use. It was against this background that the Government recently approved an amendment to the schedule of the Narcotics Drug (Control, Enforcement and Sanctions) Law, 1990, PNDCL 236 to include and control some new synthetic psychoactive substances and other psychotropic substances such as methamphetamine and its derivatives.

Ghana has also made progress in monitoring the importation and re-exportation of precursors to and from its territory. This is being done by registration of all companies dealing in precursors, issuance of permits to these companies monitoring monitor of their activities and unannounced site inspections. We are also compliant with the international notification regime currently in force.

The third goal of our national anti-narcotic strategy is the promotion of a strategic and coordinated approach to counter drug trafficking organizations by
facilitating the development of national, regional and international synergies. We believe that the strategies should be owned and embedded in existing social structures, institutions and organizations. We are also engaged in identifying priorities for the collection, analysis and dissemination of high-quality strategic information on transnational organized criminal trends and the impact of these at the regional level.

Ghana acknowledges the importance of Alternative Development as the fourth and an important component of its anti-narcotic strategy. In that regard we have embarked on various social and developmental programmes to support the eradication of cannabis cultivation in the endemic parts of the country. However our limited success will be considerably enhanced by greater technical assistance and support from our international partners, in view of the severe limitation of resources that confronts us as a country.

Mr. Chairman, let me be quick to add that at this point that fighting drug trafficking requires collective and shared responsibility as well as a long term vision.

We are aware that the war on illicit drug trafficking has assumed a sophisticated dimension aided by technological advancement. It is for this reason that the government is supporting our narcotic enforcement officers and providing them the needed training and resources to counter the clandestine activities of the perpetrators of drug related crimes, including the detection and dismantling of drug producing laboratories.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the UNODC and our international partners for their continuous support. Their technical assistance have enhanced our capacity and resulted in the implementation of projects such as the Joint Port Control Unit. Others examples include the creation of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), mentoring operations such as ‘Operation Westbridge’ carried out in close collaboration with bilateral partners represented here today, as well as
European Union supported projects such as the Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP), SEACOP and many more.

The fight against drug trafficking and abuse in Ghana has not been without challenges. Inadequate resources continue to hamper our effort to more effectively implement the Plan of Action and our own national strategies. However it is our belief that the collective will of our peoples and our common and shared responsibility to overcome the obstacles will result in greater international commitment to combat the narcotic menace.

I thank you for your attention.