

*Statement by Marcus Day on behalf of the Government of St. Lucia.
Vienna, High-level Review/57th Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 14 March 2014*

Our compliments to the Chair, and we acknowledge the protocols already established. Saint Lucia fully aligns itself with the GRULAC statement as presented.

The small island developing state of Saint Lucia is pleased to address the 57th CND. It has been 20 years since the 1st Conference on Small Island Developing States, or SIDS, was held in Barbados. As you may be aware, this is the year of Small Island Developing States, and in September, the 3rd International SIDS Conference will take place in Samoa.

In 1994, the unique challenges facing Small Island Developing States (SIDS) within the context of sustainable development were formally recognized by the international community for the first time. Saint Lucia, along with our Caribbean neighbours and small island developing states across the globe, share a number of commonalities despite the diversities of ethnicity, geography, and location.

We are small in size, we have a narrow range of resources and are very dependent on international trade, and are vulnerable to external conditions over which we have no control. We have high population densities, limited institutional capacities and, due to our size, find it difficult to achieve economies of scale.

Our geographic dispersion, isolation and limited resources make us vulnerable to a number of threats, relevant to this Commission, such as that of being used as a transit country for drugs. In Saint Lucia, this transshipment and the easy availability of cocaine, feeds local drug markets that provide cocaine at a cost well below that in destination countries.

These special vulnerabilities SIDS face accentuate other challenges facing developing countries in general. While SIDS discussions focus primarily on climate change and development issues, research conducted by my Ministry has shown that the impact of the easily availability of cocaine in Saint Lucia is contributing to the growth of HIV in our country and throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. Saint Lucia takes this opportunity to applaud the work of the UNODC HIV department for acknowledging this specialised HIV vulnerability of the users of cocaine and cocaine derivatives, and for beginning a process of developing technical guidance on HIV and stimulant use in conjunction with a core group of civil society partners and scientists.

In Saint Lucia, the portfolio for drug control rests with the Ministry of Health, and we works diligently to address the higher prevalence of HIV infection among certain sub-populations of people who smoke crack cocaine. The technical guidance being developed will be a welcome tool in our work to reduce HIV in our country.

Saint Lucia implores the CND to ensure that the UNGASS 2016 recognises the special needs of small island developing states in relation to drugs and HIV, and that the HIV

vulnerability of people who use cocaine, regardless of the route of administration, is addressed.

Regarding indigenous cannabis cultivation, the only controlled substance produced in Saint Lucia, our security forces continue to conduct eradication exercises in keeping with the spirit of the Conventions. Unfortunately, there is no support for alternative development for cannabis farmers, who, like those in other regions, require the revenue from this crop to support their families. Our research in Saint Lucia shows that unlike the cocaine transshipment and local sale that is controlled by organised international criminal elements, cannabis cultivation in Saint Lucia is primarily carried out by small farmers who see it only as a source of income. Supporting programmes in sustainable livelihood, in alternative cropping, for these farmers and assisting with post-harvest technology and marketing of legal crops will do more for sustaining a reduction of cannabis cultivation than eradication alone.

Further Saint Lucia would respectfully suggest that the CND produces a document on the appropriate language to be used in treating with drug related issues, to ensure that all of our documents reflect language that does not contribute to increased stigmatization and discrimination. This would result in a comprehensive 2016 UNGASS declaration which will not create barriers to persons who use drugs and seek to access HIV services.

Saint Lucia thanks the Commission for its attention