High Level Segment of the 57-th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Statement

by the Republic of Croatia

delivered by Mr. Željko Petković,
Head of the Office for Combating Drugs Abuse
of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend efforts of the international community in the implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan on Action towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem. However, we are aware that there is still a long way ahead all of us in achieving its targets, provisions and goals.

During the last decade, increasing number of countries developed national drug strategies, most of which were designed to correspond to the individual and specific needs of each county. Such efforts should certainly be commended but what is even more important is to see if they work. No doubt that it is important to invest in sustainable monitoring mechanism of various aspects of drug related problems as a key input in drafting strategic documents and policy paper. But what we can see in the recent years is a very dynamic process on the drug markets which raises a question of drug policy flexibility.

Bringing actions into life and practice in meeting the strategic goals is far bigger challenge than the producing a document. Therefore, for the successful drug policy it is important to closely track its implementation but also to regularly assess its effectiveness, or what is today even more important its cost-effectiveness. Responsible spending of public money is valuable attribute of any policy. Political requests for providing a high quality of performance with reduced resources might be seen as challenging ballast but actually it is also a positive selector of interventions which ensures survival only of the most effective ones. Croatia for example allocates approximately 0,2% of its GDP on drug related public expenditures, and in the last several years we have seen a significant drop in available funds.

Here I would like to call your attention to the importance of the role which civil society organizations play in social advocacy and responding to different aspects of drugs phenomenon, for which governments appear to have less administrative, professional or innovative capacities. They indeed deserve to be more integrated into drug policy development.
Another important element to success is listening to the science which is usually not sufficiently consulted in formulating drug demand and supply measures. We should be aware of still to many ingrained prejudices without scientific stronghold which keep us far from the light of a solution to the problem. Progressing consumerism in our societies vastly contributed to widely present poly-substance use which brings along many uncertainties. On one hand we far more invest in diminishing negative effects of illicit drugs, whilst problems related to abuse of some licit substances e.g. alcohol, remain the lead. The reality calls us to join the efforts and to more seriously invest in developing integrative approaches to all psychoactive substances, and addictive behaviours.

What about sensitivity to minorities and other vulnerable groups? It is our duty to adjust interventions having in mind their specific needs, while ensuring the respect of fundamental human rights. Specificities that characterise women’s addiction and their multifunctional role in the society require different approaches, in prevention but especially in addiction treatment. Human approach and full access to drug addiction treatment in prisons is still privilege mainly reserved for developed countries, when looking globally.

Furthermore, drug trafficking, together with its linkage to other forms of organised crime and even terrorism, continue to pose a serious threat to national and international security, political and economic stability. Therefore, law enforcement efforts should be further supported. More investments are needed in increasing their operational and technical capacities, especially given the fact that organised crime groups successfully use benefits of modern technologies. But it is not only their profit which should be put under the magnifier. In general, more investments are needed in monitoring financial flows deriving from any drug related crime and ensuring confiscating proceeds of crime related to money-laundering activities arising from drug trafficking.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Being aware of all the facts mentioned, Croatia recognizes values of international and cross border cooperation. Therefore, I am happy to point out that at the beginning of this year, Croatia has started its four-year term as a member of the UN’s Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND).

In this context we would like to stress that Croatia attaches great importance to universal application and implementation of fundamental international legal instruments that create the basis of the international drug control system. At the same time, we also actively support the on-going talks and debates on the international drug control system, its functioning and challenges that should reach its peak during the UN General Assembly’s special session on drugs in 2016, an event that deserves as universal response as possible.

To conclude, let us hope that all the said notions, concepts and ideas will serve us as a valuable encouragement towards the successful work of the CND’s session that has just started. With that goal in mind, on behalf of Croatia, I wish you a series of successful and fruitful upcoming days in Vienna.

Thank you very much.