

Draft Statement on behalf of the African Group at the Special Segment of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem, General Debate of the 58th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)

delivered by H.E. Ambassador, Abel Adelokun AYOKO

**Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Vienna, 09 March 2015**

Excellencies,
Mr. Chairman,

1. Allow me on behalf of the African Group to express my warm congratulations to you on your election as Chairperson of the 58th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The African Group would also like to extend its congratulations to other members of the Bureau. agreed
2. The Group assures you of the full support of its Member States during this session and believes that with your diplomatic skills and experience, the work of this session will be rewarded with fruitful results.
3. Equally, the African Group welcomes with satisfaction the convening of the Special Segment of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016. The Group would like to commend the chair of the UNGASS Board, Ambassador Shamaa of Egypt, for his abled leadership in preparation for the 2016 Special Session. We would like to assure the Chair of the UNGASS Board of the full and unwavering support of the African Group.
4. The Group wishes also to express its appreciation to the Secretariat for the hard work in preparation for this meeting.
5. The African Group associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the G77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

6. While appreciating the progress made, at the international, regional and national levels, in countering the world drug problem, the African Group underscores that this problem remains a major challenge for the international community that requires an effective and increased bilateral, regional and international cooperation on the basis of the principle of common and shared responsibility. Furthermore, the Group calls for the sharing of best practices among Member States on drug control strategies.
7. In this context, the Group reaffirms its commitment to the effective implementation of the existing three International Drug Control Conventions and underlines the importance of achieving targets, provisions and goals set out in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem. In addition, the Group reaffirms its commitment to the Joint Ministerial Statement in which Member States conducted a mid-term review that assessed the achievements, the challenges and the priorities for action in the implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action;

8. The Group reaffirms, as stipulated in resolution 67/193, that the 2016 Special Session on the world drug problem will provide an opportunity for Member States to review the progress made in the implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action including an assessment of the achievements and challenges in countering the world drug problem, within the framework of the three international drug control conventions and other relevant United Nations instruments.
9. In this context, the African Group underscores that the 2016 Special Session will further enhance the implementation of the obligations of States and the commitment of all Member States to implement the goals and objectives set out in the 2009 Political Declaration and Programme of Action, in full conformity with the international drug control system and on the basis of the principle of common and shared responsibility.
10. The Group takes note of the shared concerns related to the illicit drug and crime situation in West Africa and the Sahel region. In this regard, the group underscores the ongoing efforts made by the UNODC and in close cooperation of concerned States Parties in addressing the drug trafficking situation in these regions.

Mr. Chairman,

11. The African Group continues to express its grave concern over the global surge in the abuse of illicit drugs. The African Group believes that Member States should not lose sight of the public health consequences associated with illicit drugs. In Africa, the perilous consequences of drug abuse continue to ravage families, communities and society at large. The abuse of drugs continues to undermine the efforts of all countries within Africa to deepen socio-economic development and other efforts aimed at promoting sustainable development. Instead, the consumption of illicit drugs continues to contribute to the rise in diseases such as HIV/AIDS and psychological disorders. In addition, drug users are also exposed to violent crimes and premature deaths due to ill health as well as high risk of long-term unemployment due to school dropouts.
12. The African Group would like to reiterate its deep concern regarding the increasing use of the Continent as a cross-road for all illicitly trafficked drugs and psychotropic substances. This situation has created many security challenges, including organized crime in transit countries and along the traditional and new trafficking routes, including the transatlantic route.
13. The Group would like to salute the ongoing efforts made by African countries, despite economic constraints, in combating the drug problem, through inter alia, eradication of illicit drug crop cultivation and production and strengthening law enforcement capacities. In this regard, the Group would like to highlight the importance of a comprehensive, balanced and coordinated approach in addressing the world drug problem. In this regard, the group calls for a more enhanced regional and international cooperation in order to continue to fight against the illicit manufacturing, production and trafficking of drugs and psychotropic substances,
14. Based on the principle of shared responsibility, the Group stresses the importance of effective international and regional cooperation in the areas of exchange of information, mutual legal assistance and extradition to tackle the problems faced by the countries affected by the illicit trafficking, and abuse of drugs. The Group also reaffirms the need of a balanced approach between drug demand and supply to better address the world drug problem.

Mr. Chairman,

15. We look forward to the holding of the five (5) interactive discussions on the high-level segments to be held during the 2016 Special Session on the world drug problem. Without any shadow of doubt, these interactive discussions will further contribute towards the effective implementation of the 3 drug conventions and the goals and objectives set forth in the 2009 Political Declaration.

16. Allow me Mr. Chairman, to provide few remarks on the interactive discussions:

a) With regard to the Interactive Discussion on **Drugs and Crime**, the African Group attaches great importance to the fight against organized criminal activities related to illicit drugs. We are of the view that Member States should enhance domestic, regional and international cooperation to counter drug-related crimes including countering money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.

Furthermore, the African Group stress the urgent need to respond to the serious challenges posed by the increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in humans, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and, in some cases, terrorism and money-laundering, including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism, and to the significant challenges faced by law enforcement and judicial authorities in responding to the ever-changing means used by transnational criminal organizations to avoid detection and prosecution.

b) Concerning the Interactive Discussion on **Drugs and Health**, the Group reiterates its concern regarding health problems associated with the abuse of drugs and reaffirms its commitment to work towards the improvement of access to drugs abuse related health prevention programmes including awareness raising, treatment and rehabilitation. The Group reiterates its concern about the unavailability of pain relieving drugs for millions of people who need them most on the African continent. We look forward to tis interactive discussion to discuss the need to ensure adequate availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion and abuse.

c) On the Interactive Discussion on **Cross-Cutting Issues: New Challenges, Threats and Realities** in preventing the world drug problem, the African Group would like to underline that different regions continue to experience different new challenges, threats and realities which have an impact in strengthening the fight against the world drug problem. In Africa, new challenges of online sale of illicit drugs, increase trafficking in precursor chemicals have emerged and threaten the public health of millions of young people in Africa. In this regard, the Group believes that Member States should strengthen the implementation of the 3 drug conventions and the goals and objectives set forth in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action to effectively address new challenges and threats posed by the world drug problem.

The Group welcome efforts made by several Member States to develop combined public education, law enforcement and health initiatives to address the rise of consumption of drugs, and notes with grave concern the calls for the legalization and decriminalization of certain drugs in some regions of the world. It is the view of the African Group that such misguided policies will hinder the ongoing efforts to combat the illicit production, trafficking and abuse of drugs and also the balanced approach which Member States have committed to in the global fight against the world drug problem.

d) On the Interactive Discussion on **Drug and Development**: The Group would like to reiterate the high importance it attaches to integral and sustainable alternative development and preventive alternative development, as, inter-alia, a means to curb the world drug problem. In this respect, the Group would like to encourage UNODC to continue to use its advocacy role to encourage both multilateral development agencies as well as bilateral donors to give special attention to alternative development in the programs and projects related to counter drug problems.

Mr. Chairman,

17. The African Group would like to acknowledge with appreciation the valuable unconditional support and contribution of donors and calls upon the UNODC to continue to mobilize resources to the delivery technical assistance including equipment upon request and to enhance the capacities in the field of crime and drug prevention, law enforcement, forensic laboratories, training of personnel, and reorganization of institutions. Furthermore adequate assistance should be provided to improve the collection and analysis of reliable and comparable data and statistics in order to enable the African countries to tackle the drug problem and to join their effort to promote international cooperation.

18. The Group recognizes the efforts made by African countries in preventing, eliminating or reducing significantly and measurably the illicit cultivation of crops used for production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Despite those efforts, the illicit production, manufacturing, trafficking and abuse of controlled substances such as **Cannabis, Cocaine, Heroin**; as well as non-controlled substances such as **Ketamine, Methamphetamine, Nyaope** and **Tramadol** remains a huge challenge across Africa which requires an enhanced international and regional cooperation including technical assistance based on the needs of the requesting countries.

Mr. Chairman,

19. While noting the ongoing progress in the elaboration of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the African Group strongly believes that the Post-2015 Development Agenda should build on the gains achieved by Member States in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Group is of the view that the Post-2015 Development Agenda should enhance the means of implementation, in particular FDI and ODA, to complement the efforts of African countries in the uprooting extreme poverty, unemployment and inequality and to improve the quality of life through education, skills and technology transfer.

20. The Group shares its concerns over the abuse of substances not under international control, namely ketamine and tramadol. In this regard, the Group calls for the adoption of appropriate measures aimed at reducing their illicit supply and demand, including strengthening of cooperation in law enforcement activities to tackle the trade in, distribution, and manufacture of these substances, as well as strengthening of international cooperation in data collection, data sharing, and data dissemination, in order to develop a comprehensive and proactive international strategy and policy for drug control.
21. The Group notes with regrets that the report of the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD) concludes that the international control for Ketamine is not really necessary at present. In this regard, the Group requests the Commission to further engage the ECDD for its reviewing the conclusion and further considering the necessity and urgency of establishing international control of Ketamine.
22. The Group underscores the importance of the African Ministers for Drug Control and Crime Prevention in October 2012, of the Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2013-2017), as a blueprint for Africa to address the challenges posed by illicit drugs. We believe that complementary efforts by the international community will further enhance the realization of the objectives encapsulated in this Plan.

Mr. Chairman,

23. The role of standing open-ended intergovernmental working group to improve the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (FINGOV) remains crucial. The African Group considers the FINGOV as an appropriate forum for a fruitful dialogue on UNODC's programme development and implementation, through a process of consultation and review, thereby strengthening the trust, deepening the understanding and enhancing the cooperation between Member States and the Secretariat, as well as among Member States themselves.
24. In this regard, the Group commends the leadership of the Co-chairs of the Working Group, H.E. Ambassador Reza Najafi, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Mr. Ignacio Baylina of Spain for their efforts.
25. The Group welcomes the recommendations made in resolution E/CN.7/2015/L.2, outlining the continuous support for strengthening the financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the promotion of an integrated programme approach, and the promotion of a culture of evaluation within the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime at all stages of programme planning, development and implementation. Furthermore, the Group agrees on the importance of continuous support for strengthening human resources governance to improve gender balance and geographical representation.
26. The Group looks forward to the extension of the mandate of the Working Group and reaffirms its commitment to contribute to its task. The Group believes that Member States and the Secretariat must continue to discuss ways on addressing the persistent unpredictable and constrained financial situation of the UNODC, as well the need to ensure UNODC's delivery capacity and the sustainability of its thematic, global and regional programmes.

Mr. Chairman,

27. The African Group welcomes the inclusion in the agenda of the 58th session of the CND an item referred to Staff composition of the United Nations on Drugs and Crime and other related matters and expresses concern that geographical representation from developing countries and gender balance, especially at the senior and policy-making levels, are inadequate and adversely affect the highest standards of efficiency, technical competence and integrity of the UNODC.
28. The Group urges the Executive-Director to intensify his efforts to ensure that adequate, and proper geographical representation and gender balance are fully incorporated in the recruitment policy of UNODC, both at headquarters and its Field Offices, particularly at the senior and policy-making levels and for professional posts requiring specific skills.
29. In the above-context, the African Group believes that this question should remain a standing separate agenda item of this Commission and urges the Secretariat to engage in an open and transparent dialogue, providing disaggregated information as requested by our Group.
30. In conclusion Mr. Chairman, let me assure you, once again, of the full support and participation of the African Group during this Special Segment.

I thank you.