

**STATEMENT OF THE ASIAN GROUP
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF
58th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS
ON 9 MARCH 2015**

To be delivered by
H.E. Hussam Al Hussein, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Vienna, Chair of the Asian Group

Mr. Chairman

1. On behalf of the Asian Group, I would like to take this opportunity to express my warm congratulations to you and to the other respective members of the Bureau on your election and to thank you and the Chair of UNGASS board for the excellent organization of this special segment for preparing for the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on the World Drug Problem. I assure you of the Group's full support and cooperation.
2. The Group would also like to thank the Secretariat for its excellent work in preparation for this session of the Commission.

Mr. Chairman

3. Despite continued international efforts and achievements, certain worrying trends and challenges in relation to the world drug problem are persistent and new ones had emerged in some parts of the world. The group believes that those new trends and challenges need to be taken into account in the implementation of the 2009 political Declaration and Plan of Action.
4. The Group is of the view that these persistent and new challenges and trends in countering the world drug problem related to drug demand and supply reduction and to countering money-laundering and promoting international cooperation including on judicial matters remain a common and shared responsibility and should continue to be addressed in a comprehensive, integrated and balanced manner, in full compliance with the three international drug control conventions and in accordance with national legislation.

5. The Group stresses 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.
6. The Group underlines the importance of further strengthening national, regional and international efforts in dealing with the world drug problem, on the basis of the three international drug control conventions and the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action and in particular with full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity of States, the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of the states, and all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
7. The Group fully supports all efforts aiming at strengthening international and regional cooperation and coordination to counter the threat caused by the illicit production of and trafficking in drugs, addressing supply, demand as well as trafficking in and diversion of precursor chemicals.
8. The Group reaffirms the prime role and responsibility of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for drug control matters. The Group also reiterates its support and appreciation for the UNODC as a leading entity in the UN system for countering the world drug problem.

Mr. Chairman,

9. Last year high-level Mid-term review of the implementation of the 2009 political declaration and plan of action provided a chance to assess progress made and to highlight the importance of addressing the world drug problem in a multilateral setting through effective and increased international cooperation and through an integrated, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing, balanced and comprehensive approach to supply and demand. In this context, the group reiterates its full commitment to the full realization of those goals outlined in the political declaration and to the implementation of its plan of action through practical steps.

10. The Group stresses the importance of the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on the world drug problem in 2016 as a milestone on the way to 2019, which has been set as the target date in the Political Declaration for the review of implementation. The group appreciates the leading role that has been played by CND in preparing for this special session.

11. The group expresses its satisfaction with the progress made so far in the preparatory process leading to this session and welcomes the five interactive discussions on different topics that will be held this week. The Group believes that these interactive discussions will provide an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to exchange views, experiences, and best practices.

Mr. Chairman

12. The Group highlights the importance of continuing and further strengthening regional and inter-regional cooperation, especially in the context of illicit drugs related policy coordination and operational cooperation as well as exchange of information where appropriate. In this context, the group welcomes and reaffirms the recommendations made by the 38th meeting of Heads of Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Asia and Pacific. The group also supports the UNODC regional programs including the initiatives such as the triangular initiative.
13. The Group emphasizes that alternative development is an important, lawful, viable and sustainable option for preventing, eliminating or reducing the illicit crop cultivation, and should be implemented as an integral part of broader illicit drug control policies, including demand reduction, law enforcement, illicit crop eradication and awareness raising.
14. The Group expresses its concern over the threats and challenges posed by the large amount of non-scheduled precursor chemicals and the proliferation of new psychoactive substances, including the continued high level and significant scale of ketamine abuse and its illicit trafficking. The group calls for strengthened coordination and collective response to such threats and challenges, including providing scheduling recommendations and taking action for appropriate international control, bearing in mind the importance to ensure the balance between availability of concerned substances for medical purposes and prevention of their abuse and illicit trafficking. Hence, the group welcomes the progress that has been achieved in identifying, monitoring and reporting on a large number of new psychoactive substances through the UNODC's global Synthetic Monitoring; Analysis, Reporting and Trends program and the early warning advisory on new psychoactive substances.

15. The group welcomes that WHO convened Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD) meeting in June 2014. The group understands that the WHO assessments are determinative as to medical and scientific matters of a substance under the 1971 convention. However, the group also stresses that the Commission should consider further the economic, social, legal, administrative, and other factors in taking appropriate actions on the WHO ECDD recommendations, especially for substances used in legitimate industry.

16. The Group recognizes that the drug problem continues to pose a serious threat to the health, safety and well-being of all humanity, in particular youth, our most precious asset. The Group reaffirms its commitment to work towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes and treatment, care and related support services, in full compliance with the international drug control conventions and in accordance with national legislation.

Operational Segment

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Group expresses its support to the extension of the term of the Inter-Governmental Working Group to Improve the Governance and Financial Situation of the UNODC (FINGOV). It is a necessary step for achieving transparency and efficiency in the governance and financial system of the UNODC. The Group is of the view that under its renewed mandate the FINGOV should continue its function as a forum for dialogue among member states and between member states and the UNODC secretariat.
2. The group welcomes the inclusion of agenda item 3(c) "*Staff composition of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other related matters*". In this respect the group highlights the importance of incorporating equal geographical distribution and gender balance criterion 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. (agreed)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.