

check against delivery

58th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

**Special Segment on the Preparations for the
UNGASS on the World Drug Problem 2016**

**Statement by Austria
Director General Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger**

Mr. Chairman,

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement of the European Union and would like to add the following remarks.

Given the multifaceted nature of the world drug problem, involving health, security, social, economic and human rights aspects, an effective response needs to be equally holistic. Such understanding is the basis of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action and its integrated balanced and comprehensive approach.

The General Assembly decided in 2012 in Resolution 67/193

[quote] *“that the special session ... will review the **progress in the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, 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 UN instruments**”.* [unquote]

Progress has indeed been made and in this context I would like to particularly commend the critical **role of UNODC** as the leading entity in the UN system for addressing the world drug problem and the assistance it provides to member states. However, four years from the target date of 2019 for the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action many challenges still persist and new ones have emerged. Austria is looking forward to UNGASS as a welcome opportunity to create political momentum towards the full implementation of the commitments and targets. Please allow me to focus on some of the substantive issues which we think require attention in the preparation for UNGASS and at UNGASS itself:

One of the new issues certainly is the rapid emergence of **new psychoactive substances**. Austria has reacted at a national level by passing the New Psychoactive Substance Act which entered into force in 2012. This law criminalizes the production and making available of NPS without affecting any possible legitimate use in the industry. But the law does not criminalize the consumers in order not to jeopardize access to them in terms of prevention and harm reduction. Overall, our experience with this approach has been positive. However, measures at the national level alone are insufficient. As soon as one state bans new psychoactive substances, traders simply move their business to other states, where laws are more permissive. Uncoordinated clamp-downs may force traffickers to move drug production sites to neighbouring countries or to switch trafficking routes, but these measures cannot disrupt trafficking in a sustainable way. Therefore effective cooperation and coordination between all states is essential to tackle in particular the supply-side of the new psychoactive substances phenomenon. The development of appropriate

new and effective approaches to better dealing with the NPS phenomenon should belong to the future priorities

Other challenges include a stronger focus on the **health and social problems related to drug consumption and drug addiction**, including the implementation of risk and harm reduction measures, as well as the need to conduct more research and promote the exchange of best practices with a view to increasing access to demand reduction services. More focus on science and evidence could allow us to address critical issues apart from ideological controversies and political disputes. This also includes the **access of controlled substances for medical purposes**, which is perfectly possible within the framework of the Conventions but not sufficiently implemented.

Austria is strongly committed to a **human rights** based approach to drug control. We therefore consider that UNGASS needs to discuss the abolition of punishments that are against human dignity as well as the proportionality of sentencing for drug-related offences. In addition, the issues of non-discrimination and human rights in the administration of justice in this context, including alternatives to incarceration and re-integration, are also highly relevant for improving the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action.

Alternative development by creating perspectives and sustainable livelihoods for drug farmers is a high priority for Austria. We have supported a number of UNODC projects in Latin American countries and will continue to do so. We welcome that this Special Segment will dedicate one of five interactive discussions to this topic and we hope that this, as well as the other topics of the roundtables, will be retained for the agenda of the UNGASS itself.

Mr. Chairman,

In Resolution 57/5 the CND decided

[quote]" to present proposals, for consideration by the General Assembly, regarding all organizational matters, including the agenda, dates, substantive issues to be covered, outcomes and other issues relevant to the successful preparations for the special session" [unquote]

These preparations are well under way and will be further advanced during this Special Segment. In this context, we welcome the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, in particular the meaningful participation of **civil society** in the UNGASS preparations. Civil society participation can provide an important "reality check" on what works and what does not work in drug control matters. We therefore welcome the creation of the Civil Society Task Force in Vienna and look forward to continuing a fruitful dialogue with all stakeholders.

A good event requires good preparation. Austria remains committed to a successful and inclusive preparatory process towards making UNGASS a milestone event which lives up to addressing the world drug problem as a common and shared responsibility in a multilateral setting with an integrated balanced and comprehensive approach.

I thank you.