

Statement of the Leader of the Indian Delegation in the general debate on the Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug problem in 2016 to be held during 58th Session of CND

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of India, I am honored to take the floor in this special segment organized in the 58th Session of CND for preparations for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session to be held in 2016. Let me, first of all congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election. We are sure that your rich experience will be of immense value to the success of the Commission's meeting.

2. Mr. Chairman, the 'Political Declaration and Plan of Action', adopted in the year 2009, was a major milestone in addressing the world drug problem. Member States have strived hard to achieve the target of eliminating or significantly reducing the drug problem by the target date of 2019 set in the Political Declaration. Today, as the Commission on Narcotic Drugs meets to prepare for the Special Session of the UN on drug matters in 2016, it is apparent that while much has been done on the 'Plan of Action', new challenges have emerged which call for a concerted response from the international community.

3. Let us begin by counting the positives. There is a distinct decline in the area under illicit coca cultivation. The global incidence of people who abuse drugs has remained more or less static in percentage terms between 3.5 and 7.0% of the people aged 15 to 64 in the last few years. The number of problem drug users has also by and large remained stable. There is much greater awareness about all aspects of drug abuse globally and active involvement of civil society representatives in the debate on drug matters, which is reflected very well in the preparatory process towards UNGASS 2016. On the supply side, there is increasing cooperation of law enforcement efforts, suitably aided by UNODC at the global level. These are tangible gains of which the international community can well be proud of.

4. However, there are challenges as well which cannot be ignored. The extent of illicit poppy cultivation in the world reached an all-time high in 2014. The countries in

the neighborhood of India almost completely account for such exponential increase. Apart from continued use of amphetamines, there is this immense challenge posed by the emergence of 'New Psychoactive Substances' which are beyond the purview of the Conventions. On the demand side the percentage of people who require to be treated after falling prey to drug abuse and not having access to proper treatment, continues to be a matter of concern. These are challenges that require responses based on the cooperation of all stake holders within the country, within regions and globally, as we lead up to the special segment of UN General Assembly next year.

5. Mr. Chairman, I am happy to inform this august gathering that the Government of India has attributed the highest priority to this issue with policy directions on the same coming from the Prime Minister of the country himself. Soon after assuming office last year the Indian Prime Minister put forth a three point initiative to curb the drug menace. This comprises – increased health services for better rehabilitation of those already addicted, greater awareness in schools and colleges against use of narcotics and stringent enforcement of measures against narcotics smuggling. Recently, speaking to the Nation on the radio in one of his talks, the PM opined that drug abuse was a malaise filled 3D – 'darkness, destruction and devastation', as it leads to the dark alleys of destruction and devastation. Aptly, he described the drug problem in the country as a psycho-socio-medical problem and said that it needed to be treated and handled like one. While the PM expressed his concern on the spread of drugs among the youth, he also mentioned that **'drug addiction is bad, not the child'**.

6. This view of the PM captures India's approach towards the drug problem and in the last one year the country has taken several steps to implement this approach.

7. On the demand reduction side, a policy specifically on the aspects of demand reduction, treatment, and rehabilitation of victims of drug abuse is on the anvil. The policy emphasizes evidence based interventions with complete involvement of civil society for demand reduction initiatives. Standards to be followed by treatment centers in the private sector have already been developed by the Government, and now a Committee has been set up to accredit the entities in the private sector offering de-addiction treatment. An inter-ministerial committee has been set up with representatives from Ministries and agencies involved in supply reduction, demand reduction as well as treatment and after-care to further suggest measures for strengthening demand reduction activities.

8. Mr. Chairman, moving towards policies with a public health approach and those which are in conformity with human rights and the rights of patients to access those narcotic drugs which they need for their genuine medical needs, after the amendment of the narcotics regulation last year, the Government is very close to notifying simplified regulations in respect of certain drugs which we believe, are essential for treatment of pain as also substance abuse. With the assistance of UNODC, we have also recently successfully tried out methadone maintenance treatment as part of opioid substitution therapy in addition to buprenorphine treatment which is already in vogue.

9. Mr. Chairman, the Government has also approved significant changes to the rules pertaining to manufacture of synthetic narcotic drugs as well as psychotropic substances moving towards an online regulatory regime with specified time limits for issue of licenses, NOCs for import/exports etc. All these efforts are aimed to better serve the victims of drug abuse and the patients in pain in need of relief. They are also intended to provide the manufacturers who supply such medicines and the doctors and health professionals who actually impart such treatment, a considerate and enabling environment to do so.

10. Mr. Chairman, the entire world is grappling with the emergence of NPS and India is no exception. In order to strengthen the enforcement measures and send out a strong signal against the manufacture of new psychoactive substances in the country, the government has already included 'mephedrone' as a controlled substance under the NDPS Act very recently. There is also a Committee in place to monitor the emergence of NPS in country and think of ways to confront the challenge legally. We however strongly feel that there is need for extensive international cooperation as also support by the UNODC on this issue for strengthening forensic capabilities, and legislations globally so that law enforcement efforts are not constantly playing catch up with this threat.

11. Mr. Chairman, the Government of India has all along stood by the United Nation Conventions on drug matters. As suppliers of opiate raw material to the world and licit opium cultivators for centuries, we have special responsibility cast upon us under the Conventions which we have managed to discharge with great degree of success. Over the last few years we have attempted to align our policies, legislation and regulation to further conform to the principles laid out in the UN Conventions including the 'principle of balance'. It has been our experience, that the Conventions provide for sufficient flexibility to incorporate the 'human face' of the drug problem. Through this forum, Mr. Chairman, I would reiterate India's support to the UN drug Conventions leading up to the

special session of the UN General Assembly on drugs next year. We firmly believe that the need of the hour is not to dilute the Conventions, but to implement them in their right spirit.

12. Thank you very much.