



**CHECK AGAINST  
DELIVERY**

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**FIFTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS  
PREPARATIONS FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM**

**Vienna, March 14 - 22, 2016**

Mr. Chairman,

The Delegation of the Holy See is pleased to participate at this 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, devoted to “Preparations for the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the world drug problem”. Furthermore, we would like to congratulate both you and the Board of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for the work you have done in preparing this session and the 2016 UNGASS in general.

Whereas enhanced global solidarity and greater ease in commerce among peoples have been facilitated by recent rapid advances in trade and communication, they have also brought in their wake an escalation in international criminal activity. One of the unfortunate results of an increasingly interconnected world is proliferation in the illicit international trade in narcotics. From poor rural workers in war-torn zones of production to affluent metropolitan end-users, the illicit trade in drugs is no respecter of national boundaries or of socioeconomic status.

Critical to addressing the growing international nature of this phenomenon is the recognition that effective responses require efforts from all parties to address not only the individual but also the societal causes for these activities. Drug abuse serves as a powerful impetus for organized cartels and gangs – which redeploy financing reaped from such activities to diffuse fear and violence in securing greater hegemony in their pursuit of power. In this regard, my delegation notes with concern the links between the illicit drug trade and other inhumane activities such as trafficking in persons, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, organized crime and terrorism. These links illustrate the fact that substance abuse can never be regarded as a victimless or self-inflicted drama but is an issue, rather, that has far reaching and devastating impacts on communities well beyond the end-user.

The supply and demand dynamics of this phenomenon serve as powerful impediments to individuals, communities and nations in achieving their economic, political and social development. As cultivators of source crops, poverty-afflicted populations in developing countries are particularly vulnerable to the trickle-down effects of the drug trade. Throughout the developing world, alternative development programmes must be promoted and supported which provide producers with real alternatives to the cocoa and poppy crops, which continue to incite havoc and bloodshed. Greater efforts are needed to highlight the obvious link between development and the fight against the illegal drug trade.

At the same time, the international drug trade is driven by demand, coming in large part from the developed world. International solutions require therefore, that effective efforts be indeed focused in zones of production but must also address the underlying causes for the demand in illegal drugs. Drug production abroad will be eradicated in proportion to the domestic efforts made to address the underlying demand. This makes it necessary to identify ways to prevent the initial onset of drug abuse as well as ways to rehabilitate drug abusers expeditiously so that they may begin once more to contribute more fully to the common good. Those who have struggled to overcome drug abuse are in a position to offer hope, especially to young people, and can prove truly positive role models of how to combat the onslaught against humanity that drug dependence poses.

The globalized nature of this phenomenon presents new challenges to the legal and judicial mechanisms of States struggling to protect their citizens as well as to enforce accountability with regard to wrongdoers. Accountability remains but one factor in addressing a complex problem, since personal, social and spiritual rehabilitation will also be necessary for drug abusers and communities devastated by the production and smuggling of drugs. Whereas consumers must be held accountable where they break the law, they must also be provided with access to rehabilitation. The positive role of faith communities in this regard should also be highlighted.

Mr. Chairman,

The Catholic Church – overseeing as it does some 12,000 hospitals and institutions of healthcare and preventative medicine throughout the world – well appreciates the global policy dimensions of health care concerns affecting the peoples of the world. Thus the Holy See reaffirms its urgent call to integrate health care into the formulation of policy combating drug dependence. My delegation considers that health care should occupy a central position in anti-drug policy-making, not solely by preventing abuse but also by alleviating the suffering of drug dependent persons through treatment. Efforts must be made by governments and civil society to restore the health of individuals and communities beset by this scourge, since all people have a legitimate claim to social and economic development. The need for greater global cooperation in the quest to extend basic health care to all emerges not only as a practical necessity, therefore, but also as an ethical imperative of solidarity.

The tragic phenomenon of drug dependence afflicts not only the international community but wreaks untold devastation on the physical, social and spiritual lives of individuals, families and communities everywhere. No-one touched by this phenomenon suffers as an isolated individual the devastation and the diminution of human dignity that results. The family is usually the first to suffer, both the acute and long-term consequences of a substance-abusing member. Since the family constitutes the basic unit of society, illicit drug use provokes disequilibrium and breakdown not only in the family, but has knock-on effects undermining the social fabric of whole communities and in this way leads, as a result, to the destabilization of civil society itself.

On the other hand, research indicates that since core principles are learned in the home, children from nurturing family environments more easily learn the skill-set necessary to make important decisions in avoiding the scourge of illicit drugs. For this reason, my delegation cannot place enough emphasis on the importance of the family as the cornerstone of prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, reintegration, and health strategies. Since many of the causes and consequences of drug dependence are related to family dynamics, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation efforts should target family relationships in their biological, psychological, economic, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions.

A multifaceted problem, therefore, requires multifaceted solutions. Recognized pillars of such an approach certainly include: increasing knowledge and understanding of drugs and connected crime issues, assisting States in the ratification and implementation of the relevant international treaties, and enhancing the capacity of Member States to counteract trade in illicit drugs as a means for better understanding and response to the international drug trade. However, if we truly wish to engage in a sustained process to stop and reverse drug abuse altogether, then all parties need to find common cause in universal human principles that can truly underpin our efforts. The Holy See sees as fundamental, in this regard, the need to promote a people-centered approach to the international drug trade, which recognizes the inherent dignity and worth of every human life, with special attention to the most vulnerable members of society. A consistent ethic of life means that recourse to capital punishment for drug-related offences can never be countenanced, since this excludes, *a priori*, any concern for the rehabilitation of the offender as a person.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

