

59th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Statement

by the Republic of Croatia

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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to commend you, Mr. Chairperson, the CND Secretariat and the UNGASS Board for the considerable efforts put into preparation of this special segment leading to UNGASS next month. Let me begin by stating that the Republic of Croatia fully associates itself with the statement made earlier by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. Please allow me to add a few remarks and briefly address several issues that are of special importance to my country.

Mr. Chairperson,

In recent years, the Republic of Croatia has continuously been working on improving its national policies and approaches to countering the drug problem specially having in mind the global drug policy shift towards a more balanced and evidence-based approach, with the inclusion of issues such as social reintegration of addicts, risk and harm reduction programs and treatment programs, all tailored to the needs of the beneficiaries of such programs.

Such an approach has proven especially valuable in the implementation of social reintegration programs, where the Republic of Croatia has been particularly active. Within this framework, we have implemented numerous activities in different areas, such as psychosocial support and assistance with re-education, employment and housing, as well as other forms of social interventions with the aim of reintegrating as many drug users as possible. The achieved results have been very encouraging, as we have succeeded to increase awareness of all stakeholders of the drug problem, reduce the stigma associated with the drug use and motivate more drug users to participate in re-education programs, with the end result being the increase in their employment rate.

In addition to this, the Republic of Croatia has a long tradition of implementing risk and harm reduction programs, which have proven to be very effective in reducing drug-related deaths and blood-borne infectious diseases. In light of our experience, we are convinced that risk and harm reduction programs should form an integral part of all policies and programs that address drug and public health issues.

It is important to say that all these programs are implemented in association with civil society organisations, which provide considerable support in our efforts to improve health and quality of living of drug users in the Republic of Croatia. They are also invaluable in providing recommendations and insights during decision-making processes, and are also regarded as equal partners in the implementation phase.

Mr. Chairperson,

Another issue that has risen in recent years, and we as a country find it very important, is the issue of appropriate sanctions when sentencing for drug-related offences. In line with the national and the EU strategies, as well as international treaties and standards, we believe that all factors should be taken into consideration when sentencing individuals who have committed such offences, possibly leading to finding alternatives to imprisonment and/or prosecution for certain offences.

As mentioned before, all these approaches should be based on evidences supported by scientific studies and sharing of best practices, which should frame a starting point for all national and international drug-related measures and policies.

In conclusion, we would like to stress that the Republic of Croatia holds the universal application of all international legal instruments that create the basis of the international drug control system very important. We also support and are actively participating in the on-going talks and debates on challenges in countering the world drug problem, which we hope will result in a satisfactory outcome for all the stakeholders during the forthcoming UNGASS in New York.

Thank you very much.