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**Statement on behalf of the African Group at the Special
Segment of the 59th session of
the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)
delivered by H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Hussein H. ZAROUG,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Sudan
Vienna, 14 March 2016**

**Your Excellency Ambassador Vladimir Galuška, Chairman of the 59th Session of
the Commission on Narcotics Drugs
Your Excellency Ambassador Khaled Shamaa, Chair of the UNGASS Board
Your Excellency Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Mr. Chairman,

1. Allow me on behalf of the African Group to express my warm congratulations to you on your election as Chairperson of the 59th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The African Group would also like to extend its congratulations to other members of the Bureau.
2. The Group assures you of the full support of its Member States during this session and believes that with your diplomatic skills and experience, the work of this session will be rewarded with fruitful results.
3. Equally, the African Group welcomes with satisfaction the convening of the Special Segment of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016. The Group would like to commend the chair of the UNGASS Board, Ambassador Shamaa of Egypt, and other members of the Board for their abled leadership in preparation for the 2016 Special Session. We would like to assure the Chair of the UNGASS Board of the full and unwavering support of the African Group.
4. The Group wishes also to express its appreciation to the Secretariat for the hard work in preparation for this meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

5. While appreciating the progress made, at the international, regional and national levels, in countering the world drug problem, the African Group underscores that this problem

remains a major challenge for the international community that requires an effective and increased bilateral, regional and international cooperation on the basis of the principle of common and shared responsibility. Furthermore, the Group calls for the sharing of best practices among Member States on drug control strategies.

6. In this context, the Group reaffirms its commitment to the effective implementation of the existing three International Drug Control Conventions, which constitute the cornerstone of the international drug control system, and underlines the importance of achieving targets, provisions and goals set out in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem. In addition, the Group reaffirms its commitment to the Joint Ministerial Statement adopted in 2014.
7. The Group reaffirms, as stipulated in UN General Assembly resolution 67/193, that the 2016 Special Session on the world drug problem will provide an opportunity for Member States to review the progress made in the implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action 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 United Nations instruments.
8. The African Group recognizes the leading role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as the central policy making body with the United Nations system dealing with drug-related matters as stipulated in the CND resolution 58/8, as well as the efforts undertaken by the bureau of the UNGASS board as well as the Bureau of 58th Session of the Commission in addressing all the organizational and substantive matters for the preparation of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem.
9. Furthermore the Group welcomes the 25th meeting of the HONLEA Africa held in Algeria in September 2015 and looks forward for the implementation of its recommendations with the purpose to strengthen the regional cooperation in effectively countering the World Drug Problem.
10. The Group welcomes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is fully confident that efforts to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals and effectively counter the World Drug Problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Mr. Chairman,

11. The African Group continues to express its grave concern over the global scourge in the abuse of illicit drugs. The African Group believes that Member States should not lose sight of the public health consequences associated with illicit drugs. In Africa, the perilous consequences of drug abuse continue to ravage families, communities and society at large. The abuse of drugs continues to undermine the efforts of all countries within Africa to deepen socio-economic development and other efforts aimed at promoting sustainable development. Instead, the consumption of illicit drugs continues to contribute to the rise in diseases such as HIV/AIDS and psychological disorders. In addition, drug users are also exposed to violent crimes and premature deaths due to ill health as well as high risk of long-term unemployment due to school dropouts.

12. The African Group would like to reiterate its deep concern regarding the increasing use of the Continent as a cross-road for all illicitly trafficked drugs and psychotropic substances. This situation has created many security challenges, including organized crime in transit countries and along the traditional and new trafficking routes, including the transatlantic route as well as commercial aerial and maritime routes.
13. The Group takes note of the shared concerns related to the illicit drug and crime situation in the continent, particularly in West Africa and the Sahel region. In this regard, the group underscores the ongoing efforts made by the UNODC and in close cooperation of concerned Member States in addressing the drug trafficking situation in these regions.
14. Based on the principle of shared responsibility, the Group stresses the importance of effective international and regional cooperation in the areas of exchange of information, mutual legal assistance and extradition to tackle the problems faced by the countries affected by the illicit trafficking, and abuse of drugs. The Group also reaffirms the need of a balanced approach between drug demand and supply to better address the world drug problem.
15. The Group recognizes the efforts made by African countries in preventing, eliminating or reducing significantly and measurably the illicit cultivation of crops used for production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Despite those efforts, the illicit cultivation, production, manufacturing, trafficking and abuse of controlled substances which are Cannabis, Cocaine, Heroin; as well as non-controlled substances such as Ketamine, Methamphetamine, Nyaope and Tramadol remains a huge challenge across Africa which requires an enhanced international and regional cooperation including technical assistance based on the needs of the requesting countries.

Mr. Chairman,

16. The Group stresses that effective drug policies are those that achieve a balanced and integrated approach in between supply reduction, demand reduction and international cooperation as outlined in the three international drug control conventions as well as the Political Declaration and Plan of Action.
17. The Group calls the Member States to continue to pursue a mutually reinforcing approach to supply and demand reduction, addressing drug abuse as a health and social issue, while upholding the law and its enforcement.
18. The Group reiterates its concern regarding health problems associated with the abuse of drugs and reaffirms its commitment to work towards the improvement of access to drugs abuse related health prevention programmes including awareness raising, treatment and rehabilitation. The Group reiterates its concern over the unavailability, access and unaffordability of pain relieving drugs for millions of people who need them most on the African continent. We look forward to this session to discuss the need to ensure adequate availability and affordability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion, trafficking and abuse.

19. In this regard, the Group would like to call for an increased technical assistance and international cooperation which allow the transfer of know-how in manufacturing generic pharmaceutical preparations that are bioequivalent and cost effective.
20. The Group supports the collaboration of public health and justice authorities in pursuing alternative measures to conviction or punishment for appropriate drug-related offences of a minor non-violent nature, in accordance with the international drug control conventions which establishes, to varying degrees and in specific situations, that States may provide, either as an alternative to conviction or punishment or in addition to conviction or punishment, measures of treatment, education, aftercare, rehabilitation or social reintegration.
21. Equally, the African Group attaches great importance to the fight against organized criminal activities related to illicit drugs. We are of the view that Member States should enhance domestic, regional and international cooperation to counter drug-related crimes including countering money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.
22. Furthermore, the African Group stress 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 human trafficking, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime, 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.
23. The African Group would like to underline that different regions continue to experience different new challenges, threats and priorities which have an impact in strengthening the fight against the world drug problem. In Africa, new challenges of online sale of illicit drugs, increase trafficking in precursor chemicals have emerged and threaten the public health of millions of young people in Africa. In this regard, the Group believes that Member States should strengthen the implementation of the three drug conventions and the goals and objectives set forth in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action to effectively address new challenges and threats posed by the world drug problem.
24. The Group welcomes efforts made by several Member States to develop combined public education, law enforcement and health initiatives to address the rise of consumption of drugs, and notes with grave concern the legalization and decriminalization of certain drugs in some regions of the world. It is the view of the African Group that such misguided policies will hinder the ongoing efforts to combat the illicit production, trafficking and abuse of drugs and also the balanced approach which Member States have committed to in the global fight against the world drug problem.
25. The Group encourages governments to review their national drug policies, laws and strategies so as to ensure that the drug response strategies, covering both supply and demand reduction, taking into account the provisions of the three international drug control conventions including by ensuring that the law enforcement authorities have the requisite capacity to sufficiently address the trafficking of drugs and meet the challenges

arising from the illicit manufacture of, trafficking of drugs in and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants as well as new psychotropic substances.

26. There is a need for the adoption of appropriate measures such as laws and regulations to address the abuse of substances not under international control such as Tramadol and Ketamine aimed at preventing the illicit manufacture of, trafficking in and distribution including reducing their illicit supply and demand by strengthening cooperation in law enforcement officials to tackle the trade in, distribution, and manufacture of these substances, as well as strengthening of international cooperation in data collection, data sharing, and data dissemination, in order to develop a comprehensive and proactive international strategy and policy for drug control.
27. The Group would like to reiterate the high importance it attaches to integral and sustainable alternative development and preventive alternative development, as, inter-alia, a means to curb the world drug problem. In this respect, the Group would like to encourage UNODC to continue to use its advocacy role to encourage both multilateral development agencies as well as bilateral donors to give special attention to alternative development in the programs and projects related to counter drug problems.
28. The Group calls for an adequate assistance to be provided to Governments in order to promote, develop or review their sustainable alternative development initiatives and other crops as alternatives to narcotic plants in close cooperation with affected population, including farmers and rural and local communities, as well as cooperatives and other relevant stakeholders.
29. We encourage the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to continue to use its advocacy role to encourage multilateral development agencies as well as other donors to provide special attention to alternative development including in Africa in the programs and projects related to counter the world drug problem.

Mr. Chairman,

30. The African Group would like to acknowledge with appreciation the valuable unconditional support and contribution of donors and calls upon the UNODC to continue to mobilize resources to the delivery technical assistance including equipment upon request and to enhance the capacities in the fields of crime and drug prevention, law enforcement, forensic laboratories, training of personnel, and reorganization of institutions. Furthermore adequate assistance should be provided to improve the collection and analysis of reliable and comparable data and statistics in order to enable the African countries to tackle the drug problem and to join their effort to promote international cooperation.
31. The Group underscores the importance of the African Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2013-2017), as a blueprint for Africa to address the challenges posed by illicit drugs. We believe that complementary efforts by the international community will further enhance the realization of the objectives encapsulated in this Plan as well as the achievement of a drugs-free continent within the framework of the Aspiration number 4 of the Agenda 2063 « A peaceful and secure Africa ».

32. The role of standing open-ended intergovernmental working group to improve the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (FINGOV) remains crucial. The African Group considers the FINGOV as an appropriate forum for a fruitful dialogue on UNODC's programme development and implementation, through a process of consultation and review, thereby strengthening the trust, deepening the understanding and enhancing the cooperation between Member States and the Secretariat, as well as among Member States themselves.
33. The African Group welcomes the inclusion in the agenda of the 59th session of the CND an item referred to Staff composition of the United Nations on Drugs and Crime and other related matters and expresses concern that geographical representation from developing countries and gender balance, especially at the senior and policy-making levels, are inadequate and adversely affect the highest standards of efficiency, technical competence and integrity of the UNODC.
34. The Group urges the Executive-Director to intensify his efforts to ensure that adequate, and proper geographical representation and gender balance are fully incorporated 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.
35. In the above-context, the African Group believes that this question should remain a standing separate agenda item of this Commission and urges the Secretariat to engage in an open and transparent dialogue, providing disaggregated information as requested by the Group in the past.
36. In conclusion Mr. Chairman, let me assure you, once again, of the full support and participation of the African Group during this Session.

I thank you.