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Asia Group Statement

At The Opening of the 59th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

(14th March, 2016-Vienna)

To be delivered on behalf of the Asia Group by H.E. Ayesha Riyaz, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the Incumbent Chair of the Asia Group in Vienna

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Heads of Delegation,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. On behalf of the Asia Group, it is my pleasure to warmly felicitate Ambassador Vladimir Galuska, on his election as the Chair of the 59th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. In the same vein, I congratulate the other members of the Bureau. The Group commends the Chair and the Bureau for the excellent organization of the Commission's 59th session including the special segment on preparations for the United Nations General Assembly special session on the World Drug Problem in April 2016.
2. The Asia Group assures you, Mr. Chairman, of its continuing support and assistance in making the 59th Session of the Commission a success.
3. The Group would also like to commend the Board tasked by the Commission with preparations for the UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem, for its tireless efforts in efficiently steering the preparations for the UNGASS including in relation to the draft outcome of the special session.
4. The Group also appreciates the professionalism of the Secretariat in making excellent preparations.

Mr. Chairman

5. The Group acknowledges that over the years, notable progress has been achieved in countering the world drug problem with regard to, inter alia, improved understanding of the problem, the elaboration and implementation of national strategies to counter it, capacity-building initiatives, the review and updating of legal frameworks, and of relevant institutions.
6. Our collective progress notwithstanding, the Asia Group recognizes that the world drug problem continues to pose a serious threat to health, safety and well-being of all humanity as well as to democracy and rule of law, and reaffirms that this multifaceted challenge should be addressed and countered in a multilateral setting, by strengthening the principle of common and

shared responsibility, by enhancing international cooperation and adhering to integrated, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing, balanced and comprehensive approach.

7. The Group resolves to strengthen our collective efforts to achieve the goal of a society free of drug abuse.
8. The Group reiterates that the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 constitute the cornerstone of the international drug control system.
9. The Group reaffirms that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs has the principal role and responsibility in relation to drug control matters and that UNODC is the leading entity within the UN system to address and counter the world drug problem.
10. The Group places special emphasis on the need to further strengthen the ongoing national, sub-regional, regional and international efforts to efficiently address and counter the world drug problem, on the basis of the three international drug control conventions and the 2009 Political Declaration, the accompanying Plan of Action as well as the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement, and in particular, with full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity of States, the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the States, and all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
11. The Group stresses the significance of the UN General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem as a milestone on the way to 2019, which has been set as the target date in the 2009 Political Declaration for the review of its implementation. The Group is of the firm view that the UNGASS is a welcome opportunity to have an open and inclusive discussion together with civil society, taking stock of the progress, and on that basis, speed up implementation of the goals and objectives set out in the 2009 Political Declaration and the accompanying Plan of Action.
12. The Group appreciates the leading role of the CND in preparations for the special session, and expresses its satisfaction with the progress made so far in this regard.

13. Appreciating the inputs and contributions made by multiple stakeholders to the UNGASS preparations, the Group stresses that the inter-governmental negotiations on the draft UNGASS outcome should yield a short, concise, substantive and action-oriented set of operational recommendations as decided by CND resolution 58/8.
14. The Group holds the view that the efforts to counter the world drug problem should be in a comprehensive and balanced manner, and implementing the transformative 2030 sustainable development agenda would be mutually reinforcing.

Mr. Chairman

15. The Group recognizes that while existing challenges in relation to the world drug problem have persisted, new challenges and trends have also emerged. It is, therefore, important that in our collective efforts to fully implement the 2009 Political Declaration and the accompanying Plan of Action, as well as the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement, we must take such new trends and challenges into account, in conformity with the three international drug control conventions, and relevant and applicable international law.
16. The Group reiterates that persistent and new challenges and trends in countering the world drug problem related to drug demand and supply reduction and countering money-laundering and promoting international cooperation including on judicial matters should continue to be addressed in a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach.
17. The Asia Group emphasizes 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 trafficking in humans, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime, and in some cases, terrorism and money-laundering and financing of terrorism. Similarly, we should address 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.

Mr. Chairman

18. The Group fully supports all efforts aiming at reinforcing regional and international cooperation and coordination to effectively counter illicit cultivation, production, manufacturing and trafficking in drugs, addressing supply, demand as well as trafficking in and diversion of precursor chemicals.
19. The Group underscores the importance of continuing and further strengthening regional, inter-regional and international cooperation, in the context of illicit drugs, including through policy coordination, operational cooperation, and exchange of information where appropriate.
20. The Group emphasizes that alternative development is an important, lawful, viable and sustainable option for preventing, eliminating or reducing the illicit crop cultivation, and should be implemented as an integral part of broader illicit drug control policies, including demand reduction, law enforcement, illicit crop eradication and awareness-raising. The Group appreciates the initiative of the Government of Thailand for hosting the second International Conference on Alternative Development, ICAD 2, which strongly reinforced the importance and practicality of alternative development.
21. The Group expresses its concern over the threat and challenges posed by the large amount of non-scheduled precursor chemicals and the proliferation of new psychoactive substances (NPS) as well as rapid increase and spread of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS), especially methamphetamine. The Group, therefore, calls for improving coordination and strengthening cooperation to respond to such threats and challenges, including providing scheduling recommendations and taking action for appropriate international control, bearing in mind the importance of ensuring balance between availability of concerned substances for legitimate purposes and prevention of their diversion, abuse and illicit trafficking. In this regard, the Group welcomed the regional meeting of the global SMART programme held in Beijing in September 2015 as a venue for regional cooperation and exchange of good practices.
22. The Group highlights the importance of continuing and further strengthening regional and inter-regional cooperation, especially in the context of drugs related policy coordination and operational cooperation as well as exchange of information where appropriate. In this context, the Group welcomes and reaffirms the recommendation made by 39th meeting of Heads of Drug Law

Enforcement Agencies, Asia and Pacific. The Group also supports regional programmes such as Triangular Initiative.

23. The Group reaffirms its commitment to work towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes and treatment, care and related support services, in full compliance with the international drug control conventions and in accordance with national legislation.
24. We emphasize the need to address the specific needs of women children and youth, in promoting balanced and integrated policies.
25. The Group stresses the need to promote international cooperation to enhance affordable access to controlled drugs for medical purposes, particularly in developing countries, while ensuring that robust measures are in place in accordance with the three drug control conventions and national laws, to prevent their diversion into illicit channels.

I thank you for your attention.
