

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



Drug Commissioner
of the Federal Government

**Drug Commissioner of the Federal Government of Germany
Marlene Mortler, Member of the German Bundestag**

National Statement, 59th CND, UNGASS Segment

Mr Chairman,

Executive Director Fedotov,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This special segment of the 59th CND on UNGASS preparations is taking place at a crucial moment for international drug policy. With only a few weeks to go until UNGASS 2016, the stakes are high. Member States, together with our partners from civil society, are currently defining the focuses and goals of international drug policy in the run-up to the decisive year of 2019 and beyond.

Germany, along with its EU partners, is convinced that the stakes are high because many aspects of the world drug problem are in urgent need of attention and cannot wait for potential responses until 2019. I am referring, of course, to the many drug-related problems such as massive crime and corruption, violence, the HIV-Aids epidemic and poverty. These drug-related problems currently affect millions of individuals

worldwide, from the cultivation areas of illicit drug crops in the Andes and the Golden Triangle, along the trafficking routes in Western Africa and the Silk Road, to the major consumer markets right here in the middle of Europe and elsewhere.

Facing this myriad of negative consequences of the world drug problem, we are convinced that UNGASS should be considered by Member States as an outstanding opportunity to pause for a moment and analyse thoroughly the requirements of a successful international drug policy in the years to come.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am impressed by the dynamism of international drug policy debates in recent years and in the run-up to UNGASS. Never before have discussions been so intense, or debates so controversial, on the issue of international drug control.

However, we are afraid that the international debates may have been misleading at times. Like our EU partners, we are in no doubt that the three UN drug conventions should remain the cornerstone of the international drug control system. We are convinced that the UN drug control system is an achievement that gives Member States enough flexibility to design their drug policies in line with their specific needs and priorities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We believe that neither a bellicose approach to addressing the world drug problem nor an overhaul of the UN conventions will help to overcome the most pressing drug-related problems we are facing today.

We are convinced that the right path to follow consists of an intermediate approach, combining public health, law enforcement and development assistance in a balanced way. Such a balanced strategy, which we successfully apply in Germany and the EU, is of course fully backed by the UN drug conventions, as we decided to interpret the conventions in a human-centred, public health and development-oriented way.

Taking into consideration that the conventions allow a high degree of flexibility, the German Federal Government currently intends to reduce the existing legal barriers for the medical use of cannabis products. A public and political discussion on the changes to the regulatory framework has already begun, following the publication by the Federal Ministry of Health of a draft law in January 2016. In this context it is useful to learn from the experiences of other countries with legal regulations for the – as I clearly mentioned - **medical use** of cannabis.

In our opinion, such a project does nevertheless respect the very clear limits of the conventions. From my perspective, any law aiming to legalise the production, sale and consumption of cannabis as such, in other words for non-medical or non-scientific purposes, is definitely not in line with the conventions. Cannabis is controlled under the 1961 Convention on Narcotic Drugs. The Convention requires States Parties to limit its use to medical and scientific purposes. Therefore – within the concept of alternative development and in observance of the conventions - the production of cannabis for non-medical or non-scientific purposes cannot be a **legal** alternative. Alternative development in the area of illicit drug crop cultivation means giving people the chance to earn their living by cultivating products **in line with the conventions**, so

that they no longer have to depend on – from the conventions' perspective - illegal drug crops.

We firmly believe that the whole range of potential interpretations of the UN drug control conventions and the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action has not been fully made use of so far. While there is little doubt about the effectiveness of interventions such as sound alternative development on the supply side and risk and harm reduction on the demand side, not enough has been done so far in either area.

We do not know how many farmers across the world are involved in the cultivation of drug crops today. We do not know how many farmers across the world have benefited from alternative development interventions. Thanks to the excellent World Drug Report 2015, we see that the average funding for alternative development has accounted for only 0.2% (zero point two percent) of overall global development assistance since 1998. In 2013, it was even lower, at 0.1% (zero point one percent) of global ODA.

The notable and growing political endorsement of the alternative development approach at UN level and the steadily increasing number of countries setting up national and international programmes on alternative development require us to urgently improve the evidence base of this approach and to address the regrettable funding situation in this field.

Due to our thirty years and more of commitment in the field of alternative development, we in Germany know that in the majority of cases the ongoing illicit cultivation of coca bush and opium poppy is a direct consequence of a lack of development. Hence, we believe that we need

to address the root causes of illicit drug cultivation – not only its symptoms. This requires not only political support, but also the investment of significant funds, both by donors and by the affected countries themselves.

Germany has recently launched a new global programme on alternative development and public health-related drug policy in order to attenuate the global funding crisis in this field, and wishing to encourage other donors to do the same.

Ladies and gentlemen, UNGASS is the right moment to do so.

At the same time, we have engaged jointly with UNODC, civil society and such important partners as Thailand and Colombia to reach out to the rising number of Member States that have recently started to engage in alternative development policies and implementation. Through a series of three joint German-UNODC Expert Group Meetings since 2013, we have jointly identified the key messages for the post-UNGASS scenario and summarised them in a Conference Room Paper that has been disseminated by the Secretariat on the occasion of the 59th CND. We would like to thank UNODC and our partners for this great joint effort and kindly invite Member States to consider this document in their deliberations on the framework of the UNGASS process and beyond.

Thank you very much for your attention.