Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Reconvened fifty-ninth session
Vienna, 30 November-2 December 2016
Agenda item 11
Other Business
Special segment: Follow-up to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on the world drug problem

Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Pedro Moitinho de Almeida
CND Facilitator for post-UNGASS Matters
Thematic discussions on UNGASS Follow-up (October 2016)
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Provided below is a more detailed version of the concluding remarks, which I delivered in my capacity as CND Facilitator for post-UNGASS matters, at the occasion of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs’ thematic discussions on the implementation of the operational recommendations contained in the UNGASS outcome document, held on 10-11 and 27-28 October 2016.

Background

1. On 19 April 2016 the General Assembly adopted the outcome document of its special session on the world drug problem (resolution S-30/1). In the outcome document, Member States resolved to take the necessary steps to implement the operational recommendations contained in the document, in close partnership with the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations and civil society, and committed to share with the CND timely information on progress made in the implementation of these operational recommendations.

2. Following the adoption of the UNGASS outcome document, the CND has initiated an intensive follow-up process, based on the principles of comprehensiveness and inclusiveness, with all seven chapters of the UNGASS outcome document being dealt with equally, and ample opportunities being provided for all stakeholders to bring their expertise to the table, including UN entities and specialized agencies, international and regional organizations and civil society. A core part of that immediate follow-up process were the thematic discussions held in October 2016 on each of the seven chapters of the UNGASS outcome document, following a decision taken by the CND at its intersessional meeting on 8 September.

3. The thematic discussions, held on 10-11 and on 27-28 October 2016, provided Member States, UN entities and specialized agencies, international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, with the opportunity to share experiences, lessons learnt and to inform about concrete activities on translating the UNGASS operational recommendations into action.

4. Short introductory remarks for each of the seven thematic chapters were made by UNODC, as the leading entity in the United Nations system for addressing and countering the world drug problem. Representatives from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) participated in the meetings and made presentations on their respective work. Non-governmental organizations from Colombia, Mexico, Thailand, Côte D’Ivoire, United Republic of Tanzania, UK, Indonesia, Bolivia and other countries, whose participation was coordinated through the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs, made presentations in person or addressed the Commission via video message.

5. In line with the approach taken in the preparatory process leading up to UNGASS, the CND thematic discussions were webcast, allowing all interested stakeholders to follow the deliberations.

Facilitator’s summary of the deliberations

6. In the morning session of 10 October 2016, the Commission discussed chapter 1 focusing on “operational recommendations on demand reduction and related measures, including prevention and treatment, as well as other health-related issues”.

7. Delegations reported on specific examples that highlighted their concrete efforts to prioritize targeted prevention through education, training, awareness raising, capacity building and the promotion of life skills and healthy social environments. Delegations shared examples of effective and practical prevention measures and policies with a view to protecting people from drug use initiation, providing accurate information about the risks
of drug abuse, as well as supporting the development of life skills and opportunities. Prevention programmes often include targeted interventions and programmes for the most vulnerable members of society, including women, children and youth. A number of interventions included examples of programmes supporting parenting skills and healthy social environments. Delegations also reported that they were basing their prevention measures on demand reduction standards, including the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention published by UNODC. Education, training and capacity building initiatives tailored to different target groups, in various settings, including schools, universities, communities, military as well as at the workplace, were highlighted as effective demand reduction tools. Schools designed specifically for students in recovery from substance use disorder or dependency (Recovery-high schools, etc.), drug abuse curricula, trust-building initiatives involving law enforcement and health professionals as well as measures focusing on creativity, including art programmes, yoga, or theatre, were reported. A number of delegations informed about prevention and awareness raising initiatives using the internet in particular young people, with a view to facilitating access to information. Social media, dedicated websites, mobile messengers, applications providing information on potential risks of certain drugs, internet portals and online games were some of the tools that had been found to result in positive outcomes.

8. The importance of promoting scientific-evidence based policy making through systematic collection and sharing of reliable and comparable data for efficient demand reduction initiatives was highlighted. The collection of reliable and comparable data featured prominently in the discussions, highlighting efforts to elaborate effective scientific evidence-based programmes tailored to the needs of individuals, families and communities as part of comprehensive and balanced national drug policies. Delegations inter alia reported on the use of geo-referencing programmes, early warning mechanisms, drug observatories, as well as on conducting surveys and focus group discussions to improve systematic data collection. Collecting reliable and comparable data on drug use and epidemiology, including social, economic and other risk factors, was reported by many delegations to be complemented by gathering gender- and age-disaggregated data for the purpose of targeted policy decisions.

9. The need to focus on treating a complex health disorder through a multidisciplinary approach based on cooperation and involvement was addressed by a number of delegations. The provision of treatment through the national public health system as well as efforts to ensure non-discriminatory access to all treatment interventions were underlined, with a number of delegations sharing information on targeted services and increased access opportunities for populations at risk. Progress in the provision of treatment services through close cooperation with the private sector and civil society was reported by a number of delegations. Delegations referred to the International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders, prepared by UNODC and WHO to support Member States in the development and expansion of treatment services. Some delegations also reported on national measures designed to encourage the participation of individuals with drug use disorders in treatment programmes of an exclusive or primarily voluntary nature.

10. The importance of fighting stigmatization and social-exclusion as well as minimizing the adverse consequences of drug abuse was identified by many delegations as one of their priorities. It was underlined that measures aimed at minimizing the adverse consequences of drug abuse, referred to by a number of delegations as harm reduction, needed to be part of a structured comprehensive package of measures from prevention, early intervention, to treatment, social reintegration, rehabilitation and recovery measures. Some delegations reported that measures including opioid substitution treatment, needle exchange programmes, safe injection sites, distribution of foil as well as antiretroviral therapy had proven to be an effective element of a range of measures to prevent the transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use and delegations referred to the technical guide for countries to set targets for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care for injecting drug users, issued by the World Health Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. The need to promote risk and harm reduction measures directed also to stimulants users was also mentioned. On the challenge of drug overdoses, in particular opioid overdoses, delegations shared information on national prevention and treatment efforts to reduce drug-related mortality, including through the use of opioid receptor antagonists such as naloxone. The important cooperation between UNODC and UNAIDS was highlighted, also in view of the commitment to ending, by 2030, the epidemics of AIDS and tuberculosis.
11. In the afternoon session of 10 October 2016, the thematic discussions continued with the operational recommendations in chapter 2, “ensuring the availability of and access to controlled substances exclusively for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion”. With the availability of internationally controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering, remaining low to non-existent in many countries of the world, delegations shared information on the steps taken to enhance national approaches and international cooperation and to address different kinds of existing barriers to the availability and accessibility of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

12. Delegations shared information on measures adopted to ensure that domestic legislation, regulatory and administrative mechanisms as well as procedures to support the availability and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering, while preventing their diversion, abuse and trafficking. Measures presented covered inter alia the use of electronic prescription systems; increasing the validity of prescriptions; expanding the number of trained health professionals authorized to prescribe controlled substances as well as simplifying the storage and transport requirements.

13. The importance of providing capacity building and targeted trainings for health professionals and competent national authorities was emphasized, covering inter alia the adequate access to and use of controlled substances, including for the relief of pain and suffering. In this regard, many delegations highlighted positive experiences of closely collaborating with civil society to engage at the local level in addressing any social or cultural barriers that might exist to the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, as well as of cooperation with the pharmaceutical industries. In this regard, reference was also made to the cooperation between UNODC, WHO and the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).

14. With the a view to enhancing the assessment and reporting capacity as well as ensuring efficient supply management systems, many delegations highlighted the leading roles of UNODC, INCB and WHO and shared information on specific joint programmes, including pilot programmes, addressing the availability of and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. With a view to strengthening the functioning of national control systems and assessment mechanisms, efforts were shared, including the organization of targeted trainings for competent national authorities on estimating and assessing the need for controlled substances. The participation in the INCB Learning Programme was encouraged by many delegations in this regard. In addition, delegations reported on using early warning and monitoring systems to counter-act increased reliance on just-in-time delivery and production shortages of essential medicines, also in reference to the Model Lists of Essential Medicines of the World Health Organization.

15. Operational recommendations on supply reduction and related measures; effective law enforcement; responses to drug-related crime; and countering money-laundering and promoting judicial cooperation, contained in chapter 3 of the outcome document, were discussed in the morning session of the Commission’s intersessional meeting on 11 October 2016.

16. Many delegations provided examples of steps taken to strengthen the prevention of drug-related crime as well as of how cooperation and joint efforts to counter the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances had yielded in positive results. Examples of coordinated operations included border control; greater involvement of communities; capacity building; the use of portals and networks for sharing of information and intelligence as well as national, regional and international responses to addressing links between drug trafficking, corruption, money laundering, and other forms of organized crime.

17. During the discussion the importance of promoting comprehensive supply reduction efforts that include preventive measures addressing, inter alia, the criminal justice and socioeconomic-related factors that may facilitate, drive, enable and perpetuate organized as well as drug-related crime was underlined.

18. Delegations reported on the introduction of action plans to tackle drug-related financial flows as well as measures adopted to strengthen judicial co-operation in targeting cross-border drug trafficking, money laundering, and in the confiscation of the proceeds of drug-related organized crime. Delegations shared information on the restructuring of national anti-drug strategies with a view to increasing the efficiency in national administrations and reported inter alia on the creation of new offices, directorates, commissions or task-
forces to tackle drug cultivation and trafficking as well as addressing links with other forms of organized crime, including money-laundering, corruption and other criminal activities.

19. The importance of data collection and sharing as well as of translating analytical findings into political priorities and operational action plans was highlighted, with some countries focusing efforts on establishing centralized intelligence systems. Monitoring existing trafficking routes and identifying new routes as well as utilizing relevant regional and international networks for the exchange of operational information was also encouraged. Delegations outlined efforts to enhance the exchange of information and intelligence among law enforcement and border control agencies as well as strengthen their capacities and reported on successful joint investigations and coordinated operations to intercept drug trafficking including through the support of UNODC programmes, such as CRIMJUST, Airport Communication Programme (AIRCOP) and the Container Control Programme (CCP). In particular, given the increased reliance on electronic evidence, capacity building, training and judicial international cooperation were underlined to be of utmost importance.

20. Some delegations explained that a high percentage of organized crime groups in their countries were involved in drug-related crime, thereby weakening the rule of law and fuelling conflict. In this regard, the need to maximize the effectiveness of law enforcement measures, in particular focusing on individuals and organizations responsible of illicit activities of a large scale was highlighted by some delegations.

21. The thematic discussions in the afternoon session of 11 October focused on chapter 4 on “cross-cutting issues, human rights, youth, children, women and communities” and the commitment to respect, protect and promote human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals and the rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies.

22. Many delegations reported on steps taken to implement recommendations on proportionate and effective policies and responses for drug-related offences, including alternatives to incarceration, by focusing on treatment, education, aftercare, rehabilitation and social reintegration as well as the implementation of age and gender appropriate interventions targeted to the specific needs of vulnerable members of society, in particular women and children. Alternatives to conviction or punishment for drug-related offences in appropriate cases of a minor nature reported by delegations ranged inter alia from referral to treatment, administrative measures, suspension of proceedings conditional on pursuing treatment, substitution of imprisonment for non-custodial measures, suspension of sentences, and referral to so called drug treatment courts, which were operating in some countries, and which were currently under evaluation in others. Approaches designed to deter illicit drug use and promote policies addressing public health concerns were shared by some delegations. Some delegations underscored the importance of proportionality in sentencing, including the need to consider mitigating and aggravating factors. Some shared the view that an over-reliance on criminal justice measures was counterproductive. The need to distinguish between traffickers and users was also highlighted. Delegations referred to the importance of relevant United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice and reported on their use of national guidelines as well as of the UNODC criminal justice handbook series. Different views were expressed on the application of the death penalty for drug-related crimes.

23. Delegations shared information on specific steps taken to mainstream a gender perspective in all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies and programmes, supported inter alia by measures to enhance the knowledge of policymakers and the capacity of national authorities, including education professionals and law enforcement personnel. It was reported by some delegations that the population of women imprisoned for drug-related offences was on the rise in their region, with women offenders predominantly imprisoned for minor drug-related offences. Micro-trafficking was also reported to be a growing challenge in some countries, and in this regard, some delegations underlined the importance of identifying and addressing the risk factors that continue to make women and adolescents of any gender vulnerable to exploitation and involvement in drug-related crime. Delegations encouraged UNODC to continue promoting the implementation of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), addressing the specific needs and possible multiple vulnerabilities of women drug offenders when imprisoned. Reference was further made to the working group on mainstreaming gender perspectives in drug related policies and programmes, a post-UNGASS working group dedicated to the cross-cutting issues identified in the UNGASS outcome document, held during this year’s meeting of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA) in Latin America and the Caribbean. Information on the
implementation of age-appropriate practical measures, tailored to the specific needs of children and youth in the legislative, administrative, social, economic, cultural and educational sectors was shared during the discussions.

24. Delegations highlighted the need to ensure non-discriminatory access to health, care and social services in prevention, primary care and treatment programmes as well as the important role played by families and civil society in general. On the supervision of drug treatment and rehabilitation facilities, some delegations informed about the involvement of public health authorities in their countries in ensuring adequate quality of drug treatment and rehabilitation services.

25. On Thursday, 28 October 2016, the Commission held thematic discussions on chapter 5 of the outcome document, entitled: Operational recommendations on cross-cutting issues in addressing and countering the world drug problem: Evolving reality, trends and existing circumstances, emerging and persistent challenges and threats, including new psychoactive substances, in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments.

26. Delegations shared information on measures taken to implement the operational recommendations covering new psychoactive substances, amphetamine-type stimulants, including methamphetamine, the diversion of precursors and pre-precursors and the non-medical use and misuse of pharmaceuticals containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; the use of the Internet in relation to drug-related activities; as well as evolving reality, trends and existing circumstances, emerging and persistent challenges and threats.

27. Delegations underscored the importance of enhancing data collection, information-sharing and early warning networks, developing appropriate national legislative, prevention and treatment models and supporting scientific evidence-based review and scheduling of the most prevalent, persistent and harmful substances. In this regard, delegations inter alia expressed support for the use of the Early Warning Advisory on new psychoactive substances and the Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends (SMART) programme of UNODC, and INCB tools such as Project Prism, the Precursors Incident Communication System (PICS) and Pre-Export Notification Online (PEN Online) with a view to strengthening the use of national, regional and international established reporting and information exchange systems, supporting existing research, collection and scientific analysis of data related to amphetamine-type stimulants, as well as strengthening national, regional and international monitoring of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and new psychoactive substances. Some delegations shared initiatives building upon strong public private partnerships, with close cooperation and information exchange with the chemical and pharmaceutical industry, in particular concerning substances that constitute a potential risk to public health. Measures shared included, for example, the development of code of conducts for the use of pre-precursors.

28. Delegations underlined the importance of enhancing the capacity of law enforcement agencies as well as the capacity and effectiveness of national laboratories to detect and identify new psychoactive substances and amphetamine-type stimulants, including methamphetamine, with a focus on promoting cross-border cooperation and information-sharing to prevent their abuse and diversion. The usefulness of the regional training workshops by the UNODC Global SMART programme were highlighted in this regard.

29. With reference to current work undertaken to strengthen domestic national legislative, regulatory, administrative and operational responses in particular addressing the challenge of new psychoactive substances, efforts undertaken by countries included inter alia the introduction of blanket bans or generic approaches for chemically defined substance groups and classes. Experiences were shared on approaches to develop capacity to detect, identify, assess the risks associated and respond rapidly and effectively to the emergence of NPS and the need for efficient scheduling processes, including the use of interim steps such as provisional measures of control. Delegations furthermore shared information on efforts to set up national NPS intelligence systems, focusing on comprehensive reporting and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that all relevant data was coherently collected and can be accessed by relevant partners. Delegations further reported on the organization of national inter-sectorial dialogues, workshops and seminars with different stakeholders, with a view to covering all aspects when designing new responses to the NPS challenge.

30. Some delegations shared efforts to counter the growing challenge of non-medical use and misuse of pharmaceuticals, in particular in relation to opioid overdoses. National responses included inter alia targeted interventions, increased awareness raising initiatives on addiction and overdose risks, the supporting of better prescribing practices or the active involvement of pharmaceutical companies in risk management.
31. On the use of the internet in relation to drug-related activities, delegations informed about national responses, including the setting up of dedicated units. Some outlined examples where organized crime groups targeted in particular young people through advertising and offering of controlled substances for sale online. The need for technical assistance, technology transfer, capacity building to enhance the skills and capacity of national law enforcement authorities to preserve and analyze electronic evidence related to illicit activities, including drug trafficking and money-laundering, and to monitor sales of illicit drugs using the internet, was highlighted. It was broadly recognized, that the internet had, at the same time, also proven to be a useful tool for prevention purposes.

32. Some delegations underlined the importance of building consensus towards policies that take into account national priorities and needs through, among others, the promotion of an informed debate based on evidence. It was further underlined that the UNGASS had led to a better understanding of the socio-economic consequences of the world drug problem. The view was expressed that the results achieved and the evolving reality of the drugs phenomenon were to lead to a reflection on the policies designed to address it. Some delegations referred to the need of expanding the set of indicators and tools to monitor and evaluate all dimensions of drugs policies.

33. In the afternoon session of 27 October, the Commission focused its deliberations on the operational recommendations of chapter 6, containing operational recommendations on strengthening international cooperation based on the principle of common and shared responsibility. It was reaffirmed that no State could act alone, and that the world drug problem needed to be addressed in a multilateral setting, through effective and increased international cooperation. Many delegations illustrated concrete national and regional efforts to strengthen multifaceted cooperation with different counterparts and stressed that the UNGASS 2016 outcome document should be an impulse to further strengthen international cooperation.

34. Some delegations stressed the importance of linking the cooperative efforts of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to address the world drug problem with the Sustainable Development Agenda, including Goal 3 on ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls as well as Goal 16 on promoting peace, justice and inclusive societies, and referred to the contribution by the Commission(s) to the global follow-up and its support to the thematic review of the progress on Sustainable Development Goals.

35. The importance of having the CND and UNODC, in their lead role, closely cooperating and collaborating with all relevant United Nations entities, other international organizations and civil society was emphasized and proposals were made for the Commission and UNODC to act as a clearing house or coordinating body for drug policy and programmes undertaken in the United Nations system.

36. In addition, delegations highlighted the need to continue, including through the CND subsidiary bodies, the regular exchange of information, good practices and lessons learned at all levels to effectively implement a balanced approach to addressing the world drug problem.

37. Delegations highlighted the need for the provision of specialized, targeted, effective and sustainable technical assistance, including, where appropriate, adequate financial assistance, training, capacity building, equipment and technological know-how, including in cooperation with UNODC and WHO. Some delegations reported on their national initiatives providing targeted technical and financial assistance to partners in their region.

38. In the morning session of 28 October 2016, participants shared experiences on chapter 7 of the UNGASS outcome document “operational recommendations on alternative development; regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented balanced drug control policy; addressing socioeconomic issues”.

39. Delegations highlighted efforts undertaken to promote sustainable crop control strategies that support the empowerment, ownership and responsibility of affected local communities while taking into account their vulnerabilities and special needs. Efforts reported included increasing farmers’ access to financial services, facilitating access to local and international markets and upgrading community infrastructure, promoting gender equity and the empowerment of youth, supporting the development of local citizens’ organizations to interact with local and municipal authorities as well as building transparency and accountability. Law enforcement was highlighted by a number of speakers as a key component of a comprehensive and balanced package of
interventions to strengthen sustainable crop control strategies that may include, inter alia, alternative development, eradication as well as law enforcement measures.

40. Delegations expressed support for the inclusion of alternative development strategies in national drug control policies, focused on a broader development perspective, taking into account demographic, cultural, social and geographic considerations. Promoting a holistic approach to alternative development to alleviate poverty and strengthen the rule of law, accountable, effective and inclusive institutions and public service, was underlined by a number of delegations. Delegations underscored the importance of taking into account the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, when designing sustainable crop control strategies.

41. Advancing sustainable alternative development initiatives in rural and urban areas, and promoting viable economic alternatives for communities affected by illicit drug-related activities were highlighted as key priorities by a number of delegations. Delegations reported on national and regional strategies to identify and address the root causes of illicit cultivation and drivers for instability as well as foster development at the community level. Delegations also referred to encouraging economic development through investments in and partnerships and innovative cooperation initiatives inter alia with local, national, and international businesses to ensure licit economic development by strengthening for example small-scale producer associations. In this regard, the importance of ensuring long-term and flexible funding for the implementation of comprehensive and balanced alternative development programmes and viable economic alternatives was highlighted.

42. Some delegations highlighted the need to extend the concept of alternative development to urban areas for those affected by the cultivation of illicit crops and drug trafficking. Such programmes included alternative development programmes targeting particular populations in urban settings, not directly involved in the cultivation but affected by the illicit cultivation and trafficking of drugs, who often faced a lack of alternative economic opportunities. Delegations shared information on specific projects such as comprehensive training programmes, including vocational training, that had yielded positive results.

43. Ensuring access to markets for products stemming from alternative development was accentuated by a number of delegations and information on initiatives including certification schemes for alternative development products or trade agreements with producing countries to boost exports was shared. In addition, the need to address the consequences of illicit crop cultivation on the environment was underlined.

**Facilitator’s Proposals on the Way Forward**

44. With a view to using the momentum and continuing to conduct its UNGASS follow-up in a comprehensive and inclusive manner, it was proposed to hold, in the second half of January 2017, another, shorter round of thematic discussions covering all seven chapters to discuss more specifically action that could be taken by the Commission, including at its forthcoming 60th session, to support Member States in the implementation of the UNGASS operational recommendations.

45. A number of delegations shared information on regional initiatives and efforts to implement the UNGASS outcome document, and stressed the importance of strengthening, including through the CND’s subsidiary bodies, the regular exchange of information, good practices and lessons learned among national practitioners from different fields and at all levels, as called for in the UNGASS outcome document. Furthermore, it was proposed that the Commission consider, in preparation for the 60th regular session of the CND, reviewing the substantive scope of work of the subsidiary bodies, with a view to covering the broad spectrum of issues included in the UNGASS outcome document in support of the implementation of the recommendations at the regional level.

46. In the lead-up to the special session, the UNGASS 2016 website had served as an information platform, with all interested stakeholders sharing information and priorities for UNGASS 2016. Following the adoption of the UNGASS outcome document and the efforts initiated by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to implement the operational recommendations contained therein, it was proposed that the Secretariat looks into options to further

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1 The Extended Bureau of the 59th session of the CND agreed, during its meeting of 9 November, to hold the second round of thematic discussions from 23 to 25 January 2017.
strengthen the use of the CND post-UNGASS website www.ungass2016.org with a view to functioning as an online repository for experiences, lessons learnt and information about concrete activities to translate the UNGASS operational recommendations into action. All interested stakeholders are invited to share targeted contributions on the implementation of the over 100 operational recommendations contained in the UNGASS outcome document with the Secretariat (ungass2016@unodc.org) for posting on this website (www.ungass2016.org).