

CZECH REPUBLIC

Speech of Mr. Jindřich VOBOŘIL, National Drug Policy Coordinator, Head of the Secretariat of the Governmental Council for Drug Policy Coordination, Executive Vice-Chair of the Governmental Council for Drug Policy Coordination, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

Thank you, Madam Chairperson,

1. Dear ministers, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me first of all thank the Secretariat of the UNODC for the hard work in preparing this CND meeting.
2. We fully align ourselves with the Statement, delivered by the delegation of Malta, on behalf of the European Union.
3. The absolute priority is the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances, including for drug-related crimes as well as the abolition of other practices, like extrajudicial sanctions which are not in line with the principles of human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, solidarity, the rule of law and human rights as stated in UNGASS outcome document where we reiterated our commitment to ensure that "all people can live in health, dignity and peace, with security and prosperity".
4. In 1961, when we all signed the Single convention, the evidence and the known solutions were not very clear. However, today we believe that we know much more and we are much closer to know what is realistic and what is achievable. We also have the experience with policies in areas where people die or get seriously ill for no particular reasons and we know that these policies should not be driven by ideologies or wishful thinking but rather by science.
5. We unfortunately also know today that the idea of "drug free world", based on the belief that we can eradicate the supply and therefore eradicate the demand was built on

false assumptions. We have the evidence now proving that a balanced policy based more on the protection of public health and harm reduction principles, led by public health knowledge of professionals is far more effective and also leads to greater cost effectiveness. Policies should not be based on the belief of drug free world but rather work towards maximum reduction of risks and harms.

6. For these reasons, with respect to each country and its own culture and needs, we stress the need to share the responsibility. Reluctance of any country to look for the evidence is a threat not only to the citizens inside their own country but also a threat on a global scale.
7. Today we face new epidemics in this regard. The transmittable diseases and the risks of their spreading among injecting drug users, such as HIV or Hepatitis C, do not respect territorial boundaries, therefore it is an imperative to turn to evidence and humbly accept solutions that proved effective.
8. The reasons such as need of reduction of HIV and Hepatitis C epidemics among injecting drug users give us an obligation to start openly speaking and researching what really works. We simply have the evidence and the tools today of achieving these goals.
9. Also, we would like to emphasize that the evidence today suggests that the drug policy should not be based on criminalization of people who use drugs or suffer from drug addiction. This approach has never proven to be effective and at the same time it is very expensive. The legislation of our country decriminalized the possession of drugs for personal use more than a decade ago. Not only that it did not create any risks, but it also allowed us to work with the public budget far more effectively. There are no overcrowded prisons and aside of some small scale producers there are no organized crime groups.
10. The results of our strategies are clear. By de-stigmatizing the debate and shifting policies towards motivating the problematic drug users to come early enough to ask

for help we have achieved stabilization of drugs scene and reduction of amount of people becoming problematic drug users.

11. Since the middle of 1990s when we started our drug policy the prevalence of Hepatitis C dropped by 70%, there is virtually no existence of HIV amongst the IDUs and very few overdoses per year. Approximately 70% of our PDUs are in contact with low threshold services without fear of being stigmatized, thus strengthening our early warning system.
12. Let me conclude by reiterating the Czech Republic's full support for the work of CND which we have been a member of since 2014. I would like to inform you that we have recently submitted our candidature for re-election for the term 2018-2021 and we would very much appreciate your support in the upcoming elections in April.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.