Thank you, Mrs. Chairperson,

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First of all, I would like to thank the Secretariat of the UNODC for their hard work in preparing this CND meeting.

2. I also want to stress that the Czech Republic is fully aligned with the Statement, delivered by the delegation of Bulgaria on behalf of the European Union.

3. Dear excellences, dear delegates. As we have already mentioned in previous years in our statements it is obvious that the overdose death of many, the HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C epidemics spread among millions, the hundreds of thousands of people in prison cells as well as some destabilized countries finally call for open and critical review of the outcomes of the global war on drugs and the reasons why it is sometimes failing. It is only up to us, who have the knowledge to choose not to ignore that. We must push vigorously to accept the scientific evidence and set more realistic aims and concrete public health based policies.

4. It is our responsibility to accept the evidence that is clearly leading us towards less repressive policies and not only verbally declare the so-called balanced approach and focus more on preventative measures, and treatment. We are obliged to ensure that people who suffer from problem drugs use are encouraged to come forward and ask for help early enough without being stigmatised. Our policies must be based on a public health perspective rather than on punishment. This is the reason why the Czech Republic is decriminalizing the possession of small amount of illegal drugs for personal use.

5. Furthermore, we must look at policy coherence between licit and illicit drugs. In this regard we should learn our lessons from alcohol and especially tobacco policies that show a significant success in many countries unlike with illegal drugs. The Czech Republic encourages member states to research and open international debate to further develop drug policies that integrate both licit and illicit substances. We currently have evidence to determine that what we are facing is not a problem of addiction on different types of drugs but a single problem of addictive behaviour. The
The legal and illegal drugs world is not separated and we know that in terms of addictive behaviour it only often shifts from one addiction to another. The evidence from many countries also suggests, how much underage smoking and drinking influences illegal drugs taking and vice versa.

6. The Drug Policy of the Czech Republic is not perfect, but we do believe and our numbers support it, that we are going in the right direction. The principles of public health strategy have led to a significant reduction of harm in the prevalence of hepatitis C, HIV infection amongst injecting drugs users and managing few overdoses per year. Prisons are not overcrowded because of our decriminalization policy and organized crime has not influence politicians, courts or police.

7. Therefore and in line with the EU policy, we call on all member states to ensure that drug policies are in full conformity with the principles of human rights and we fully support the proportionate sentencing for drug related offences and the promotion of alternatives to imprisonment and coercive sanctions. We strongly condemn extrajudicial killings as an unacceptable tool of law enforcement and disagree with death penalty for drug related crimes. Unfortunately, not long after we all signed the UNGASS outcome document in 2016, we saw many people being murdered without a trial. It is very apparent that such policies are in full breach of basic human rights principles. Such doings can bring the international consensus to a risk of failing in near future.

8. Furthermore, the Czech Republic urges not to pull back from a critical evaluation of the 2009 Action Plan and the Political Declaration, let us all accept our responsibility for what we are failing in and draw a realistic policies based on the recently agreed Outcome document of the UNGASS 2016. In this regard we want to call for a new global policy based on the realistic goal of minimising harms and risks. We also call and strongly encourage and believe in much stronger involvement of all relevant UN agencies such as WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP, as well as civil society in all decision making processes.

9. Last but not least, we would like to stress that since we all signed the UNGASS outcome document in 2016 in New York it should actually mean in real politics to redraft concrete budgets and focus on help rather than punishment, and on achieving realistic goals on harm minimization rather than the unachievable zero tolerance.

10. Ladies and Gentleman, it is evident that we are at a crossroads and have to allow the new knowledge should be discussed as some analytics say that the international drug
control system might fall apart soon if the evidence internationally available continues to be ignored. We want to believe that we will make the right decisions in this regard and relieve the globe from the unnecessary suffering of many.

Thank you ladies and gentleman for attention.