



**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR JANUSZ S. URBAŃCZYK
HEAD OF THE HOLY SEE DELEGATION**

61ST SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

Vienna, 12 – 16 March 2018

Madam Chair,

The Holy See is pleased to participate in this 61st Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. My Delegation would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, and the Bureau of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for the extensive work you all have carried out in preparing for and now leading this session.

Common efforts in combating the world drug problem

The Holy See reiterates once more its profound gratitude for the continued efforts by States – ably assisted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – in combating the world drug problem by promoting “the health, welfare and well-being of all individuals, families, communities and society as a whole, and facilitating healthy lifestyles through effective, comprehensive, scientific evidence-based demand reduction initiatives at all levels”.¹

It has long been a key principle of all efforts aimed at combating the world drug problem that “universal action calls for international co-operation guided by the same principles and aimed at common objectives”.² Echoing this principle, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs affirmed last year that “addressing and countering the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility that requires effective and increased international cooperation and demands an integrated scientific evidence-based, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing and balanced approach”.³ My Delegation welcomes this recognition, since, among other things, it presents the key features of such a coordinated effort. The broad and encompassing nature of a *scientific evidence-based, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing and balanced approach* ensures not only that all efforts come together and pull in the same direction, but also that all resources are utilized to their full potential.

¹ UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2016 UNGASS), *Outcome document “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”*, art. 1.

² *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol*, preamble.

³ COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS, *Resolution 60/6*.

It also follows from such a broad and encompassing approach that efforts are made to engage all stakeholders as allies. While States play the principal role, we would be remiss – and indeed foolish – not to acknowledge and unite with the multifaceted work undertaken by local and regional communities, schools and educational institutions, civil society organizations and associations of various forms, religious organizations and communities, as well as the family.

The family: stakeholder and ally

The family remains for the Holy See not only a stakeholder in our efforts to combat the world drug problem, but an ally without which these efforts cannot properly advance. Pope Francis has highlighted the important formative role of the family by describing it as “the first school of human values”,⁴ and such an understanding would surely imply that it has a role in promoting our ultimate goal: a world free of drugs.

The 1961 Single Convention reminds us that “addiction to narcotic drugs constitutes a serious evil for the individual and is fraught with social and economic danger to mankind”.⁵ A serious evil cannot be conquered by well-intentioned government programmes alone; it must be challenged by the values and knowledge passed on to every man and woman, every boy and girl. This was acknowledged by this Commission last year, when it stated that “the purpose of community, family and school drug prevention programmes is to equip children and adolescents with information about drugs, the life skills and resilience necessary to enable them to deal with different situations without turning to drugs and the ability to resist pressure to use drugs”.⁶

The Holy See would welcome further encouragement of efforts where States and non-state actors collaborate to assist the family in handing on such “information about drugs, the life skills and resilience” that enable everyone to say “no” to drugs.

Youth and comprehensive education

In advancing such family-based prevention work, special attention must be given to children and young people, reflecting this Commission’s recognition that “the world drug problem continues to constitute a serious threat to public health and safety and the well-being of humanity, in particular children and young people and their families and communities”.⁷ While it remains important to help young people to avoid falling into the web of drugs and become enslaved by drug addiction,⁸ it should be accompanied by a truly comprehensive approach to forming them. Such formation should seek to place them squarely on the path

⁴ POPE FRANCIS, *Ap. exhortation Amoris lætitia*, 274.

⁵ 1961 *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended by the 1972 Protocol*, Preamble.

⁶ COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS, *Resolution 60/7*.

⁷ COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS, *Resolution 60/7*.

⁸ Cf. Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the Meeting Sponsored by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on: “Narcotics: Problems and Solutions to this Global Issue”*, 24 November 2016.

away from drugs and from the allure of drugs, through employment, training and schooling, sport and recreational activities, in short, – through a healthy life.⁹

This forming of young people reflects what Catholic social teaching identifies as “integral human development”. It takes as its foundation the inherent human dignity of every woman and man, girl and boy, ensuring prevention efforts that are truly balanced, avoiding a permissive attitude towards drugs, as well as avoiding a punishment-centered approach devoid of mercy and compassion. The Holy See applauds those States and stakeholders who are able to provide such true balance in their anti-drug efforts.

In closing, the Holy See assures this Commission of its collaboration in every just effort to tackle the world drug problem and actively promote a society free of illicit drugs, as well as of its interest in next year’s CND Ministerial Segment and the extensive review that 2019 offers, marking the 10th anniversary of *The Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem*.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

⁹ Cf. Pope Francis, *Address to Participants of the 31 Edition of the International Drug Enforcement Conference*, 20 June 2014