

**National statement of the Russian Federation at the second Intersessional Meeting of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

**(Vienna, 8 October 2020)**

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellences,  
Distinguished colleagues,

In addition to the joint statement delivered by the Russian Federation on behalf of a group of like-minded countries, we would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

We commend the leadership of the Ambassador of Pakistan as the Chair of the Commission as well as the assistance of the Secretariat to the Governing Bodies in guiding us through the intersessional discussions on the WHO/ECDD recommendations to reschedule cannabis and cannabis-related substances under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

We appreciate the role of the World Health Organization and its Expert Committee on Drug Dependence in the scheduling process for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances under the three drug control conventions. We believe that the WHO has brought to the attention of the CND an important issue at a time when countries are developing different national frameworks with regard to cannabis, some of which run counter to the international drug control conventions.

However, the proposed solutions in our view are not the most effective way to address the problem. The in-depth analysis of the medical, social, economic, legal and administrative implications of the six recommendations on cannabis and cannabis-related substances clearly shows that adoption of these recommendations will bring more confusion and uncertainty to the international and national drug

control than the current gaps and discrepancies in the legal trade and reporting on cannabis they intend to amend. Adoption of the recommendations by the Commission might lead to misinterpretation by the international community as promotion of further weakening of control of cannabis and its legalization for recreational purposes.

Therefore, the Russian Federation does not see justification for the proposed profound changes in the level of international control of cannabis and related substances and will not be in a position to support them during the voting in December.

We appreciate the valuable contributions of the WHO, the UNODC and the INCB to the intergovernmental debate on this important issue. We are strongly convinced that the technical issues with regard to control over cannabis raised by these international bodies do not constitute a problem requiring a system-wide solution at the level of changing the drug control treaties. Russia is ready to work with other delegations to search for alternative solutions outside the scheduling process. We encourage the INCB, the UNODC and the WHO to consider developing guidelines on the implementation of the relevant provisions of the drug control conventions on cannabis and related substances. Such universal set of rules in our view will ensure coherent application of the drug control treaties by all Parties and strengthen international cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem.

We once again call upon the Member States of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to carefully consider their voting positions taking into account not only their national interests, but also the opinions of all Parties to the 1961 and 1971 Conventions that would be faced with the need to amend their legislation.

Finally, we would like to underline that even though the discussion on cannabis proved out to be quite useful, the Commission has invested two years and substantial amount of financial and human resources into this process that could

have been spent on more urgent and important issues. This is something we would like to avoid in the future.

Agenda item 6 “Next step – voting procedure during the reconvened session”

The Russian delegation supports the proposal of the CND chair to adjust the voting procedure for the WHO scheduling recommendations on cannabis and cannabis-related substances. In particular, we reiterate our earlier position that recommendations 5.2, 5.3 and 5.6 to reschedule substances from the 1971 Convention to the 1961 Convention should be discussed and voted upon as a package since they are intertwined. The qualified majority threshold of two-thirds of the votes of all CND Members States should apply in this case to avoid potential confusion for our national drug control framework.