

28 January 2020

English only

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**Commission on Narcotic Drugs****Sixty-third session**

Vienna, 2–6 March 2020

Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the implementation at the national, regional and international levels of all commitments, as reflected in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, to address and counter the world drug problem****Chair's summary by H.E. Ambassador Mirghani Abbaker Altayeb Bakhet (Sudan), Chair of the sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, on the thematic discussions on the implementation of all international drug policy commitments, following-up to the 2019 Ministerial Declaration (16–18 October 2019)\*\***

1. Provided below are salient points, a Chair's summary, of the thematic discussion held during the Commission on Narcotic Drugs thematic session from 16–18 October 2019. The summary by the Chair was not subject to negotiation.

**I. Background**

2. At its 62nd session in March 2019, the Commission adopted by consensus the Ministerial Declaration entitled "*Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem*". In the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, Member States, while acknowledging that tangible progress had been achieved over the past decade, noted with concern the persistent and emerging challenges posed by the world drug problem and committed to accelerating, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility, the full implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement and the 2016 UNGASS outcome document, aimed at achieving all commitments, operational recommendations and aspirational goals set out therein.

3. On 24 June, following-up to the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, the Commission adopted a multi-year workplan for thematic discussions on the implementation of all international drug policy commitments. This multi-year workplan foresees the organization of interactive thematic sessions, every autumn, in the period up to 2024,

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\* E/CN.7/2020/1.

\*\* This document has not been edited.



to address the challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration, through the implementation of the provisions and recommendations contained in the three policy documents (2016, 2014, 2009).

4. The first autumn thematic session was held from 16–18 October 2019 at the United Nations in Vienna. In line with the multi-year workplan, the Commission focused its discussions on how to address the challenges, that:

- Both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying;
- The abuse, illicit cultivation and production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as the illicit trafficking in those substances and in precursors, have reached record levels, and that the illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals are on the rise; and
- Synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of prescription drugs pose increasing risks to public health and safety, as well as scientific, legal and regulatory challenges, including with regard to the scheduling of substances.

5. The CND Chair, H.E. Ambassador Mirghani Abbaker Altayeb BAKHET, moderated the discussions on 16 and 18 October. On 17 October 2019, the session was moderated by H.E. Ambassador Kazem GHARIB ABADI, first Vice-Chair of the Commission. Each of the three thematic discussions consisted of an introductory presentation and a panel discussion followed by presentations by international and regional organizations and United Nations entities as well as an interactive debate. The panels included experts nominated by the five Regional Groups, as well as civil society representatives. Following previous practice, civil society speakers were nominated through the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs. Participants who were not able to join the meeting in person could participate through a video-message or videoconferencing.

6. In addition to introductory remarks and presentations by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) made presentations in their respective field of expertise. Observers from non-governmental organizations, including from Austria, Argentina, Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Spain, Turkey and the United States of America, also made statements.

7. In preparation for the thematic discussion, a background note, based on the findings of the 2019 World Drug Report and contributions by the UNODC substantive sections, was prepared by the Secretariat and shared with Permanent Missions. In line with the approach taken in the preparatory and follow-up process to UNGASS 2016, the CND thematic discussions were webcast in all six United Nations official languages on the Commission's website, allowing all interested stakeholders to follow the deliberations. Pictures of and presentations made during the thematic session are available on the Commission's website dedicated to the follow-up to the 2019 Ministerial Declaration <http://unodc.org/2019MDFollow-Up>.

## II. Chair's summary of the deliberations

### (a) 2019 Ministerial Declaration Challenge: "Both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying"

8. The thematic session started on 16 October 2019 with a discussion on how to address the challenge that "both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying". The Chief of the UNODC Research and Trends Analysis Branch introduced the topic, including by presenting relevant findings from the 2019 World Drug Report. The expert panel discussion preceding the interactive debate included

an expert from Italy, as well as a representative of the Instituto Latinoamericano de Seguridad y Democracia, representing civil society.

9. Presentations were made by UNODC including on waste water analysis, changing trafficking routes and modi operandi, the ATS market 10 years after the 2009 Plan of Action and new trends in drug use patterns. In addition, representatives from the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the Organization of American States (OAS), shared regional perspectives on the development of the range of drugs and drug markets.

10. Discussing new developments in the range of drugs and drugs markets, several speakers highlighted that addressing the world drug problem was a common and shared responsibility. Many delegations reiterated the importance of a comprehensive and balanced approach, based on evidence, comprising both measures to reduce demand and supply, and in line with international law and policy commitments, in particular the international drug control conventions, human rights obligations and the policy commitments reaffirmed in the Ministerial Declaration 2019.

11. Several delegations encouraged countries to strengthen international cooperation, including in the law enforcement and judicial sector, in order to effectively combat the increasingly professionally operating and transnationally connected organized crime groups. It was highlighted that such international cooperation should include the exchange of information and evidence, as well as sharing of good practices. Member States were encouraged to make use of the existing legal instruments for international cooperation, namely the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 and relevant regional treaties. It was emphasized that also at the domestic level, cooperation between different agencies had to be ensured.

12. Many delegations highlighted the need for high quality, disaggregated data to ensure informed policy decisions at the national, regional and international level. Comprehensive data collection would also allow to draw lessons learned from past experiences, for example from the significant reduction of opium consumption in the last century. UNODC presented waste water analysis method as a relatively inexpensive way to collect valuable data on drug consumption and market size.

13. Several delegations expressed their support for strengthening and streamlining the existing annual report questionnaire, to reflect and assess progress made in the implementation of all international drug policy commitments. The lack of data relating to the consequences of cannabis legalization, depenalization and other policies adopted in some countries of the world was also mentioned. Recent changes in the range of drugs reported by many delegations included a significant increase in new psychoactive substances (NPS) and synthetic drugs in some parts of the world, including synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones, that were increasingly potent and thus posed a serious health risk. Many speakers highlighted the need and usefulness of early warning systems at the national and international level, in particular the UNODC Early Warning Advisory, to recognize and share information on NPS, as trends in the illicit drug market tended to spread to other countries and regions. Capacity-building for law enforcement and scientific experts and well-equipped laboratories were underlined to be crucial for the ability to detect NPS.

14. Several speakers emphasized the difficulty to control NPS, as due to their quickly changing nature it was challenging to put them under control. Some delegations reported on national control efforts that their respective countries had introduced. Examples presented included (1) the listing of substances by class to also include salts and isomers and (2) generic listing, meaning the listing of parent molecular structures and specific substitution patterns of structures. One delegation also elaborated on the introduction of provisional listing of new suspicious substances to allow for temporary seizures until there was scientific evidence for or against possible licit uses of the specific substances. Another delegation reported that their

national experience showed that after scheduling an NPS, it usually disappeared from the market.

15. Several delegations reported on observed developments in the drug market due to changes in both supply and demand. On the supply-side, new marketing techniques from drug dealers included free or cheap trials of substances, thereby changing use patterns. On the demand-side, urbanization led to major shifts in consumption. The Internet, the darknet and the use of cryptocurrency also influenced the drug sales structures, mostly for personal consumption, as well as related intertwined crimes, such as money-laundering.

16. Among the new challenges in the abuse patterns mentioned were polydrug use and dependencies and dependency of children. The need for adequate treatment facilities for people with drug use disorders was emphasized. It was suggested to use the Internet to extend the reach and geographical coverage of treatment programmes. Some delegations also mentioned that new substitution therapies, following the same principles as for example methadone therapy for heroine, were being developed for other drugs. Studies were showing promising results, in particular with regard to cocaine.

17. Some speakers underlined that preventive measures, in particular addressing children not yet involved with drugs, were crucial, as statistics showed a correlation between vulnerabilities, such as mental suffering in the personal past, and the likelihood to abuse drugs. Effective measures to address those vulnerabilities included keeping students in school, strengthening families and parenting techniques and addressing socioeconomic challenges, including poverty. It was mentioned that the case study of tobacco showed the effectiveness of preventive measures.

**(b) 2019 Ministerial Declaration Challenge: “The abuse, illicit cultivation and production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as the illicit trafficking in those substances and in precursors, have reached record levels, and the illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals are on the rise”**

18. On 17 October, Member States discussed the challenge that the abuse, illicit cultivation and production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as the illicit trafficking in those substances and in precursors, had reached record levels, and that the illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals were on the rise. An introductory presentation was delivered by the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch. Experts from Nigeria, India, Colombia and Germany participated in the expert panel discussions, as well as a representative of the Corporación Viso Mutop-Observatorio de cultivos y cultivadores nominated by the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs.

19. Speakers from UNODC made interventions on the following issues: community and women empowerment in the framework of alternative development; the Container Control Programme; drug trafficking via the darknet; illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals; as well as the complexity of drug dependence as a health disorder. In addition, presentations were made by the Ambassador of Afghanistan and the Secretariat to the International Narcotics Control Board.

20. With a view to addressing illicit cultivation, many delegations expressed the view that alternative development was key as part of a holistic approach, addressing the vulnerabilities of the communities and security issues to ensure livelihoods. It was emphasized that alternative development programmes should take into account climate conditions and the environmental impact. The importance of building trust in the State by establishing a minimum level of services, in particular health, education and infrastructure, for the programme to be successful, was underscored. In addition to agricultural products, other alternative legal income sources should be explored, such as handicraft and tourism, in particular with regard to the establishment of programmes in urban areas.

21. A major challenge cited by several speakers was ensuring the sustainability of alternative development programmes due to short-term funding. It was suggested to for example address this issue by for example establishing a trust fund or a coalition of donors in cooperation with targeted communities. Additionally, it was mentioned that red tape barriers were hampering the sale of licit agricultural products. It was underlined that assessing the impact of alternative development was necessary, but difficult, as the programmes had diverse targets. The need for a unification of reporting standards to measure the impact of the programmes was highlighted. In addition, a number of speakers underscored the importance of the review of the annual report questionnaire.

22. Regarding the production of drugs, the importance of precursor control to be undertaken in cooperation with the International Narcotics Control Board was highlighted by several delegations. It was observed that the number of designer precursors, solely used for the production of illicit drugs, was increasing, and that at the same time the diversion of precursors with licit uses remained problematic. The importance of closely observing new techniques used by clandestine laboratories in order to identify precursors used for the production of illicit drugs was highlighted by a number of speakers. Some delegations underlined that to avoid diversion of precursors with licit use, cooperation between the production and destination countries was key, taking thereby into account the quantity of precursors required by the legal market, was key.

23. Several delegations highlighted that since most substances under international control were smuggled via maritime routes, it was crucial to implement relevant provisions contained in the international drug control conventions. This includes responding to requests regarding the registration of a ship under article 7 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 and expeditious manner. The strengthening of port and maritime control capacities, as well as the need to increase information-sharing between countries on the trafficking route were highlighted as prerequisites for the interception of maritime trafficking. Regarding the strengthening of capacity, the Container Control Programme, developed by UNODC in cooperation with the World Customs Organization, was commended by a number of delegations. Speakers highlighted that information exchange was in particular crucial with regards to developments, such as the physical appearance of new drugs. An increase in the illicit trafficking of raw material instead of refined drugs and the associated relocation of drug laboratories closer to the destination countries with the goal to minimize the loss in case of an interception of the shipment, were noted.

24. Several delegations mentioned that investigations in the darknet and the gathering of evidence that was valid in court, remained a challenge. It was further underlined by several speakers that investigations should always be in line with domestic and international regulations, in particular human rights. The importance of capacity-building in the law enforcement sector, inter alia, through trainings on darknet investigation and the use of cryptocurrency offered by UNODC, was highlighted. Additionally, speakers stressed that more data were needed on the use of the darknet for trafficking of illicit drugs, in particular on websites in other languages than English. As controlled substances purchased on the darknet were mostly delivered by postal service providers, the establishment of cooperation mechanisms with such providers could prove to be useful. Several delegations underlined that it was also important to establish and strengthen Financial Intelligence Units to disrupt money-laundering channels, in order to intercept illicit trafficking.

25. Addressing the rise in the abuse of controlled substances, it was recalled that drug dependence was a multifaceted health disorder with social causes and consequences. It was highlighted that drug demand and supply reduction had to be combined in an evidence-based, inter-agency driven, holistic approach. The importance of a gender sensitive approach to prevention and treatment was underlined by a number of speakers, including with regard to alternatives to incarceration, as

women often had to take care of the family. The need to address drug consumption during pregnancy was also highlighted.

26. Some speakers expressed concerns regarding the increasing consumption of illicit drugs among young people and highlighted the importance of awareness-raising campaigns on the harm associated with drug consumption. It was observed that peer pressure was a factor for drug consumption, but that vulnerabilities, including poverty, were considered root causes. It was noted that the ageing population also led to an increasing number of elderly drug users, and that this was creating new challenges for prevention and treatment.

**(c) 2019 Ministerial Declaration Challenge: “Synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of prescription drugs pose increasing risks to public health and safety, as well as scientific, legal and regulatory challenges, including with regard to the scheduling of substances”**

27. The thematic discussions continued on 18 October 2019, focusing on the implementation of all commitments to address the challenge that synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of prescription drugs pose increasing risks to public health and safety, as well as scientific, legal and regulatory challenges, including with regard to the scheduling of substances. Day 3 of the thematic discussions started with an introduction by the Chief of the UNODC Research and Trends Analysis Branch. Experts from Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Estonia, Australia as well as a representative of the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care, for the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs, formed the expert panel preceding the thematic debate.

28. Additional interventions were made by experts from the Russian Federation and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, followed by UNODC, INCB, WHO and Universal Postal Union presentations focusing on the UNODC Opioid Strategy, United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs, the S.O.S initiative, and the availability and accessibility of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

29. With a view to addressing the challenge, many speakers underscored that the collection of relevant and reliable data was key for a comprehensive overview of the drug situation worldwide enabling governments to make timely and evidence-based decisions at the national and international levels. One delegation stressed the importance of collecting data beyond dependency rates and to also focus on the number of deaths and other harmful effects related to the misuse of opioids.

30. Many delegations highlighted the need to develop and implement an integrated and balanced approach to addressing the non-medical use of pharmaceuticals that would strike the right balance between prevention, treatment and measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences, by some referred to as harm reduction programmes, on the one hand, and supply reduction measures, on the other hand. A number of speakers pointed out that measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of drug abuse played an important role in reducing risks of opioid overdose. Introduction of prescription guidelines, reducing stigma associated with the use of synthetic opioids, training for first line responders on overdose management, administration of naloxone, an opioid antagonist medication, to address the overdose and mortality, and provision of rehabilitation and reintegration services were reported by several delegations as components of a holistic response to the challenges posed by the non-medical use of opioids.

31. Some delegations underlined the importance of enhancing controls for the trade and distribution of pharmaceuticals through all channels, including through enhanced cross-border information-sharing. One delegation highlighted the need to take into consideration and address the growing role of the Internet and information and communications technologies in facilitating the non-medical use and misuse of pharmaceuticals.

32. Speaking on national control measures, many delegations highlighted the importance of striking a balance between ensuring the availability of controlled substances and drugs for medical and scientific purposes, including for pain relief and management, while avoiding their misuse and diversion into illicit channels. In particular, with regard to the “tramadol crisis”, some delegations stressed the importance of introducing national control measures, such as scheduling at the national level, to prevent misuse, while recognizing the medical value of tramadol. Some delegations reported on the introduction of centralized electronic registers for the prescription of pharmaceuticals to prevent their misuse and diversion. Some speakers highlighted the role that the International Narcotics Control Board plays in supporting Member States to ensure the availability and accessibility of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion and abuse.

33. Many delegations highlighted the importance of strengthening cross-border cooperation to prevent the diversion of pharmaceuticals from licit sources to illicit markets, including through sharing of information and good practices. The importance of involving academia and civil society was also underscored. Strong and consistent inter-agency cooperation and coordination at the national level was emphasized by a number of speakers as an essential component of effective national policies to address the challenges posed by synthetic opioids and the misuse of pharmaceuticals to public health and well-being. Public awareness-raising, including among health-care professionals and law enforcement authorities, was mentioned as an important tool to keep all relevant stakeholders informed about the legal uses of pharmaceuticals. A number of delegations highlighted the need to strengthen the capacity of relevant practitioners on how the misuse of pharmaceuticals can be managed.

### III. Way forward

34. As part of the Commission’s efforts to enhance the implementation of all international drug policy commitments, following-up to the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, the next thematic session is scheduled to be held during the 63rd session of CND in 2020. In line with the multi-year workplan, the Commission will focus on how to address the following challenges:

- Drug treatment and health services continue to fall short of meeting needs, and deaths related to drug use have increased;
- The rate of transmission of HIV, the hepatitis C virus and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use, including injecting drug use in some countries, remains high;
- The adverse health consequences of and risks associated with new psychoactive substances have reached alarming levels; and
- The availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and palliative care, remains low to non-existent in many parts of the world.

35. Member States, and interested stakeholders are encouraged to initiate timely preparations for the 2020 thematic sessions to facilitate the participation of relevant experts, with a view to sharing good practices and challenges and to discussing how to address the highlighted challenges through the implementation of the international drug policy commitments of the 2016 UNGASS outcome document, the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement and the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action.