



Statement by Ambassador Barbara Žvokelj, Permanent Representative of Slovenia and Head of Delegation, at the 63rd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, General debate, Vienna, 2 March 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

In Slovenia we are convinced that the world needs a comprehensive and humane drugs policy based on balanced implementation of demand and supply reduction pillars together with international cooperation under the principle of common and shared responsibility. In addition to what has been said on behalf of the EU, I would like to make several remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. Chairperson,

Like other countries, Slovenia has not been spared from tackling the problem of illicit drugs and its consequences. In response to this challenge, my country has been systematically developing drug legislation and policy for many years. As early as in 1999 we decriminalized possession of a small quantity of any drug for personal use, with the aim of encouraging treatment instead of penalization. Our greatest emphasis has continuously been given also to public health measures and activities, including harm reduction programs and substitution treatment.

Turning now to the drug programs, I would like to express our firm belief that all such activities should be evidence based, evaluated and accessible to all people with drug use disorders. Concurrently developing a multi-sectoral and fully coordinated approach is also an important part of this equation: multiple agencies, including education, social welfare, health and law enforcement working together in order to support the development of a full continuum of programs that promote prevention, early detection and intervention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration for all people suffering from substance use disorders.

The non-governmental organizations, as an active and in many instances equal participant, are also indispensable in this coordinative process. It is within this context that I wish to highlight that in Slovenia we succeeded in creating such fully-functioning, inclusive and participatory mechanism, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Health, as the competent authority for dealing with illicit drug issues.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would now like to focus on another important aspect, which also requires our close attention. There is a common understanding that factors such as increased availability, reduced risk perception, reduced costs of drug, favorable media messages and changes in social norms may have significant long-term effects on the consumption level, especially for young people. Therefore, the importance of a broad policy with an overall aim to reduce drug demand, for example through drug prevention or risk reduction activities, cannot be stressed enough. It is for this reason that Slovenia decided to co-organize together with its partners from around the world a side event during this session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, focusing on addressing challenges for prevention programs in the era of cannabis rescheduling.

In Slovenia, over the last ten years, we have spent a lot of time and effort on various cannabis related initiatives. Based on the fact that there have been no legal or professional reservations against, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has already enabled the use of all cannabis-based preparations for medical purposes. However, they must be regulated and made accessible in the same rigorous manner as it applies to all other substances. Drugs with pharmacological effect must be safe and efficient and of high quality for patients, and due to potential risks, they must be prescribed by physicians.

Mr. Chairperson,

Before concluding, I would like to underline the great importance that Slovenia attaches to regional cooperation, particularly with countries of the Western Balkans. Apart from programs of bilateral technical assistance, which focus on the implementation of measures to address the issue of drug abuse and illicit drug trade, Slovenia also supports the activities of different organizations in the region, particularly the Council of Europe's Pompidou Group.

In conclusion, I would like to assert our firm belief, that the world drug problem can only be solved through international cooperation, in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. Progress must be based on verifiable facts, arguments and promotion of a broad dialogue between all stakeholders.

Thank you.