

AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY STATEMENT
63RD SESSION
UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS
VIENNA
MARCH 2020

Chair, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Representatives,

Australia is pleased to contribute to the essential work of the UNODC and the CND.

In 2019, we took stock of our collective efforts to address the world drug problem. We identified progress, but also serious gaps and challenges in the implementation of our work and emerging threats.

One year after the adoption of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, this 63rd session represents an important opportunity to consider how we fully implement and advance our collective commitments including - the complementary and mutually reinforcing - Political Declaration and Plan of Action and 2016 UNGASS Outcomes Document.

Chair,

As we look to translate our commitments into action, Australia remains particularly concerned about the global inequality in access to controlled substances given that almost 80% of the world's population lacks adequate access to pain relief.

Over the past decade, we have also seen the problem of opioid dependence rise, indicating that as a global community we have neither increased access where it would benefit most, nor prevented the diversion and abuse of controlled substances - as we might have hoped - in order to protect our communities.

We are pleased to introduce a resolution at this 63rd session - in partnership with the EU - to address barriers to access to controlled substances for medical purposes, while preventing their diversion and misuse.

Australia will continue to support action on the ground, including through UNODC's Joint Global Programme. We urge other states to support this initiative to address the global disparity in access to medicine.

Chair,

We remain concerned about the rise in synthetic drugs. With amphetamine-type stimulants the second most widely used drugs across the globe, the continued growth of the new psychoactive substances market has become a significant policy challenge and a major international concern. In our Indo-Pacific region, Australia is working closely with partners to disrupt methamphetamine trafficking by serious and organised crime groups.

Australia continues to support countries through UNODC's Global Smart Program to strengthen efforts to address the challenges presented by synthetic drugs.

A holistic and multifaceted approach is needed to address the world drug problem. We believe that an emphasis on education, prevention and treatment can reduce demand and should be integrated with law enforcement efforts to disrupt the manufacture and distribution of illicit drugs and their precursors.

Special attention is required to address the needs of vulnerable members of society. While whole-of-population strategies can reduce the adverse impact of illicit drug use, evidence tells us there are specific population groups that are particularly vulnerable and we need to involve these populations in designing and implementing effective responses.

Chair,

Australia considers the obligations in the UN drug conventions cannot be interpreted in isolation. Domestic drug policies need to align with the drug control treaties and other international obligations.

Australia will continue to press for the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances. The death penalty is an inhumane and irreversible form of punishment, and completely ineffective in deterring drug use. Australia remains committed to promoting a public health approach to illicit drug use, which considers a proportional response to minor or non-violent drug-related crimes.

To conclude,

Australia reaffirms its commitment to the international drug control conventions.

We also underscore our support for the combined and coordinated work of the UNODC, the INCB, and the WHO.

We call on all members to enhance engagement with academia and civil society to inform our work and enable meaningful participation at the CND.

We look forward to a productive CND session that addresses the world drug problem in a balanced, humane and evidence-based manner.

Thank you Chair.