

**Sixty-Third Commission
on Narcotic Drugs**

2-6 March 2020

New Zealand Statement

delivered by
**Deputy Director-General
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(Check against delivery)



Thank You Chair

Tēnā Koutou Katoa. My greetings to you all. New Zealand is pleased to have the opportunity to address the sixty-third Commission on Narcotic Drugs today. We regard the CND as a vital body for the discussion of drug policy and have a long-standing commitment to the Commission, its work, and its partners.

I would like to briefly touch upon New Zealand's views of international drug policy and the domestic developments that have taken place over the past year.

Chair

New Zealand continues to closely follow the global debate on effective drug policy. Supported by the growing global evidence on effective harm minimisation, New Zealand is strongly of the view that the best way to deal with our crises is to take a health and people centred approach. We want to strike a balance between preventing drug use and recognising that people who use drugs need support from the health system, and not necessarily a criminal conviction. This view also aligns with overarching national policies which focus on promoting wellbeing and improving equity.

We see the three policy documents of the past decade as complimentary and mutually reinforcing and look to the 2016 UNGASS outcome document as the way forward in guiding modern and effective drug policy. For New Zealand, UNGASS is a milestone in drug policy that takes a more holistic approach to management of drug issues and expands on human rights matters in drug policy. We welcome the work recently undertaken to improve and streamline the Annual Report Questionnaire and look

forward to the results of such endeavours. With regard to human rights, New Zealand shares the concerns of other Member States regarding the disproportionate use of the death penalty in response to drug offending and continues to advocate for the abolition of the death penalty.

Chair

Domestically, 2019 was a big year for New Zealand on the drug front. In the past year we amended our Misuse of Drugs Act to schedule several dangerous synthetic cannabinoids; to affirm discretion by New Zealand Police to treat drug use and personal possession as a health issue and allow Police to refer people to addiction services; and to enable temporary class drug orders to be issued, enabling Police to have the necessary search and seizure powers needed to interrupt supply. We responded to the 2018 Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction by directing our Ministry of Health to adopt many of the Inquiry's recommendations, for example to make talk therapies, alcohol and other drug services and culturally aligned therapies much more widely available and to commit to a staged funding path to improve access and choice in these areas.

New Zealand also made regulations for a medicinal cannabis scheme, aimed at increasing access to domestically made medicinal cannabis products, and approved funding for research into the effectiveness of drug checking programmes at music festivals to investigate whether these programmes help keep people safe and reduce harm.

Looking to 2020, New Zealand will hold a referendum on the regulation of cannabis for personal use at our general election in September. The referendum will be an opportunity for the public to consider an alternative approach to cannabis control which has been developed in a manner consistent with global health and wellbeing outcomes. The public health approach taken to development of draft legislation focuses on reducing harms of cannabis use, including the health risks, and particularly for youth.

New Zealand faces some of its greatest challenges in methamphetamine, synthetic drugs, and cannabis. However, we believe that our compassionate, innovative and proportionate approach to drug issues will put us in a strong position to make significant progress on addressing the harm caused by drugs to our society.

Chair

In closing, I wish to reiterate some points we have made previously on how we as an international community can collectively approach the challenges illicit drugs pose today. There is no one-size-fits all approach and we cannot face the challenges alone. To be successful we need to take a balanced approach to drug policy and harness the effectiveness of a health approach to achieve harm reduction and national security. And in order to achieve the fundamental goal of the three international drug control conventions, namely to safeguard the health and welfare of humanity, we need to give ourselves the space and flexibility to pursue new approaches to reduce harm and build up a body of evidence on what works. We can do this by being open to innovative

solutions and previously untried paths. As our understanding grows, so does the need to establish a truly modernised drug policy.

Thank you Chair