

CND Special Event
Commemoration of the United Nations International Day
against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

*DISCUSSION ON THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE WORLD DRUG
SITUATION - A REGIONAL RESPECTIVE*

Friday, 26 June 2020

Belgian Statement



by Permanent Representative H.E. Ambassador Ghislain D'hoop

Ambassador Khan, Chair of the CND,
Ms Waly, Executive Director of UNODC,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak at this commemoration of the United Nations International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on the extremely important topic of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world drug situation.

Let me start by saying that we monitor very closely the illicit drug trafficking that affects my country, as indicated in the new World Drug Report, and that simultaneously Belgium also achieves substantial results in the interception of illegal drug shipments (especially cocaine) and in the dismantling of illegal laboratories (NPS).

As far as the COVID 19 pandemic is concerned, my country is managing the effects of this crisis through the unstinting efforts of all relevant authorities and the involvement of civil society, specialized drug treatment services, prevention services, hospitals, etc. To that effect, various surveys were organized during the crisis. Both the abovementioned interaction and surveys are very useful to understand the situation and to draw conclusions that will help us improve our policies in the future. The surveys seem to indicate a decrease in the use of substances during the period where lockdown measures were applicable, except for marijuana. Nevertheless, a more thorough analysis is necessary to get a more accurate picture.

The unfortunate and forced reduced availability of health services poses a risk to the most vulnerable groups, but the essential services have remained active and open. Some services also receive more questions – that is the case for instance with the drug line.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Belgium is known to be a keen supporter of the universal access to and availability of controlled substances, especially pain medication. This topic merits the specific attention of the international community. The current COVID 19 crisis is having a major negative impact on access to and availability of those substances. The crisis is also benefiting producers of falsified medicines who are exploiting the shortages of regulated medicines in certain regions in order to fill the resulting niches with partially life-threatening products. This is a very worrying trend, and Belgium therefore wants to take this opportunity to encourage the UNODC to include these 2 important topics in the planned UNODC strategy for the next 10 years.

Thank you very much for your attention.