

**Statement by Ambassador Gerhard Kuntzle, Germany, on the occasion of the World Drug Day on 26 June 2020 UNODC Vienna**

Ambassador Khan, Chair of CND

Ms Waly, Executive Director of UNODC,

Dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset I'd like to express our gratitude that in spite of the challenges which the pandemic crisis has brought upon us, this yearly landmark event can take place, albeit in a virtual fashion. But, as the saying goes, every crisis is an opportunity, and so our virtual meeting is also an opportunity because it has a potential to dramatically increase the outreach of this important event, if compared to a meeting in Conference Room C.

Chair,

The pandemic has not mitigated the disastrous impact of drug abuse. Much to the contrary, it has added to its negative effects. Therefore, I'd like to commend UNODC's Research and Trend Analysis Branch, Director Lemahieu and in particular Angela Me and her team for presenting their analysis of the impact of Covid-19 on the drug situation in the framework of a special session added to the presentation of the annual World Drug Report.

And, if you bear with me, express my satisfaction that the German government has once again contributed 600.000 Euros of non-earmarked funding to the World Drug Report.

This year's World Drug Day is special indeed. The new situation in which we find ourselves all of a sudden invites us to rethink and adapt. I would like to refer to the Executive Director's address to FinGov on 17 June when she outlined her strategy. I have noted with satisfaction her mentioning a dynamic approach towards the policy and programs on Alternative Development. Germany is financing with millions of Euros projects of AD worldwide. In close cooperation with our European and international partners we want to intensify our support for alternative sources of income for small holders and support the rule of law in areas where drug crops are cultivated.

Germany and our partners within the European Union continue to advocate and pursue a balanced approach in addressing the challenges of drug abuse, encompassing health, development and security aspects, with the human being right in the center of our policy. There is no denying the fact that drug addiction is a disease. Sick persons need medical attendance, counseling, treatment, damage reduction, as clearly spelled out in UNGASS 16 and the Ministerial Declaration 2019.

Let me also mention another scourge within our societies which is linked to the drug business: Organized crime has become an omnipresent threat to our citizens. There can hardly be any doubt that we need to counter it with more resolve and more cooperation. Because drug gangs act in a highly professional and interlinked way – so our response must be commensurate. Therefore we need to invest in modern instruments of investigation, and intensify information exchange and cooperation between law enforcement agencies worldwide. There is still a huge potential for international and multilateral cooperation! The data presented in the World Drug Report to which member states contribute facilitate this cooperation as they are the basis for evidence based drug policies.

As I do not intend to take the floor twice this afternoon, let me conclude by expressing our satisfaction that our proposal to devote a special part of this session to addressing the impact of Covid-19 on the drug situation has been taken up. And even more so that Angela Me managed to write a preliminary assessment into the World Drug Report. This helps to underline and showcase UNODC's unique contribution to addressing the crisis. It seems to me that it might be appropriate to devote a special agenda item of the reconvened CND in December to further assess and discuss the impact of Covid 19 on our drug policies.