



**Australian Country Statement**  
**64<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**  
**Vienna, 12-16 April 2021**

Chair, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Representatives,

The unprecedented global health crisis presented by COVID-19 has put great pressure on our communities, our economies, and our collective efforts to address the world drug problem.

We strongly support the commission's statement on the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the implementation of our joint commitments. We remain committed to our collective response to address new and emerging trends and challenges, including those presented by COVID-19.

This 64<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission marks the important 60<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances respectively. These milestones are testament to the enduring relevance of the conventions, and we remain strongly committed to implementing them.

But to ensure the conventions continue to remain relevant into the future, we must be prepared to listen to expert scientific and medical advice and keep the scheduling of controlled substances up to date and in line with community expectations. The scheduling system is essential to the integrity and currency of the international drug control framework.

In this context, we welcomed the commission's vote in December on the WHO recommendations to reschedule cannabis and cannabis resin. The vote demonstrated the enduring relevance of the international drug control regime, which aims to protect public health and ensure the well-being of society.

Chair, Australia is honoured to have been a member of the CND for over 45 years and is seeking re-election for the 2022-25 term. We are proud to have brought an Indo-Pacific perspective to the CND, collaborating closely with our regional partners to address our shared drug challenges.

After 45 years Australia is as committed as ever to the essential work of the CND, including by contributing to the Global Smart Program to address challenges posed by synthetic drugs, and the Joint Global Programme to ensure greater access to controlled medicines for medical and scientific use.

If re-elected, Australia will continue to advocate for greater access to controlled medicines for those in need, in line with the primary objectives of the international conventions, with a focus on addressing the specific needs of vulnerable populations.

We will also continue to advocate for a balanced and evidence-based approach to illicit drugs policy incorporating both law enforcement and health approaches.

And we will remain steadfast seeking the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances. It remains an inhumane and irreversible form of punishment, and completely ineffective in deterring drug use.

The international community should make more use of this Commission to share evidence-based policies and lessons learned in their implementation. Only through the sharing and contest of ideas will the best policies emerge. If re-elected, Australia will do more to share our experiences, good and bad, pursuing supply, demand, and harm reduction measures and in working with all stakeholders, including civil society organisations, in our efforts to improve lives and livelihoods.

We will also continue to accelerate implementation of our 2019 Ministerial Declaration commitments, including the complementary and mutually reinforcing 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action and 2016 UNGASS Outcomes Document.

In closing, we look forward to a productive session of the CND and hope to be back in person next year in Vienna.