

**Statement of Belgium**  
**at 64th session of Commission on Narcotic Drugs**  
12-16 April 2021



**H.E. Mr. Ghislain D'hoop**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Belgium

Thank you Madam Chair.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement by Portugal on behalf of the EU and its member states, and in my national capacity I would like to stress the following points.

For several years now, Belgium has been proactive in promoting adequate **access to, and availability of, controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes**. Although this principle is embedded in the conventions whose anniversaries we celebrate today, this lack of access remains a critical global issue.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** again made it clear that we are far from ensuring access to controlled medicines to patients in need. Last year, an important resolution aimed at promoting awareness-raising, education and training was adopted. But even more efforts are needed to close the **global pain divide** affecting millions of patients, including children, worldwide. We need to alleviate their suffering. Belgium therefore supports UNODC's Joint Global Programme and the INCB Learning initiative.

The lack of access to **quality-assured medical products** leads patients to illegal markets and to substandard and falsified medical products. These issues also need to be addressed in our multilateral discussions.

Belgium will continue working on **an evidence based approach** for the development and evaluation of effective drug policies. This requires strengthening of data collection, scientific research and working with civil society.

Drug abuse still carries a **stigma**, leading to exclusion and discrimination, and complicating access to health care or social services. As stated in the World Drug Report, **women with a drug use disorder** appear particularly vulnerable to stigmatization, violence and severe health risk. These issues require attention when developing or evaluating drugs policies.

Finally, Chair, my country is tackling, with increasing success, a challenge deriving from Belgium's position as a European and global trade and logistics hub. I am referring to **cocaine trafficking via maritime routes**. More than a third of all European cocaine seizures take place in the port of Antwerp. This success rate is a direct result of stricter national and local policies and of the dedication of multidisciplinary teams of police, customs officials and magistrates working in unison. We have also strengthened our cooperation with the UNODC and partner countries in Central and South America, and look forward to further developing international partnerships in the fight against narcotics trafficking and abuse.

Thank you Chair.