



European Union

Statement on the occasion of the 64th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs Vienna, 12-16 April 2021

Agenda item 3: General debate

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is an honour to participate in this meeting and to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland+, Liechtenstein+, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino.
2. We would like to thank you, Madam Chair and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Secretariat, for making this meeting possible, despite the obstacles posed by the COVID-19 crisis. It is essential that we continue to meet and discuss solutions to the challenges related to drugs, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.
3. In this regard, let me emphasise that effective solutions can only be found if we involve civil society in our discussions, as was our established practice. We are conscious that the virtual format of our meeting is challenging, but we have to make every effort to facilitate an inclusive and transparent multilateral process using the technology available. The restrictions imposed for this session must not set a precedent.

*Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+Iceland and Liechtenstein are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

Civil society participation is a priority, and we believe that the experience now gathered from virtual meetings will make it possible to return swiftly to the pre-pandemic level of civil society participation and involvement, and that this can happen as early as the next intersessional meeting.

Madam Chair,

4. We are proud to announce that in December 2020 the Council of the European Union adopted a new Drugs Strategy for the period 2021-2025. Not only does the Strategy explicitly support the acceleration of the implementation of our joint commitments, but it also directly contributes to this objective. With this Strategy, the EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to an evidence-based, integrated, balanced and multidisciplinary approach. The Strategy addresses the various aspects of the drugs situation by aiming at: 1. enhancing security and reducing drug supply; 2. increasing prevention, treatment and care-services and reducing drug demand; and 3. addressing drug-related harm. With the respect, promotion and protection of human rights at its core, the EU Drugs Strategy incorporates gender equality and health equity perspectives. I should also stress that this Strategy fully recognises the importance of international cooperation to address drug-related challenges, and that it has a dedicated chapter in this regard. Last but not least, our Strategy incorporates the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis in the drugs area and takes a future-oriented approach, promoting research, innovation and foresight to respond more effectively to increasing challenges and to anticipate these. We will present the EU Drugs Strategy at our side-event tomorrow. You are welcome to participate in this event.

5. In line with the approach promoted in the Strategy, we have submitted a draft resolution to be adopted at this 64th Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) session. This draft resolution aims to promote the development of quality, affordable, scientific evidence-based and comprehensive drug prevention and treatment services around the globe. Indeed assurance of the quality of drug prevention and treatment services, solidly based on scientific and evidence-based research and knowledge, is essential to the continuous improvement in this regard. These services should on the other hand be accessible to all, which can only be assured by their affordability. We know that we can count on your constructive involvement in the discussions on this resolution.

Madam Chair,

6. The COVID-19 crisis has had a great economic and social impact on our societies. In the field of drugs, it has worsened an already grim situation, as was evidenced by the World Drug Report 2020. The pandemic has had multiple effects. Organised crime groups have swiftly adapted their business models, for instance by expanding drugs trafficking via maritime routes and online sales via darknet markets. For people who use drugs, prevention, treatment and care services have been disrupted worldwide. In Europe, following an initial disruption, innovative approaches were applied, which allowed for increased access to services, including a greater use of digital health options.

Madam Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. In 2016, at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Drugs, we committed to addressing and countering the world drug situation in a comprehensive, integrated and balanced way, through the adoption of an outcome document which remains the most comprehensive international drug policy document. In 2019, we adopted the Ministerial Declaration that highlights our willingness to accelerate the implementation of our commitments. More than ever, this should remain our priority.
8. The EU and its Member States emphasise that States have to respect, protect and promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the inherent dignity of all individuals and the rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies. We reiterate our own commitment to that end. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the use of capital punishment in all circumstances and in all cases, as it violates the inalienable right to life and is incompatible with human dignity. The death penalty does not serve as a deterrent to crime and makes any miscarriage of justice irreversible. The International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy provide a comprehensive set of international legal standards that can in some ways provide guidance to governments in developing human rights-compliant drug policies.

9. Cooperation through effective multilateralism remains the best way to tackle today's and tomorrow's global challenges. The EU is strongly supportive of efforts to promote coordination between relevant UN entities and regional and international organisations. The EU also recalls the importance of the commitment to the effective implementation of the three international drug control conventions. We welcome the continued support of the international community to these conventions and the broad consensus on the relevant international human rights instruments as being the cornerstones of the international drug control system.

10. In this regard, we support the UN System Common Position on drug policy and suggest that its Task Team focus on stepping up efforts to ensure that no one is left behind, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Common Position inspires us to work together in developing and implementing balanced and evidence-based responses to the world drug situation, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda. We should now further accelerate our efforts to ensure that no one is left behind.

To conclude, Madam Chair,

11. The international community needs to step up its responses to cope with the challenges at stake, which is important to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The EU and its Member States will continue working relentlessly with our international partners to address the world drug situation and to accelerate the implementation of our joint commitments.

Thank you.
