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## **Statement of Finland**

**On the occasion of the 64th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Vienna, 12-16 April 2021)**

Madame Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its Member States.

Madame Chair,

We would like to start by thanking you and the UNODC Secretariat, for making this meeting possible, despite the COVID-19 crisis. It is essential that we continue to meet and discuss solutions to the challenges related to drugs, even during the pandemic.

Madame Chair,

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a great economic and social impact on our societies. We have seen the multiple effects of the pandemic also in the field of drugs. In Finland, drug markets did not change as we expected and the availability of drugs did not decrease. Even if the borders were closed for travelling, transport of goods continued – and the organized crime groups adapted quickly to the new situation.

Madam Chair,

Covid-19 pandemic has taught us many things. During the last year, it has been yet again underlined that we need close cooperation between different actors when solving multifaceted problems. The role of NGOs, civil society, volunteers and people who use drugs have also been vital when looking for innovative solutions. During the pandemic different actors have worked more closely together than before, and these new ways of cooperation are something that hopefully continue also after the pandemic.

Of course, the pandemic has also shown the gaps of our system. Despite the efforts and good innovations there is still work to be done and lessons to be learned for the future. Especially people without permanent residence have been affected with the limitation of services. It has become even clearer that we need to tackle marginalization and stigmatization. Human rights of all vulnerable groups need to be taken into account.

Madam Chair,

Human rights are at the core of all work of the UN system. In this context, Finland considers the role of UNODC unique in its efforts to address drugs and crime, and in supporting Member States to deliver a safe society founded on the rule of law. In this respect, we are happy to announce that Finland, as a country that has been dedicated to promoting human rights for decades, is now seeking membership of the UN Human Rights Council for the period of 2022–2024.

We are of the view that also all drug policies have to be implemented comprehensively while respecting human rights. Health, well-being, safety and security of people and societies are essential. We also align ourselves with the advocates of the abolition of the death penalty as well as with those condemning the use of extrajudicial sanctions of whatever nature.

Madame Chair,

In the time of crisis, it has become even clearer that we need drug policy coordination and cooperation between the law enforcement and the health and social sectors. Even if the main role of the law enforcement authorities is to reduce the drug supply and tackle drug trafficking, successful and sustainable harm reduction is not possible without their participation.

The pandemic has underlined that the promotion of participatory and inclusive policies contributing to public health should be at the core of today's drug policy implementation.

Thank you.