



## MALTA STATEMENT FOR THE 64<sup>TH</sup> CND SESSION

12 – 16 April 2021

delivered by

Hon. Michael Falzon

Minister for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights

Excellencies, Representatives of Civil Society, Distinguished Delegates,

Madam Chair,

Allow me to start by congratulating you on your nomination and assuring you of my country's full support.

Malta fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Minister of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. I'd like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

The current pandemic has exacerbated the complexities of the world's drug situation.

The individuals particularly those in vulnerable groups, and those in marginalised sectors of society may have experienced added challenges in accessing health care services.

On the other hand, organised criminal groups have found their way around the lockdowns, through creating new ways of distribution models. Despite all odds the illicit supply of drugs increased significantly.

More than ever, it is now clear, that only a multi-sectorial, human rights approach to drug policy, can provide us with effective solutions.

Firstly, we must adapt our judiciary systems. People who use drugs are not criminals. This battle will not be won if substance use continues to be considered as a criminal act, punishable by imprisonment. Our focus and emphasis should rather be on assisting people who use drugs and ensuring that they receive the necessary and adequate care.

In 2015, Malta introduced the *Treatment Not Imprisonment Act*. This approach has proven to be effective, and we are very pleased with the positive results obtained. We are now even stronger in our determination to continue developing our work in this direction.

Secondly – Equal and non-discriminatory access to treatment and other rehabilitative services, is undoubtedly key in assisting users to overcome their dependence. We need to invest to make more treatment services not only available, but also accessible to all. Affected persons often hesitate to seek treatment, out of shame and fear of society's negative perception, and are therefore deprived of access to health care and to other important social services.

This brings me to the third issue I would like to address –stigmatisation. People who use drugs are victims of all forms of bias, discrimination, and prejudice. They are labelled with all kinds of derogatory names, rejected by society, and at times totally marginalised.

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Malta has been working very actively on this front and I am pleased to invite all of you to join us at the side event that we will be organising together with Canada, the Pompidou Group, and the UNODC, which will further explore measures taken to promote attitudes and actions that reduce stigmatisation of drug use and drug addiction. This event will build on the results obtained from a survey in which 80 countries participated.

We hope that many of you will not only join us at the event on Wednesday, but that you will also join in the task that remains ahead of us – that of changing mentalities.

People who use drugs are no different than the rest of society. They deserve to be treated with dignity and afforded every possible opportunity in order not to be left behind. After all this is a commitment, we collectively took towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Thank you for your attention.