

# **Sixty-Fourth Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

**12-16 April 2021**

**New Zealand Statement**



NEW ZEALAND

Thank you Chair

Tēnā koutou katoa. Aotearoa New Zealand is pleased to address the sixty-fourth Commission on Narcotic Drugs today. We have a long-standing commitment to the CND and we greatly value the work of this vital body, along with all our partners engaged in drug policy.

Chair

As we can all attest to, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed great strain on our communities, and has had far-reaching consequences for many aspects of society, not least efforts to address the world drug situation. The pandemic has changed drug trafficking routes, affected drug consumption habits, and put immense strain on treatment services. But we are yet to fully understand the long-term impact of COVID-19 on the world drug situation. While we all continue to learn to live with the impact of COVID-19 domestically, we must also continue to focus on its impact globally and be at our collective best in this most important endeavour.

Chair,

New Zealand is pleased to join others in commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Single Convention of Narcotic Drugs of 1954 and the 50<sup>th</sup> of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971. Over the decades both conventions have played a vital role in providing an international legal framework for drug control measures while at the same time ensuring the availability of important medicines. New Zealand remains a strong advocate of the conventions and their fundamental goal, to safeguard the health and well-being of humanity.

Over the six decades since the 61 Convention was adopted, the drug landscape has seen many changes, and the pace of this change has been unrelenting. States, and the international community, have needed to adapt and respond to the new challenges, and in many ways we have succeeded. But there is still work to be done. In order to achieve the fundamental goal of the drug conventions, and to successfully address the challenges we face, it is important we give ourselves the space to explore new approaches and innovative solutions to reduce harm and build up a body of evidence on what works. This will allow us to establish a truly

modern drug policy that is balanced in its approach and one that harnesses the effectiveness of a health approach to reduce harm and to improve national security.

In this vein, New Zealand welcomes the vote by the CND to remove cannabis and cannabis resin from Schedule IV of the 1961 Convention. We see this as an important step in the acknowledgment of the medical and therapeutic properties of cannabis, and in encouraging global research into the therapeutic potential and public health effects of cannabis.

While we see progress in some areas, there is room for improvement in others. New Zealand shares the concerns of other Member States regarding the disproportionate use of the death penalty in response to drug offending and continues to advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. We also see the need to increase services to and awareness of the needs of vulnerable members of society, not least indigenous populations. We have seen this in our own country, where often the burden of drug harm falls most heavily on our Māori communities.

Chair,

Domestically New Zealand used 2020 to consolidate the good work achieved in the previous years on drug issues. In April our Medicinal Cannabis Scheme came into effect, improving access to quality medicinal cannabis products for patients. Our Ministry of Health continued to adopt many of the recommendations made in the recent Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction, which directly affect drug users. And towards the end of 2020 temporary legislation was passed to allow limited drug checking at summer festivals, while more permanent regulations are under development.

Despite progress, methamphetamine, synthetic drugs, and cannabis still remain a great concern. But we believe that our compassionate, innovative and proportionate approach to drug issues puts us in a strong position to make significant progress on addressing the harm caused by drugs to our society.

Thank you Chair

