

Statement from Portugal

General Debate of the 64th Session of the Commission on Narcotics Drugs

12 April 2021

Thank you Madam Chair.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be able to address the Commission at its sixty fourth session in these unprecedented times. I would like to commend all the efforts made by you, Madam Chair, and the Secretariat to ensure that this session allows for fruitful discussions on all the important topics of the agenda.

Madam Chair,

The Ministerial Declaration of 2019 allowed us to recall the importance of implementing all our commitments with regards to drug policy, setting the stage for an international single-track approach, reaffirming the multidimensional nature of those commitments and promoting its implementation in practice.

The prius of these commitments is reflected in the UN General Assembly Special Session 2016 2016 Outcome Document, an historic landmark in the area of drug policy, in which Member States recognized that the world drug situation remains a common and shared responsibility that should be addressed in a multilateral setting through effective and increased international cooperation and demands an integrated, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing, balanced, scientific evidence-based and comprehensive approach.

In this regard, Portugal fully supports the UN System Common Position on drug policy as well as its Task Team, a key development towards the assurance of UN system-wide coherence and alignment with the overarching Sustainable Development Goals.

The recommendations included in the UN General Assembly Special Session Outcome Document, strengthening action on the public health and human dimension of the world drug situation, are not new to Portugal.

Portugal has been implementing a public health oriented approach with the aim of preventing the spread of HIV among people who use drugs, decreasing the number of drug-related deaths and curbing drug-related crime. It is clear that this model has produced positive effects not only for the people who use drugs, but also for their families, communities and the Portuguese society as a whole.

Portugal has been committed to an approach based on the principles of humanism and pragmatism that has been considered a model of best practices, namely by the International Narcotics Control Board, due to the fact that we recognize drug use as a health issue and drug user as a person who needs to be treated and not punished. In line with this public health approach, Portugal continues to be strongly committed to supply reduction and related measures, including law enforcement, money laundering, assets recovery and judicial cooperation.

Portugal considers that equal efforts should be invested in all areas of drug policy, in respect of the UN Drug Conventions and other relevant instruments, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the conformity to which helps to ensure that while pursuing effective drug control policies we also respect the inherent dignity of all human beings.

At this stage, Portugal would like to underline the value and importance of the International Guidelines on Human Rights Drug policy, which provide a comprehensive set of international legal standards for guiding governments to develop human rights compliant drug policies.

Furthermore, and in line with this model, Portugal strongly condemns the application of capital punishment in cases of crime offenses related to drug use. As a matter of fact, Portugal unrelentingly opposes the death penalty in all circumstances.

Madam Chair,

As a reflection of our commitments to addressing the world drug situation, Portugal and Austria have tabled a draft resolution on behalf of the EU and its Member States, entitled “Promoting quality, affordable, scientific evidence-based and comprehensive drug prevention and treatment services”.

This draft resolution highlights several relevant topics in the area of drug prevention and treatment, including the importance of developing quality and affordable prevention and treatment services, ensuring that such services fully respect all human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, and promoting international cooperation, exchange of information and best practices and technical assistance. We believe this resolution, when approved, will constitute an important milestone on our path to facing the world drug situation.

To conclude, Portugal would like to take this opportunity to recognize the role played by civil society organizations in the development and implementation of drug policy.

I will now address you very briefly in my capacity as Presidency of the Pompidou Group, of the Council of Europe.

This year we are celebrating the fiftieth Anniversary of the Pompidou Group, a platform for intergovernmental co-operation which promotes a multidisciplinary, evidence-based and humanist approach of drug policies, in line with the values of the Council of Europe. It grew from seven founding states to forty one members today, including three non-European countries.

Under the motto "Human rights at the heart of drug policies", the Anniversary event , in Paris on 28 October 2021, will be the occasion to take stock of the achievements of the Pompidou Group over the last fifty years, to pay tribute to the people who have contributed to them, and to address the challenges we are facing today.

The most important feature of the Anniversary is the expected adoption of a revised statute by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. By strengthening the identity of the Pompidou Group as a Council of Europe entity, including a strong focus on human rights and public health, extending its mandate beyond the field of illicit drugs and fostering synergies with other international organizations and Council of Europe bodies, the new statute will give a reinforced political commitment and open new legal avenues to the Pompidou Group.

The Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe is committed to continue and expand its efforts to further cooperate with international organisations and with civil society organisations towards our common goal to bring public health and the respect of human rights to the forefront of drug policy, as set by the outcome document of the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and reaffirmed by the 2019 Ministerial Declaration.

Thank you, Madam Chair.