



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY !

**Statement by Ambassador Barbara Žvokelj,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the International Organisations in Vienna,
at the 64th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Vienna, 12 April 2021**

Thank you Madame Chairperson,

Slovenia highly appreciates the role of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. In our view, it enables important exchange of experience in search of joint ways to resolve the problem of illicit production, trade and use of drugs at the global, regional and national levels. It also tackles this complex challenge in a comprehensive manner and with respect for fundamental human rights. For these reasons, Slovenia decided to renew its financial support for the work of the UNODC.

In addition to what has been said on behalf of the EU, I would like to make several remarks in my national capacity.

Madam Chairperson,

Like other countries around the world, Slovenia is not immune to drug abuse. In response to this problem, my country employs an interdisciplinary, comprehensive and balanced approach. The Slovenian Ministry of Health systematically promotes scientifically proven measures and cooperation among different stakeholders, including governmental experts, scientists and non-governmental actors. It is also for this reason that Slovenia is organizing a side-event on Wednesday, 15 April, on the topic of Early Prevention. The aim is to explore ways to make effective preventive solutions available and to galvanize action on implementation, in line with the UNODC/WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention.

Madam Chairperson,

In Slovenia, we regard addiction as an illness and the person suffering from it as requiring particular medical and social assistance, as well as rehabilitation. To meet this principle, only within the Slovenian Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities over 170 social welfare programs a year are financially supported. With these programs, we contribute to prevention, treatment, harm reduction, de-stigmatization and reintegration of drug users into society.

Madam Chairperson,

We are convinced that reducing the supply of controlled substances is one to the guiding principles in comprehensive and balanced drugs policy. In this context, it is important to mention that the traditional Balkan drug trafficking route is still active in both directions.

Slovenia's geographical position on this route in a certain way influences the situation in the field of drugs. Slovenia is mostly a transit country, but also a target country for controlled substances.

For some time now, we have been observing the trend that companies are being set up in Slovenia solely for the purpose of smuggling controlled drugs. As a consequence, the Slovenian Police has stepped up its efforts to disclose the abuse by potential businesses in smuggling controlled drugs.

We are aware that organized criminal groups are able to quickly adapt to the different situations and trends in countries as well as to the current situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to emphasize that during the last year the activities of drug criminal groups have not decreased despite the restrictions posed by the pandemic. On the contrary, the COVID-19 situation has only increased the supply and sale of controlled substances, especially synthetic and new psychoactive substances, via internet, especially darknet. Organised criminal groups are taking full advantage of encrypted digital communication. In this regard, we support all activities in this area on a global level, as we are aware that national efforts, no matter how appreciated they are, do not contribute significantly to the global reduction of the problem.

Before concluding, I would like to underline the great importance that my country attaches to regional cooperation in tackling the drug problem. Slovenia therefore intends not only to maintain, but also to enhance its cooperation in the Western Balkans. In light of the global nature of the drug challenge, we also call on cooperation among other countries, both in Europe and around the world. For these reasons and in order to contribute in addressing the world drug problem, Slovenia has decided to apply for its first-ever membership in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

Finally, let me say that Slovenia appreciates all the work that has been done in preparing for this session in these extraordinary circumstances and hopes that our joint efforts will further strengthen a comprehensive, balanced and humane global drugs policy.

Thank you.