



**NATIONAL STATEMENT
BY**

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OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

AT THE 64TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

AGENDA 3: GENERAL DEBATE

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**Chairperson,
Executive Director of the UNODC,
President of the International Narcotics Control Board,
Director General of the World Health Organization,
Distinguished Guest,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset let me extend my delegation's warm congratulations to you on your election as Chair of the 64th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

To this end, I would like to assure you and your Bureau of my delegation's support. I also express my delegation's sincere appreciation to the Secretariat for diligently preparing for this session.

South Africa associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the African Group and the G77 and China.

I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Chairperson,

In order to deal with the scourge of the world drug problem, South Africa uses a human rights based approach through accelerating the implementation of prevention and treatment programmes targeted towards vulnerable groups. The 2019 Ministerial Declaration as informed by the three international drug control conventions; the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action; the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement and the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Outcome Document remain important instruments in our resolve to fight and reverse the world drug problem.

South Africa reiterates its concern that the world drug problem continues to persist to the detriment of socio-economic development, thus negatively affecting the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5 and

16. In addition, the scourge of illicit drugs poses a threat to security and stability throughout the world.

During this period, when we are faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, criminal networks continue their illegal acts of peddling drugs. In this regard, my country observed the global trends that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic on the world drug problem.

Criminal networks and syndicates took advantage of the lockdown situation in many countries by adapting their operations. There was an increase in the usage of the internet or the dark web for ordering, supplying and delivery of drugs and chemicals. This led to more use of cargo, mail and other means of transportation rarely seen before including the illegal crossing of land and line borders to supply these products. We are cognisant that substance abusers particularly vulnerable groups including Children, Youth and Women were impacted significantly by the effects of the national lockdown.

Globally criminal networks are taking advantage of the broad business network which is interconnected with globalisation, evolving communication technologies and business models to carry out their illegal activities. This helped fuel the global drug supply during this period. We also saw an increase in frequent use of crypto currency for payment of drug trafficking transactions. The supply of counterfeit pharmaceutical drugs also became a more common occurrence.

Chairperson

South Africa noted the global trends that drug use remains multifaceted in nature and characterised by concurrent use of several substances. These substances include the use of conventional plant based drugs; synthetic stimulants; and opioids. In this regard, we call on the international community to adopt innovative approaches to address these challenges.

Chairperson

Our efforts to address the COVID-19 and world drug problem will not achieve the desired outcomes until we have disrupted, dismantled and neutralised the national and transnational criminal networks who are taking advantage of the COVID-19 crisis. To this effect, South Africa is cooperating closely with the World Health Organisation and other governments in the region and beyond to foster a collaborative approach. In the same light we are appalled by the developing behaviour of rich and developed countries of vaccine nationalism and greed by not allowing, sharing and showing solidarity at this time of need by heeding the call to suspend elements of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to allow for vaccines to be accessible and affordable to all humanity.

My delegation welcomes the decision to delete cannabis and cannabis resin from schedule (IV) of the 1961 convention as recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD). The positioning of cannabis and related products should be informed by scientific and evidence based information and not be considered immutable.

We are equally grateful to you Chair for guiding the process leading up to the streamlining of the annual report questionnaire that would assist Member States to share information accordingly.

Let me conclude Chair by encouraging the UNODC to continue to provide technical assistance and capacity building to support Member States, particularly developing countries in the formulation and implementation of integrated, balanced, comprehensive and evidence based national policies and programmes in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic and the world drug problem.

I thank you.