

**Statement of the Group of Friends of UNODC Research
at the Intersessional Meeting of the CND (19-21 October 2021)**

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of a Group co-chaired by Singapore and the European Union, comprising Australia, Chile, Colombia, the EU, France, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Sweden, Thailand, the United States of America and Singapore. We are an informal cross-regional group that supports strengthening the role of research, data and evidence-based analysis in UNODC's work and its policies.

The world drug problem is complex and transnational in nature and no country alone can pretend to fully understand or address and counter it on its own. Monitoring the world drug situation requires the **collection, analysis and dissemination of comparable and reliable data at the national, regional and international levels**. This has been clear since the inception of the international drug control conventions, which requested each party to submit such data as requested by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Over the years, publications like the **World Drug Report** and the reports submitted to the CND have shown the benefits of this data collection system, which provides an **integrated picture** of the situation at the global level. But these reports have also shown the gaps in data gathering that we still have at the international level in some regions of the world and for certain drug issues.

The World Drug Report as well as other flagship publications of UNODC present a valuable source of information and knowledge for the whole international community and should be provided with sustainable and predictable funding.

The CND has systematically underscored the importance of designing drug policies and programmes based on **solid scientific evidence**. The 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement, and the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document, which represent the cornerstone of our drug-related policy commitments, have all underlined the importance of data collection and analysis. The 2019 Ministerial Declaration specifically referred to "promoting and improving the collection, analysis and sharing of quality and comparable data". Member States have consistently indicated the primary role of

scientific evidence to improve the implementation of their commitments. It is time that we all reiterate our commitment to collect and analyse reliable and comparable data that can help us to better design our international responses.

One and a half years ago – at its 63rd session – the CND adopted a **revised Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ)** after a thorough revision based on a comprehensive, inclusive, expert-level consultation process. The revision aims to make the data collection system better suited to describing the modern dynamics of the drug problem. The questionnaire has been designed so that every Member State has something to contribute even if it is only limited qualitative information. The revised questionnaire will require an adjustment phase for Member States to update their interagency coordination and develop specific skills; over time, however, it will allow us to develop a more precise and strategic vision of the evolution of the drug situation worldwide.

We call on all Member States to share their data to the extent possible and **submit the ARQ** to UNODC as soon as possible, if they have not done so already. If we aim to build a truly comprehensive and factual picture, we all need to be part of that collective effort.

Thanks to the data collected through the ARQ, the Commission can better carry out its mandate of regularly monitoring the drug situation, including on new and emerging threats, and of supervising the application of the international conventions. It is our duty as parties to the international drug control conventions and in line with all international drug policy commitments to **regularly report** to the best of our abilities to UNODC on the drug situation through the annual ARQ submission. Data sharing through the ARQ is a key activity that strengthens international cooperation.

We appreciate the **measures already taken** by UNODC to facilitate the ARQ submission by Member States: the modular approach of the new ARQ; the development of an online reporting platform; and the training delivered to Member States at national, regional and international level. We ask UNODC to continue supporting Member States to submit the ARQ, and we ask Member States that have not yet done so, to appoint a national **ARQ Focal Point**, as requested by this Commission. In that context, it can be highlighted that countries that have appointed Focal Points have a higher rate of ARQ submission.

Data provided by the national authorities serve as the essential source of information for UNODC. However, despite all the efforts of UNODC and Member States, there are still some gaps in national data, mainly in terms of coverage and timeliness, which in some cases may be filled from additional sources of information.

Recognizing that some Member States have **limited capacities** to collect drug-related data, to maintain a comprehensive drug information system, and to report data through the ARQ, we call on UNODC, other international organizations and donors to **support** these Member States to improve coverage and quality of their national drug data systems. The national experts that developed the new ARQ provided to this Commission clear indications on how the international community can support them through, for example, promoting new cost-effective data collection initiatives and developing new methodological guidance tools.¹

The **exercise** of compiling the information that needs to be reported in the ARQ can in itself **strengthen national coordination** since the Questionnaire consolidates national evidence and represents an opportunity to bring together all national competent authorities.

In conclusion, we, as members of the Group of Friends of UNODC Research remain fully committed to providing comprehensive, timely and high-quality information through the Annual Report Questionnaire and would like to **invite** all Member States to fulfil their commitments to contribute to these efforts.

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¹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_63/CRPs/ECN72020_CRP15_V2001626.pdf