

Statement on behalf of the African Group at the 65th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)

To be delivered by H.E. Mr. Mohamed Elmolla

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Vienna, 14 March 2022

Mr. Chair,

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.

The African Group aligns itself with the Statement delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China

1. Allow me on behalf of the Group, to express my warm congratulations to H.E. Ambassador Ghislain D'Hoop of Belgium on his election as the Chair of the 65th session of the Commission, as well as to the other elected members of the Bureau and the Secretariat for the work done in preparation for this session
2. The Group once again expresses its full support to H.E. Madam Waly, the Executive Director of the UNODC as well as her policies and programs to effectively address and counter the world drug problem
3. The Group welcomes the theme of the 65th session and expresses its deep concern about the inequity of COVID-19 vaccines in developing countries, especially in Africa, as a global vaccine gap threatens everyone's health and well-being. The Africa Group supports the ongoing negotiations at the WTO on the TRIPS waiver with an aim to increase production of vaccines and treatment, as well as the WHO strategy to achieve global inoculation against the Covid 19 Pandemic.
4. The Group welcomes the Developed Strategic Vision for Africa 2030 and its continental wide initiatives to respond effectively to the socio-economic challenges on the continent. The Group further calls for requisite funding to continue to fully implementing the Strategic Vision.

5. The Group takes note of the decision to delete cannabis and cannabis resin from Schedule (IV) of the 1961 convention, and placing it under International Control in Schedule (1), taking into consideration that Member States shall have the right to further exercise domestic control in accordance with Article 39 of the 1961 convention.

Mr. Chair,

6. The Group reaffirms that the World Drug Problem is most effectively addressed in a multilateral setting and that the three international drug control conventions and other relevant instruments remain the cornerstone of the international drug control system .

7. The Group reiterates its commitments to the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action; the 2014 Joint Ministerial Declaration; the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document as well as the 2019 Ministerial Declaration as the recent political consensus in the fight against the world drug problem and reiterates that these documents are complementary and mutually reinforcing”.

Mr. Chair,

8. While appreciating the progress made, at the international, regional and national levels, in countering the World Drug Problem, the Group underscores that this problem remains a major challenge for the international community, in particular for the African continent, that requires effective bilateral, regional and international cooperation and mutual legal assistance based on the principle of common and shared responsibility.

9. The Group continues to express its grave concern over the global scourge of drug abuse, especially among youth, which continues to undermine efforts aimed at promoting sustainable social-economic development.

10. The Group would like to reiterate its deep concern regarding the increasing use of the African Continent as transit and destination routes along the traditional and new trafficking routes via commercial aerial and maritime routes for illicitly trafficked drugs and psychotropic substances, which has created many security challenges, especially organized crime and increased drug dependence in transit countries.

11. The African Group stresses the urgent need to respond to the serious challenges posed by the increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption, illicit financial flows and other forms of organized crime, cybercrime, terrorism and money-laundering, including in connection with the financing of terrorism, and to the significant challenges faced by law enforcement and judicial authorities.

12. The Group is concerned that despite the efforts made by African countries in preventing, eliminating or reducing significantly and measurably the illicit cultivation of crops used for production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, under international control, the abuse of these substances, remain a huge challenge across Africa, and require enhanced international and regional cooperation including technical assistance based on the needs of the requesting countries.

13. The Group notes with concern the harmful effects of the increasing non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids including Tramadol and invites Member States to collect and share data in order to facilitate the consideration of placing of the substance under international control to prevent its diversion for illicit use while ensuring its access and availability for medical and scientific purposes.

Mr. Chair,

14. The Group calls the Member States to continue to pursue a mutually reinforcing approach to supply and demand reduction, addressing drug abuse as a health and social issue, while upholding the law and its enforcement.

15. The Group remains concerned about health problems associated with the abuse of drugs and reaffirms its commitment to work towards the improvement of access to drug-abuse health-related prevention programs, including awareness raising, treatment and rehabilitation.

16. The Group is gravely concerned about the access, availability and affordability of medicines, including pain-relieving drugs for millions of people who need them most on the African continent. The Group calls upon member States to take concrete measures to ensure adequate availability and affordability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion, trafficking and abuse. In this regard, the Group would like to stress the need for

increasing technical assistance and international cooperation to facilitate the transfer of know-how in manufacturing generic pharmaceutical preparations that are bioequivalent and cost effective.

Mr. Chair,

17. The African Group underlines new challenges of online sale of illicit drugs, especially on Darknet and increased trafficking in precursor chemicals, which threatens the public health of millions of young people in the continent, in particular during Covid-19 pandemic. In this regard, the Group urges Member States to strengthen the implementation of the three International drug control conventions and all related political commitments related to drug issues to effectively address and counter these new challenges and threats posed by the world drug problem

18. The Group encourages Governments to strengthen their national drug policies, laws and strategies to ensure that the drug response strategies, covering both supply and demand reduction, taking into account the provisions of the three international drug control conventions including by ensuring that the law enforcement authorities have the requisite capacity to sufficiently address the trafficking of drugs and meet the challenges arising from the illicit manufacture of, trafficking of drugs in and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants as well as new psychotropic substances.

19. The Group is fully confident that the achievement of the SDG's, the AU 2063 Agenda and countering the World Drug Problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

20. The Group reiterates the importance it attaches to integral and sustainable alternative development and preventive alternative development programs, as, inter-alia, a means to address and counter the world drug problem.

Mr. Chair,

21. We reiterate the central and primary role of the CND as the sole policy making body of the United Nations with primary responsibility for drug control matters and the UNODC as the leading entity in the UN system for addressing and countering the world drug problem.

22. The Africa Group would like to acknowledge with appreciation the valuable support and contribution of donors and calls upon the UNODC to continue to mobilize resources to provide technical assistance including equipment, upon request, and to enhance the capacities in all fields of crime and drug prevention, including law enforcement, forensic laboratories, training of personnel, and reorganization of institutions, taking into consideration the new challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. Chair,

23. The Group reiterates its call for the Executive-Director to ensure that adequate, and proper equitable geographical representation and gender balance are fully incorporated in the recruitment policy of UNODC, both at headquarters and Field Offices, particularly at the senior and policy-making levels and for professional posts requiring specific skills.

I thank you