



European Union
EU Statement on
Agenda item 3: General Debate

65th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Vienna, 14-18 March 2022

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Ministers, Madam Executive Director of the UNODC, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to speak today on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland+, Liechtenstein+, Norway+, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino.

I would have preferred to be able to be present in person among you, but the health situation we have been living in for more than two years now, has regrettably not allowed me to do so.

Considering the seriousness of the situation at the moment when I'm recording this message, let me express the EU's and its Member States' full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unacceptable military aggression against Ukraine, which grossly violates international law and the UN Charter, and undermines international security and stability.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, and the Secretariat of the UNODC for having made it possible to hold this 65th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in this particular context. The current pandemic will have an impact that will be felt far beyond the excessive number of victims we regrettably have in our respective countries. It will have a lasting impact on our lifestyles, the organization of our societies and the reality of the challenges we will have to face in the future,

*Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

from a health or security point of view. This challenge is particularly sensitive in addressing the issue of drugs at the international level.

While France has taken over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union on the first of January, I would like to underscore, on its behalf and on behalf of its Member States, our commitment to a **balanced approach** to drug policies. It is in this context that the European Union Drugs Strategy and Action Plan were adopted in December 2020 and last June respectively. These texts reflect an ambition that we want to pursue, with the same determination, in cooperation with our international partners.

The COVID-19 crisis has been a challenge in terms of drug consumption, development and changes in supply routes, with increased use of maritime routes and new information technologies. A significant share of the market is now channelled through the Internet and social media. The production of cocaine has never been as high and its consumption is on the rise in many countries, while treatment options for cocaine addiction remain insufficiently effective. In addition, recent events in Afghanistan call for a collective mobilization as the potential consequences of the ongoing crisis there go beyond its borders. Finally, the sustained emergence of new psychotropic substances, most often synthetic, and the crisis related to the consumption of opioids continue to pose a major threat, further increasing the number of deaths throughout the world.

But the Covid-19 pandemic has also reminded us once again of the importance of the ties that drive the interdependent global society in which we are living. In this context, it is our collective responsibility to provide a response to the expectations of our citizens, based on coordination and international cooperation, which must be based on several fundamental principles.

The first is the **unfailing respect of Human Rights, human dignity and fundamental rights**. In this regard, I would like to recall, on behalf of the European Union, **our firm opposition to the use of the death penalty** and any other form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

The second is the need to underscore the importance of **scientific rigor and transparent data collection and analysis** in order to support public decision-making.

The third is the need to further **strengthen legislation by promoting a balanced approach** to drug policies, relying on the central role of the International Narcotics Control Board.

Finally, it is our responsibility to preserve our **common frames of reference, made up firstly of the three international Conventions on drugs, which constitute the basis of our cooperation and which we must continue to**

respect, as well as the implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session of 2016 on the World Drug Problem.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that our work during this Commission must reflect the difficulties that we are facing in our respective territories. It is in that regard that we support the emphasis put this year on risk reduction levers as well as on prevention, which must take place as early as possible in order to act on the most vulnerable populations, such as the children and youth. Thus, a resolution on that matter will be presented by Slovenia and France, on behalf of the EU during this session, as well as a side-event on the same topic.

Aware of the realities of our world, the European Union and its Member States call for greater consideration of **environmental issues linked to illicit drug production**. We must continue our efforts in this area and not miss this critical window of opportunity in our efforts against climate change and damage to biodiversity. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 must remain a top priority.

Each session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs is a new demonstration of our collective ability to take action. Our work demonstrates that there are solutions and that the international community can be proactive through **the partnership of state, institutional, non-governmental and civil society actors**.

The European Union and its Member States will continue to work to ensure that this-work can bear fruit, driven by the deep conviction that, faced with a challenge of such magnitude, there can only be a concerted, international and ambitious response.

Thank you.