



## Commission on Narcotic Drugs Sixty-Fifth Session

Statement by the Hon. Michael Falzon  
Minister for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights

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### *CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Representatives of Civil Society

Mr Chair,

**At the outset let me start by expressing Malta's full solidarity with Ukraine. Malta condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, which violates international law and the UN Charter, and undermines international security and stability. We call on Russia to immediately cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from the territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders.**

Mr. Chair,

Allow me to congratulate you on your nomination and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation.

Malta fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

Mr Chair,

Every single day, illicit drugs kill around 1000 lives. Millions of precious lives are lost on a yearly basis due to drugs. Alas, they cost the loss of the quality of life of many, many more.

Malta has not been spared of this scourge.

In recent years, we have sought to address this by enhancing measures which seek to mitigate the harmful effects of drug use and resulting substance use disorders. To this end, in 2015 we introduced the *Treatment Not Imprisonment Act*. This legislation has reaped positive results and reasserted our conviction that the best means of addressing these challenges is through maintaining a human-rights centered approach. This law has strengthened our conviction that our priority should remain that of providing access to treatment for the users while reducing stigmatization. Prison is for criminals. The user is not the criminal.

Keeping human rights central to our policy, my government most recently enacted the *Responsible Use of Cannabis Act*. Through this latest measure, we acknowledge the realities on the ground, while seeking to pragmatically regularize the situation, keeping the well-being and the health of the user at the heart of our actions. It enshrines the principle of harm reduction, which also remains a critical pillar within Malta's drug policy.

This Act has provided the means through which a national authority may be established. The Authority will be charged firstly with setting the parameters for the rules and mechanisms, and in turn with addressing the problem of cannabis use. The Authority has also been mandated to run educational campaigns in a further



**PERMANENT MISSION OF MALTA  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY  
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE,  
THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

push to prevent the increase in use while also addressing the harmful stigmatization related to drug use. It will also work hand-in-hand with law enforcement authorities to ensure proper regulation to prevent abuse and penalize the real criminals at play – traffickers, organized criminal networks, and their assets.

Our support for the International Conventions remains resolute. The Authority shall also be conducting extensive impact-assessment studies, to be followed by further studies to analyze the effects of these measures. The results of our experience will be shared with the international community. This is a testament to our unwavering commitment towards cooperating with our international partners, including members of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the International Narcotics Control Board, and to contributing to the International Drug Control Framework.

Mr Chair,

Health and welfare are two overarching objectives of Malta's drug policy. Our approach to achieving this reality continues to be multi-faceted, through concerted efforts to ensure the provision of equitable and non-discriminatory access to treatment and rehabilitative services. In this regard, I am pleased to invite all of you to join us at the side event that we will be organizing together with the Council of Europe's Pompidou Group and Portugal on 15 March 2022 at 13.10. This event will seek to provide some insight into how we may do better in reflecting Human Rights in drug policy especially in relation to health, social and justice remedies for people who use drugs.

Thank you.