

NEW ZEALAND COUNTRY STATEMENT

65th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

United Nations, Vienna: 14 to 18 March 2022

Tēnā koutou kātoa – greetings to you all.

Before I begin I want to take a moment to acknowledge the people of Ukraine.

Aotearoa New Zealand condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, and we call on Russia to act consistently with its international obligations.

Our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine affected by the ongoing conflict.

Turning to today's event, Aotearoa New Zealand is pleased to address the Sixty-Fifth Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The CND is an important forum for international drug policy, and we value the Commission's work.

Today I would like to touch on both our domestic situation, and Aotearoa New Zealand's wider drug policy.

Aotearoa New Zealand has a health-based response to drug use, which we have built on in recent years. We have amended our Misuse of Drugs Act to affirm that Police have discretion not to prosecute for personal possession of drugs. Police must take into account whether a health-centred approach will be more beneficial.

As a result, more and more people found with illegal drugs are not being prosecuted for drug related charges. Instead they are supported with interventions to live healthier lives.

We have legalised drug checking through world-leading legislation that introduced a licensing system to regulate providers. This will save lives by enabling people to make informed choices, and by alerting us to dangerous drugs in our communities.

Information from drug checking contributes to our early warning system on dangerous drugs. This is a successful joint operation between the Health, Customs and Police authorities, supported by health and social sector professionals.

Aotearoa New Zealand is committed to preventing the importation and manufacture of illegal drugs. We have placed a record number of Police on the frontline, focussing on organised crime to interrupt drug supply chains.

Turning to the global setting, Aotearoa New Zealand welcomes collaboration with the international community to address the world drug situation.

We welcome the recent development of the Synthetic Drug Strategy by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, which will aid international cooperation.

We recognise the need to better serve vulnerable members of society, particularly indigenous populations. Domestically we are working to reduce the burden of drug harm on our indigenous Māori communities.

Like many other countries, New Zealand is very concerned about use of the death penalty for drug offences. We continue to advocate for the abolition of the death penalty for all offences.

In closing, I wish to reiterate our support for the CND, and the value of collective action.

As we would say in Aotearoa New Zealand - mā whero, mā pango ka oti ai te mahi. Through cooperation and combined effort, our work will be completed.

Thank you.