

## **General statement the Netherlands**

### **65<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (14-18 March 2022)**

#### **Agenda item 3**

(3min)

Distinguished Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement made by the Presidency of the European Union. In my national capacity, I would like to add the following.

Dear colleague Ambassador d'Hoop, I would like to congratulate you on your election as chair of the 65<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. My government is looking forward to the session, and we look forward to working under your able leadership.

Mister Chair, let me express the solidarity of the Netherlands with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. The Netherlands condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as its violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, in the strongest possible terms. This aggression has horrible consequences in many fields, especially humanitarian. But also related to, for example, people who use drugs and for the supply of controlled medicines. We call upon Russia to immediately cease its military activities in Ukraine and withdraw from Ukraine's internationally recognized territory.

Dear colleague Ambassador d'Hoop, I would like to congratulate you on your election as chair of the 65<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. My government is looking forward to the session, and we look forward to working under your able leadership.

Two years into the COVID-19 crisis, today we still see the impact of the pandemic and of the measures taken to curb infection rates on our societies.

Major pre-existing societal challenges have become increasingly visible and are exacerbated today. Whilst demanding on all, the crisis was and is particularly burdensome on vulnerable and marginalized members of society, including people facing serious substance use disorders. The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the ambition of the 2022 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to build back better after the COVID-19 crisis. In this spirit, the Netherlands calls on governments to de-criminalize the use of drugs and to introduce evidence-based policies, interventions and harm reduction services to reduce drug-related deaths and overdoses in particular. De-criminalizing the use of drugs is key to breaking down barriers to access addiction care and harm reduction services. In this context we recall that de-criminalization is allowed under the 1961 Convention.

At the same time, illegal drug markets have proven, once more, to be resilient during the COVID-19 crisis. Drug trafficking, trade, and drug-related crime are visible more than ever and demand our prominent and urgent attention. In September last year, the government of the Netherlands announced to add 435 million Euros each year to programmes on countering and preventing

organized crime, especially in the area of illicit drugs. Key focus areas of this new impulse are dismantling drug trafficking and money laundering routes, related cybercrimes and illicit drugs, stricter border controls, preventing youth from getting involved in drug-related crime, but also enhanced international cooperation. Enhanced international cooperation, for example relating to our main ports, is an essential part of the programme.

The Netherlands would like to thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for support and coordinating work.

Next to our fight against drugs related crime, the Netherlands is a strong proponent of balanced and evidence-based drug policies that protect and promote human rights. International collaboration and exchange between United Nations bodies, States Parties, civil society and the scientific community is of utmost importance to attain our common goals. In this context, we look forward to the briefing on the work of the United Nations system coordination task team as well as to the presentation by the Chair-Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council's Working Group on arbitrary detention later this week.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I am happy to invite all delegates and stakeholders to attend our side-event on preventing overdoses and drug-related deaths tomorrow at 12:15.