

UNODC Executive Director's Remarks
Opening of the 65th Session of the Commission on
Narcotic Drugs
March 14, 2022

It is my pleasure to address the 65th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

We are convening during truly difficult times.

As we gather here in Vienna, conflict is driving Europe's worst humanitarian and refugee crisis in decades.

Many of the Member States represented here today are affected or involved, by this crisis or by the many other crises that continue to rage around the world. We cannot ignore this fact or pretend otherwise.

What we can do is remember why we are here.

Intergovernmental bodies such as this Commission cannot fix the world's problems overnight, but they have an important job to do, even amidst conflict, the climate crisis and a continuing global pandemic.

They are part of a broader system of global cooperation that functions as a whole, one that represents our best chance for sustainable solutions and sustainable development.

The CND helps to ensure the integrity of the international drug control system, to curb illicit trafficking, and protect health, particularly as justice and health sectors around the world face mounting challenges.

The triple crises of conflict, environment, and COVID are magnifying the impact of the world drug problem, by deepening vulnerabilities and desperation.

People in difficult conditions are more exposed to drug use, along with associated disorders and health impacts. They are also at greater risk of exploitation by criminal groups engaged in the drug trade.

People in need of treatment for drug use disorders face new obstacles resulting from movement restrictions and diminished resources; such obstacles are preventing those in need of controlled medicines from accessing pain relief.

At the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, we are committed to stepping up our efforts to help people in crisis, everywhere.

In response to an increasingly volatile situation in Afghanistan, which accounts for more than 80 percent of the world's opium cultivation, UNODC developed the Strategic Stability Grid.

The Grid is a framework for tackling intersecting drugs, terrorism, corruption, and organized crime threats in and around the country.

To address the escalating synthetic drugs problem in many parts of the world, we launched our Synthetic Drug Strategy last year.

Over one thousand new synthetic substances have been reported to UNODC, and we are helping 300 laboratories in 90 countries to develop early warning.

Through our family skills programmes, we reached 10,000 families in need of assistance to cope with crises, including many living in humanitarian settings such as refugee camps.

We also continue to promote robust drug control by providing legislative assistance and capacity-building, and help disrupt drug trafficking supply chains, including through our Container Control and Global Maritime Crime Programmes.

At the same time, we advance evidence-based treatment, including through the UNODC/WHO International Standards, and support HIV prevention, treatment, and care.

Now, as global challenges ramp up in intensity and complexity, our Office is determined to be as effective and efficient as possible.

We have taken important steps to improve our implementation of the UNODC Strategy 2021-2025, and its thematic area on addressing the world drug problem.

Last month, from Bogotá, I launched a new Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean, and we continue to implement and adapt the Strategic Vision for Africa 2030.

We are also improving the approach of our flagship World Drug Report, which this year will see an expanded focus on gender and pertinent issues such as the nexus between drugs and the environment.

To integrate expertise and improve synergies, we are consolidating streams of work that are closely linked, such as our drugs, laboratory and scientific services, as well as our various interdiction programmes that target trafficking supply chains.

I call on you, our Member States, to continue to devote due attention to the world drug problem, and the balanced responses needed, during crises.

Civil society, the private sector, and local communities are essential partners in these exceptional circumstances, with their unique reach and perspectives.

We prioritize engagement with them at UNODC, and I urge you to do the same.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate UNODC's call on Member States to facilitate access to controlled medicines, including in humanitarian emergencies such as those we are facing.

Excellencies,

In times of crisis, we seek to live up to our common and shared responsibility to stand with those who need help, treatment, and protection as a result of the world drug problem.

I wish the Commission every success in fulfilling its important mandate.

Thank you.