

Thank you Mr Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates, Dear Colleagues, it is a great pleasure to address this message to you.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement by France on behalf of the EU and its member states and I wish to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

While I am recording this message, Russia's unprovoked and unacceptable military aggression against Ukraine, which Italy condemns in the strongest possible terms, is undermining international security and stability, grossly violating international law and the UN Charter, causing death and suffering of civilians, including children, which is totally unacceptable. As Minister for Youth Policies, let me express my deep sadness and Italy's full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Mr. Chairman,

2021 was a very active year for Italy, particularly in the drug related policies: after twelve years of interruption, I re-launched, at the national level, the dialogue on addictions and psychoactive substances. I held a very wide consultation process that involved civil society organisations, the health sector, public services, the scientific community, law enforcement and international players: the result of this work was presented and discussed at a National Conference on Addictions, in November.

The aim of the Conference was to strike a balance on the status of implementation of the national policy on addictions and on the possible reform needs, leaving no one behind. In this regard, the purpose was to put people at the centre of policy-making, with a special attention to communities, prisons and streets. Among the main points that citizens underlined there are measures for the fight against the social stigma and effective measures for the reintegration of people affected by addictions into the society.

The recommendations of the Conference were officially sent to Parliament, as a fundamental contribution towards a revision of the legal framework. In this sense, I wish to underline the importance of adopting evidence-based policies, based on monitoring and data collection, also on high-risk populations and prison settings. This should include the monitoring of drug trafficking online, especially as regards new psychoactive substances: a growing problem for the new generations.

Italy strongly supports a balanced approach towards drug supply and drug reduction interventions. In the field of prevention, we implement early detection and intervention measures. In order to be successful, these measures must be guided by the specific needs of the person: this is why we are in favour of the adoption of a gender dimension in drug policies.

Italy recognises the fundamental role played by the European Union in improving cooperation in drug-related issues and supports the strengthening of the Early Warning System. In this framework, we welcome the proposal to reform the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, in order to improve its role of integration and operability.

Finally, Italy appreciates positive impact of the Council of Europe in the promotion of human rights in the field drug policies: that is why we applied for the next Presidency of the Pompidou Group.

I would like to thank the Commission for Narcotic Drugs for its excellent work in combatting drug abuse by coordinated international action, the Executive Director, Ms. Ghada Waly, and the UNODC Secretariat for its continuous support.

Thank you.