

United Kingdom

Chair and distinguished guests,

Before I outline the UK priorities in the field of drugs, I would like to say a few words on the Ukraine situation. The UK and our international partners stand united in condemning the Russian government's unprovoked, premeditated attack against Ukraine, a sovereign democratic state.

Russia's assault on Ukraine is an egregious violation of international law and the UN Charter. As a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, Russia has a particular responsibility to uphold international peace and security. Instead, it is violating the borders of another country and its actions are causing widespread suffering.

The UK stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and calls on Russia to urgently de-escalate and withdraw its troops.

The 2021 World Drug Report estimated that around 275 million people had used drugs in the past year, a 22% increase on 2010. And the number is predicted to rise by 11 per cent globally by 2030

This is a shocking problem that is being felt in the UK. We decided last year to step forward assertively to tackle the problem by publishing a ten-year drug strategy designed to drive down drug misuse across the country. The strategy falls into three key areas:

Firstly, we must have a renewed attack upon the supply chain bringing drugs across the world into the UK. But critically we are looking at the supply chain as a business model, focussing on the mechanics of the business and the money flows and turning what to date has been a low-risk high-return business into a high-risk low-return business. We hope this will mean businesses will decide to do something that is more profitable and legitimate. This means using the mechanics of the business against them, including the telecoms and supply chain logistics, and focussing on apprehending those individuals in the business who have unique skills and without whom it can operate.

The second area we want to focus on is prevention and delivering a world class recovery and treatment system. This is an area which sadly has been neglected in the past but where we want to work to rebuild our ability to turn around the lives of those with a drug dependence. We're particularly focussed

on bringing together the whole of the public sector into specific geographies where we have focused problems. This has shown that by leveraging off each other, off health, off policing, off housing and off other support and therapeutic services, we can turn peoples lives around and diminish the demand for drugs, specifically for heroin and crack-cocaine.

The third area of focus is on reducing demand overall. Sadly, in the UK we have a large number of people who don't regard themselves as having a drug dependence but indulge themselves in the use of narcotic drugs on an occasional or recreational basis. This demand is brining organised crime to the UK and driving violence elsewhere in the world as they seek to feed the demand. We want to work hard to bring in a set of sanctions and consequences for that kind of consumption which will have meaning for those individuals and drive them to change their behaviour.

I hope this will all sit as a coherent strategy in our plan which is called 'From Harm to Hope'. And that it sits nicely with much of the work that you are all doing across the world as well.

We will only beat this problem by standing together. This is a global logistics operation bringing drugs into all our nations and the imperative is on us all to cooperate to drive this evil scourge from all our shores.