



European Union

**EU Statement at the
First intersessional meeting**

**65th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**

Vienna, 21 September 2022

Thematic session: *Responses not in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and not in conformity with applicable international human rights obligations pose a challenge to the implementation of joint commitments based on the principle of common and shared responsibility:*

- ‘drug conventions’ aspect

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to participate in this meeting and to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Albania*, Ukraine*, the Republic of Moldova*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Georgia, Iceland*, Norway*, Andorra and San Marino.

At the outset, let me express the EU and its Member States’ full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. The EU and its Member States condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia’s unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU and its Member States demand that Russia immediately cease its military actions, stop its indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, and immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

This context must not, however, prevent those States and all stakeholders that remain faithful to the principles of the UN Charter and to international obligations under human rights law, to work together to improve the world drug situation and achieve the international commitments.

* Candidate Countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

* Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

The health, safety and well-being of our societies is our shared concern. **Universal human dignity forms the cornerstone** of all our joint efforts to address and counter the world drug situation in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international human rights law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The EU and its Member States stress their concern about the violations and abuse of human rights and fundamental freedoms of humankind and emphasize the need for the full respect, protection and fulfillment of universal human rights in order to improve the well-being of societies globally, including by protecting persons in vulnerable and marginalised groups and communities.

The EU and its Member States therefore welcome the thematic focus of this session on the international drug control conventions and international human rights obligations in this field. The principles of the **EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025**, which forms the basis of EU policy in the area of drugs, include those of shared responsibility, multilateralism, the promotion of a development-oriented approach, respect for human rights and human dignity and the rule of law. The strategy emphasises among others that the EU's external relations in the field of drugs are based on the respect for the international drug control conventions.

The EU and its Member States continue to strongly support the **2016 UNGASS Outcome Document which has a human rights-centered approach**. This document gives us guidance, aiming to support Member States in the implementation of international drug control treaties in accordance with applicable human rights obligations. It also promotes the respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights and the dignity of all individuals in the context of drug programmes, strategies and policies at the national and international level. The EU and its Member States also support the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, the **UN system common position** supporting the implementation of the international drug control policy through effective inter-agency collaboration, and the **International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy**.

Those International Guidelines respect the diversity of States and their legitimate prerogative to determine their national policies in line with applicable human rights law. They also recognise the potential tensions between drug control and human rights obligations but clearly state that parties to the international drug control treaties are bound to implement their obligations arising from those treaties in full respect for their other obligations under international law, including human rights law. They also state that nothing in the international drug control treaties may be interpreted as implying for any State, group, or person the right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at or having the effect of violating rights and freedoms guaranteed in international human rights instruments or limiting these rights to a greater extent than is specifically provided for in those instruments. It is of great importance to continuously consider international human rights obligations

in the implementation of international drug control conventions in order to improve the health, safety, and well-being of our societies.

The **respect for human rights and a people-centered approach are at the heart of the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025**, with an evidence-based, integrated, balanced and multidisciplinary approach to drugs at national, EU and international level. The **three equally important pillars** of the Strategy are drug supply reduction, drug demand reduction and addressing drug-related harm. One of the key elements is ensuring voluntary access to treatment and care services. The availability, accessibility and coverage of risk- and harm-reduction services need to be maintained and, where needed, improved for women and men who use drugs and with drug use disorders, as well as for girls and boys. It is necessary to further prevent and treat blood-borne infectious diseases, such as HIV and Hepatitis C. Also, we have to reach persons in vulnerable and marginalised situations and put them in touch with care and other support services.

The EU and its Member States are committed to reduce **stigma** linked to drug use and drug use disorders. Stigma may have a detrimental effect on the mental and physical health of people who use drugs and could also act as a barrier when seeking support. Gender equality should not be treated as a specific track but as an integral part of all drug policies.

The EU and its Member States are also committed to the prevention of, dissuasion from and disruption of **drug-related crime**, in particular organised crime. Actions are taken to reduce the illicit availability of drugs and to disrupt the illicit supply channels of drugs.

Such actions must be targeted towards illicit trafficking and we reiterate the EU and the Member States' attachment to ensuring a **balance in policies** applicable to controlled substances: it is essential that access to quality-assured medication, including medicines containing internationally controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, is ensured for patients around the world.

Throughout these actions, the EU and its Member States are strongly committed to adhere to international human right standards and obligations in global drug policies. This includes upholding and promoting the principle of an **adequate, proportionate and effective response to drug-related offences**. The EU and its Member States strongly and unequivocally oppose the use of the **death penalty** under all circumstances, including for drug-related offences.

Finally, the EU and its Member States recognize that **civil society and the scientific community play a crucial role** in assessing and addressing the world drug situation by providing accurate information and reflecting the broadest possible range of perspectives and groups involved, including affected populations.

Distinguished Chair,

With the mid-term review of progress in implementing all our international drug policy commitments in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2024 approaching, the EU and its Member States are fully dedicated to their implementation and **count on the resolve of all parties to maintain collective efforts** in accelerating the implementation of joint commitments at national, regional and international level. The EU and its Member States also encourage sharing of good practices and experiences as well as fully support the CND efforts in this respect, keeping in mind applicable international human rights obligations and shared principles that should form the basis of drug policies worldwide so that we can move ahead in an accelerated pace.

Thank you Chair.