



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, 22 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:*

- *human rights obligations*

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to take part in this session 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.

The EU and its Member States continue to strongly support the **2016 UNGASS Outcome Document** with a **human rights-centred approach** and a commitment to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals, as well as the rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies. The EU and its Member States strongly and unequivocally oppose the use of the **death penalty** under all circumstances, including for drug-related offences. The EU and its Member States also underline the importance of the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policies and of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, and underscore that the multifaceted nature of the world drug situation requires a comprehensive approach that includes law

* 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.

enforcement efforts designed and implemented in a way that ensure people's security and efforts promoting health, human rights, including equality and non-discrimination, and sustainable development.

In line with the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document, the EU and its Member States support a particular focus on **women, children, young people and vulnerable groups** in drug-related policies and programmes. These policies should focus on promoting and protecting health, improving access to health and social care, safety and well-being, including reducing stigma and ensuring a non-discriminatory approach.

The various aspects of the world drug phenomenon differently affect **women** who use drugs, who face particular issues over and above those experienced by men. The EU and its Member States have committed themselves through the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025 to incorporate a **gender equality** and health equity perspective, identify and reduce barriers to treatment and other services for women who use drugs, and ensure that drug-related services respond to the needs of women, including childcare support. We are also committed to launching outreach efforts to women who use drugs and raise awareness of available women-centred treatment. The EU and its Member States underline the importance of tackling gender-based violence towards women who use drugs and aim to ensure that women who are victims of violence and use drugs have access both to drug prevention and to support and treatment. We attach great importance and encourage all UN Member States to implement the commitments set out in the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document to integrate a gender and age perspective in drug-related policies and programmes while ensuring the involvement of women in all stages of their development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

As regards **children and youth**, the EU and its Member States continue to underline the importance of taking effective and practical prevention measures that protect in particular children and young people and therefore strongly welcome CND resolution 65/4 on early prevention, supported by the EU. We reiterate the need to provide appropriate resources to and put greater emphasis on scientific evidence-based early prevention as well as to facilitate access to demand and risk and harm reduction services and related measures to young people, including those in the nightlife, and to vulnerable members of society.

The EU and its Member States also stress the importance of the UN Common Position on Drugs and of the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy in relation to **particularly marginalised or vulnerable groups**, including indigenous peoples and persons deprived of their liberty. The latter are more likely to be exposed to or vulnerable to the use of drugs compared with the general population and engage in risky forms of use, such as injecting. Therefore, the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025 promote ensuring equivalence and continuity of healthcare provision

in prison settings and implementing evidence-based preventive, risk and harm reduction and therapeutic measures to prevent and reduce drug use and its health consequences. **Harm reduction measures** are a direct consequence of pursuing a human rights-based approach to drug policy.

In accordance with the EU Drugs Strategy, the diversity evident among people who use drugs should be recognised and measures undertaken in order to develop services that can address this diversity whilst reflecting the needs of different groups in relation to drug use. We must provide equal and effective protection against discrimination, ensuring that particularly marginalised or vulnerable groups can effectively exercise and realise their human rights. Effective engagement with these groups also requires models of care that recognise the need for cross-service partnerships between healthcare, youth and social care providers, and patients and carers groups.

Distinguished Chair,

To conclude, let me underline once again the importance of the human rights-centred approach towards drug policies. It allows to achieve positive results in **reducing the harms** caused by drug use and in the **prevention of risk** and thus contributes to the implementation of international commitments outlined in the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document. With the 2024 mid-term review of progress in implementing all our international drug policy commitments in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs approaching, full commitment of all Member States to human rights-based drug policies should remain the **cornerstone** of our efforts to successfully address the world drug situation.

Thank you Chair.