

**Statement of the Deputy Director of Department on New Challenges and Threats, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation  
Mr. Dmitrii Subbotin at the 1<sup>st</sup> intersessional meeting  
of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

(Vienna, 21 September 2022)

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished colleagues,

We have attentively listened to the opinions of the distinguished panelists on responses not in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and ways to address them.

We appreciate the valuable contribution of the International Narcotics Control Board, which serves as the guardian of the conventions and brings pressing matters to the attention of the Commission. The quasi-judicial monitoring functions of the Board are specified in Articles 14 of the 1961 convention, Article 19 of the 1971 convention and Article 22 of the 1988 convention and reaffirmed by the CND in its resolution 62/8. We welcome the INCB's efforts to continue to exercise those functions.

Russia welcomes this timely discussion, which has long been due. The three drug control conventions are the cornerstone of the CND work. Their full implementation by all parties based on the common interpretations of their provisions is a pre-condition for effective international action against drug-related transnational organized crime. Any step that endangers to shatter this cornerstone deserves the most urgent attention and response from the CND.

When some delegations try to divert our attention to non-related politicized topics and make biased and unfounded accusations, the global

drug situation continues to deteriorate as we speak. Recreational use of drugs is growing particularly among young people, causing individual harm and fueling black markets, violence and instability.

Member States manage to find creative ways to address complex challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century within the existing drug control framework. National scheduling of substances by class helps us slow down the rapid spread of dangerous new psychoactive substances. Enhanced cooperation with the private sector is useful in tackling the diversion of pre-precursors and closing Internet platforms engaged in the promotion and distribution of drugs. None of these phenomena existed when the conventions were drafted, but their flexibility helps us adjust to new realities.

However, some Member States like the United States and Canada choose to give up on their international commitments and to take unilateral decisions to legalize recreational use of cannabis, while still remaining parties to the conventions and reaping all the benefits they provide. Calls have been made for lifting the ban on other narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Similar legislative experiments on cannabis have recently been adopted in Malta and the Netherlands and are currently discussed and some other EU Member States.

We fully agree with the INCB president that such selective approach to implementing legal obligations goes against the fundamental principle of international law “*pacta sunt servanda*”. It undermines the international consensus based on the principle of common and shared responsibility for addressing and countering the world drug problem.

Let us recall that as recently as 2020 the CND had a chance to openly and frankly debate on a possible need for change in the international

control regime of cannabis. Most of the WHO proposals were rejected, except for the one allowing for research and limited medical use of this narcotic drug. The voting outcome clearly shows that the majority of parties believe the existing control requirements for cannabis are fit for purpose.

Attempts to justify recreational use of drugs by human rights arguments that we have heard today do not stand up to criticism.

The conventions clearly reflect the international community's view that the most effective way to protect the health and wellbeing of mankind in the field of drug control is to limit the use of drugs to medical and scientific purposes. Any measures beyond this general provision are contrary to the aims and goals of the conventions and therefore contrary to protecting public health and safety.

Data provided in the World Drug Report 2022 prove that cannabis legalization has had a wide-ranging negative impact on public health and safety and was unable to curb the black market.

Unlimited profit-driven expansion of cannabis industry to developing countries can endanger food security as marijuana replaces essential crops. Experts argue that the main driver for such initiatives is the commercial interest of huge transnational companies rather than concern for the health and wellbeing of people. Short-term tax benefits from cannabis cultivation, production and distribution could never cover for the drug treatment needs when cannabis becomes easily available in those states.

Equally concerning is the message that the liberal initiatives of some countries send to the world. Perceived easy access to cannabis makes

young people across the globe believe that it is less harmful and tolerable. We cannot allow the impression to be given that occasional drug use is acceptable. It is not.

Cannabis legalization is a relatively new and geographically limited phenomenon. Our joint task as members of the Commission is to respond to this serious challenge and reinstate the integrity of the international drug control framework for the benefit of future generations.

Russia has always followed the letter and spirit of the three drug control conventions, the international law and the UN Charter in its national drug control policy and international counter narcotics cooperation, including in such formats as BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Collective Security Treaty Organisation.

We are committed to providing technical assistance to other Member States in their efforts to implement the conventions and to educate the youth about the dangers of drugs, including through the INCB-Learning Programme and the UNODC Youth Initiative. We expect the same responsible approach from other parties to the treaties.

Mr. Chair,

We appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat and your efforts to prepare and conduct the intersessional meeting in a technical non-biased manner. Russia as a responsible CND Member has always been committed to a constructive action-oriented discussion in the Commission based on mutual respect.

Since the name of my country was mentioned in several interventions today I am compelled to respond. Insistent attempts of some Member States to politicize the work of the Commission and divert our

attention to non-related issues do not help us progress on the agenda. This approach damages the reputation of this important international body and could erode the trust of the world community in it.

Those delegations which claim the right to judge other Member States' implementation of international law have themselves too often disregarded those principles in their drug-related engagement with other countries. It is unfortunate that those countries are trying to lay their own faults with the implementation of the drug control conventions by Russia's door.

Russia's position on the conflict in Ukraine is well known. The blunt accusations we have heard today are unacceptable since they are based on a distorted interpretation of facts and violate the existing practice of mutually respectful dialogue.

Having respect for your efforts, Mr. Chair and the importance of the issues that we are discussing today Russia will not waste our precious time on the fruitless discussion on the issues that go far beyond the CND mandate.

Thank you.