

STATEMENT of the REPUBLIC of TÜRKİYE

First Intersessional Meeting of the 65th Session of the CND Thematic Session Two: “Responses not in conformity with the international drug control conventions and applicable human rights obligations” (21-22 September 2022)

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

I thank you, Your Excellency, for your wise Chairmanship during CND meetings and UNODC Secretariat for organizing this meeting. I also thank all panelists for their presentations and especially the INCB for drawing our attention to the problem of legalization of drugs in some countries in violation of the Conventions and human right obligations.

Mr. President,

The topic of our discussions is the “responses not in conformity with the international drug control conventions and applicable human rights obligations”. We thank you and the Secretariat for the preparation of the background note for this meeting. However, we regret that there is no mentioning of the problem of the increasing misperceptions regarding drugs, especially among the youth and children, and their effects on human rights.

We believe the biggest challenge in these terms today is the legalization of drugs, especially cannabis, in several countries. This is unfortunately due to the policies of some countries that are contradicting drug conventions and their obligations.

In that regard, we want to highlight three points.

First, as mentioned in the world drug report, cannabis legalization has accelerated the upwards trends in the daily use of the drug and the number of hospitalizations due to cannabis disorders. Today, as a result of the responses of some countries which contravene the drug control conventions, fewer people see cannabis as harmful. This is, in reality, a result of the growing influence and investments of large corporations in the cannabis industry, as stated in the report. We must not forget that cannabis is still the mostly abused drug in the world.

In December 2020, Türkiye objected to all the six recommendations made by WHO on cannabis and cannabis-related substances. Five of these recommendations were rejected by the CND Members. Only one recommendation regarding scheduling of “cannabis and cannabis-resin” was

adopted with a slight majority, with only one vote in favour. This is also a strong signal that any change in the control of cannabis cannot find wide support from Member States.

In spite of this new scheduling, as it was also mentioned by the INCB, this change is not the “legalization of cannabis” under any circumstances. In spite of its legal status, it is worrying that increasing number of countries are liberating cannabis and cannabis-related substances with the impression of using something “natural”, “organic” and sometimes even “curative” in an unscientific manner.

Today, all Member States still have the obligation to report their activities in line with international drug control conventions and cannabis is not an exception to that. It is disregarded that many people are hospitalized not only by smoking cannabis, but also because of the use of CBD products due to the difficulties to control the levels of THC or as they are mixed with other types of chemicals or produced from genetically modified plants.

Second, Cannabis issue is not only related with public health, but also the global safety and security. An increase in cannabis production will also have negative consequences on the struggle against financing of crime and terrorism. PKK/PYD/YPG and FETÖ terrorist organizations are directly involved in drug trafficking through their widespread connections in Europe. In many recent operations conducted against PKK/PYD/YPG cells, large amounts of illegal drugs, including cannabis, have also been seized along with weapons.

In addition to that, as we feel the impacts of the climate crisis and importance of food security more deeply today, any possible production of cannabis and its effects on the cultivation of essential staple crops must be carefully evaluated with a global perspective.

Third, living in a secure and healthy environment is among the basic human rights, as mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When we are discussing the human rights aspect of drug policies, we should not ignore or exclude the consequences of normalization of drug use from other forms of human rights violations.

Therefore, we kindly request the Secretariat and the Presidency to include this title among the topics of the nexus between three drug control conventions and human rights for the coming meetings and documents, such as the background note of this meeting. We believe, this approach will provide us with a more comprehensive understanding.

Mr. President,

We heard different views and proposals during this meeting on the topic of the Thematic Chapter of the next World Drug Report. We are not in a situation right now to accept any proposal mentioned by some delegations and we need to consult our capital on this issue. Therefore, we kindly ask the Secretariat to carefully elaborate this matter and consult our delegation before taking any steps.

Mr. President,

To conclude, I reaffirm my country's strong commitment to the three international drug conventions. Türkiye will continue contributing to our joint efforts and international cooperation in line with its obligations. We invite all countries to abide by their obligations arising from the drug control conventions, including for cannabis. This is our common and shared responsibility.

We kindly ask the Secretariat to reflect our position and the concerns regarding legalization of drugs which was discussed by several delegations yesterday and today in the Chair's summary.

Thank you.