

AFRICAN GROUP STATEMENT

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
66TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS (CND)**

TO BE DELIVERED BY:

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**AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

13 MARCH 2023

Mr. Chair

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Africa Group. At the onset, the Africa Group aligns itself with the Statement delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

1. I express the Group's warm congratulations to Ambassador Miguel Camilo Ruíz Blanco, the Permanent Representative of Colombia, on your election as Chair of the 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and assure you of our full support.
2. We also express our deep appreciation to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Madam Ghada Wally, for her able leadership in guiding our fight against the world drug problem. The Group also commends the Executive Director for the UNODC Strategic Vision for Africa 2030 and calls for requisite funding to UNODC to fully implement the Vision.
3. The Group reaffirms that the fight against the world drug problem is a common and a shared responsibility of all UN member states. The Group reiterates its commitment to the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action; the 2014 Joint Ministerial Declaration; the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document as well as the 2019 Ministerial Declaration. The Group views the recent political consensus in the fight against the world drug problem as complementary and mutually reinforcing.
4. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has undermined the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and African Union Agenda 2063 which necessitates coordinated action to address the integrated and indivisible interlinkages amongst the various SDGs, with specific reference to SDG 3 and its impact upon good health and wellbeing. The Group welcomes the timely deliberations under the theme ***“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”***.
5. In this regard, the Group notes with appreciation the report of the AU Health Commission on COVID-19 that acknowledges that Africa's socio-economic recovery from the pandemic depends on the continent's ability to turn the current challenges into viable opportunities including through increasing the capacities and capabilities of the health workforce; initiating and expanding local manufacturing enterprises for all commodities required in pandemic response and particularly vaccines; and mobilizing appropriate technical and financial resources for preparedness and response.
6. The Group is cognizant that accelerated recovery requires multi-agency coordination both at the regional and international level and supports the ongoing negotiations at the WTO on the TRIPS waiver with an aim to increase production, accessibility, affordability and availability of vaccines and treatment.

7. The Group reiterates its concerns as encapsulated in the 2022 INCB Report on *“Progress in ensuring adequate access to internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes”*, which confirms the persistent disparities between regions in the consumption of opioid analgesics for the treatment of pain and the consumption of several psychotropic substances for the treatment of mental, neurological and substance use disorders. Almost all such consumption is concentrated in the developed world whilst consumption levels in other regions, especially in Africa, are often not sufficient to meet the basic medical needs of the populations.
8. The Group remains concerned that Africa is experiencing a “double burden: of disease, characterised by high rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases. This is compounded by the addition of drug users, with associated health problems, into a struggling health system which poses many challenges as Africa is still struggling with affordability, availability and accessibility of many medicinal drugs. Nevertheless, the Group reaffirms its commitment to work towards the improvement of access to drug-abuse health-related prevention programs, including awareness raising, treatment and rehabilitation.
9. In this regard, the Group calls upon Member States and relevant stakeholders to take concrete measures to ensure adequate availability, affordability and accessibility of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion, trafficking and abuse. We also stress the need for increasing technical assistance and international cooperation to facilitate the transfer of know-how in manufacturing generic pharmaceutical preparations that are bioequivalent and cost effective.
10. The Group welcomes the ongoing preparations for the mid-term review which will be held in 2024 concerning the progress made in implementing all international drug policy commitments, as reflected in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, to address and counter the world drug problem. The Group supports the efforts of the Chair and looks forward to taking stock of progress made in implementing all international drug policy commitments, inclusive of the challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration to make a meaningful evaluation.
11. The Group takes note of the decision to delete cannabis and cannabis resin from Schedule (IV) of the 1961 convention, and placing it under International Control in Schedule (I), taking into consideration that Member States shall have the right to further exercise domestic control in accordance with Article 39 of the 1961 convention.
12. The Group continues to express its grave concern over the global scourge of drug abuse, especially amongst women and youth, which continues to undermine efforts aimed at promoting sustainable social-economic development. The Group is deeply concerned that drug use amongst Africans is growing due to a number of stress factors such as high levels of poverty, inequality and economic decline from covid-
13. The African Group stresses the urgent need to respond to the serious challenges posed by the increasing interlinkages between drug trafficking, corruption, illicit

financial flows and other forms of organized crime, cybercrime, terrorism and money laundering, including in connection with the financing of terrorism, and to the significant challenges faced by law enforcement and judicial authorities.

14. The Group is concerned that despite the efforts made by African countries in preventing, eliminating and reducing significantly and measurably the illicit cultivation of crops used for production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, under international control, the abuse of these substances, remain a huge challenge across Africa, and require enhanced international and regional cooperation including technical assistance based on the needs of the requesting countries.
15. The Group continues to note with concern the harmful effects of the increasing nonmedical use of pharmaceutical opioids including Tramadol and invites Member States to collect and share data in order to facilitate the consideration of placing of the substance under international control to prevent its diversion for illicit use while ensuring its access and availability for medical and scientific purposes (
16. The Group calls upon Member States to continue pursuing a mutually reinforcing approach to supply and demand reduction, addressing drug abuse as a health and social issue, while upholding the rule of law.
17. The Group also denounces the online sale of illicit drugs, especially on the Darknet and increased trafficking in precursor chemicals, which threatens the public health of millions of young people in the continent. In this regard, the Group urges Member States to strengthen the implementation of the three International drug control conventions to effectively address and counter these new and emerging challenges and threats posed by the world drug problem.
18. In this regard, the Group encourages Governments to ensure that law enforcement authorities have the requisite capacity to meet the challenges arising from the illicit manufacture of, trafficking of drugs in and abuse of new psychotropic substances.
19. The Group calls for sufficient resources to ensure the successful implementation of the mandate of the Commission in pursuance of the SDG Agenda 2030 and 2063 Agenda of the African Union.
20. We reaffirm the principle role of the CND as the policy making body of the United Nations in drug control matters, and our support and appreciation for the efforts of the relevant UN entities, in particular those of UNODC as the leading entity of the UN system for addressing and countering the world drug problem and further reaffirm the treaty-mandated roles of the INCB and the WHO.
21. The Africa Group calls upon the UNODC to continue to mobilize resources to provide technical assistance including equipment, upon request, and to enhance the capacities in all fields of crime and drug prevention, including law enforcement,

forensic laboratories, training of personnel, and reorganization of institutions, taking into consideration the new challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic and enhanced focus on the road to recovery.

22. To conclude, the Group commends the Executive-Director for her efforts in ensuring that equitable geographical representation and gender balance are fully incorporated in the recruitment policy of UNODC, both at headquarters and Field Offices, particularly at the senior and policy-making levels and for professional posts requiring specific skills.