

Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Sixty-sixth session, 13-17 March 2023

Deputy Minister of Interior of the Republic of Albania,

Mr. Besfort Lamallari

Distinguished Chair,

Honorable Commission's Delegates

Before I begin, I avail myself of this great opportunity to express and reconfirm that the Republic of Albania stands in full solidarity with Ukraine.

It is a pleasure to address the Commission today, given its global authority and unique role within the UN system, in addressing the world drug problem.

The Albanian Government is strongly engaged in the fight of illicit drug trafficking and values and promote regional cooperation, better coordination among our law enforcement authorities in tackling cross-border crimes, while supporting programmes aimed at strengthening cohesion and resilience at community levels.

Moreover, I would like to emphasize that Albania is pleased to be hosting this year the Fifteenth Meeting of the Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies for Europe. We look forward to welcoming the delegates in late June in our capital Tirana.

Albania is happy to contribute to the improvement of the governance and financial situation of the UNODC, including through its Permanent Representative's role as vice chair of FINGOV for 2023.

We are also pleased to have joined forces with the Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development. Together with the Government of Germany and the United Kingdom, we are addressing the root causes of illicit economies, with tailor-made alternative development programmes, and we are delighted to see how vulnerable and high-risk communities are today stronger and more resilient.

As far as gender aspects of narcotic drugs are concerned, I would like to note, as well as to extend our invitation, to a quite interesting side event organized by Germany with the support of Albania on "*Feminist approaches in alternative development – the case of Albania*". The event aims to highlight the importance of putting women at the center of alternative development and empowerment programs given their potential to enable better bottom-up responses to crises, which eventually contribute to communities resilience and crime prevention.

The Government of Albania has continued to pursue an unwavering and holistic approach to this complex phenomenon. Recently we have approved the Action Plan against Organized and Serious Crime 2023-2025, that intertwines national measures with bilateral, regional and international instruments and tools, as the most overarching, viable and effective approach to pursuing

criminals, protecting communities, institutions and the economy, as well as preventing the growth of illicit drug-related activities.

We believe that only combined efforts of all stakeholders - state agencies, communities and families – (multi agencies approach) can be effective in tackling the use of illicit drugs and addressing the multifaceted threat of the world drug problem.

Aware of the global profound impact of drugs on all areas of our life and committed to pursue holistic approaches that take into consideration also the relevant public health implications of drug use and abuse, the Albanian government has lately developed and adopted several strategic documents that contribute to the reduction of drug demand and harm.

Namely, the approved “National Health Strategy 2021-2030” and its action plan, foresees the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and of a healthy environment.

Furthermore, the Strategy for the Development of Primary Health Care Services in Albania 2020-2025, approved in May 2020, paved the way for an important health care reform, introducing the integration of socio-health services at the primary care, while addressing relevant needs of vulnerable groups, including drug users.

Albania recognizes that investing in prevention of crime, corruption and drug use among youth is more effective than fighting its consequences.

Moreover, we are strongly committed to the implementation of the international legal framework on drugs, and are presently intensifying our work for the harmonization of the national legislation with the EU Acquis and standards, as we move forward along the European integration path.

A Law on Drugs and pharmaceutical services has been approved, and the draft revising the law on *Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic substances* has been finalized according to the recommendations of the 13th meeting of the Subcommittee of the EU under chapter 24 “Justice, Freedom and Security”.

To conclude, it is worth emphasizing that in the face of a profoundly transnational phenomenon, successful efforts and initiatives are bound and must be driven by a shared sense of responsibility and determination for increased security and human prosperity.

In this spirit, I would like to wish the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs and all member states, a very fruitful session and productive discussions.

Thank you for your attention!