



Australian Country Statement
66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Vienna, 13-17 March 2023

Chair, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Representatives

I would like to start by expressing my appreciation to Ambassador Ruiz Blanco for your able chairing of this very important meeting of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

Chair

It has been more than a year since Russia launched its illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine. We reiterate our unfailing support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We unequivocally condemn Russia's aggression and call on Russia to end its war and re-commit to the international rules and norms which we have all agreed to uphold.

Chair

Guided by our National Drug Strategy, Australia proudly advocates for drug policies that are based on scientific evidence and are balanced between health and law enforcement principles. Our approach takes into account the needs of priority populations and people who may be in vulnerable situations, recognising that they often experience harms, stigma and discrimination at disproportionate rates.

Preventing and minimising drug-related harms to individuals, families and communities remains the core focus of our domestic strategy.

Chair

With the rise in synthetic drug production, and the overdose crises, we acknowledge the importance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Synthetic Drug Strategy in helping strengthen the global response. We also appreciate the World Health Organization's scientific reviews and recommendations to place a further seven synthetic drugs under international control.

Australia is pleased to propose a resolution that promotes the safe and secure handling and disposal of synthetic drugs, precursors and other chemicals used in illicit drug manufacturing. The resolution aims to ensure that individuals who handle drugs in the course of their official duties can do so in a safe manner and in accordance with best practice.

This is an issue of acute importance to our region.

Australia will also lead a side-event this week showcasing initiatives that prevent overdose and reduce associated harms and sharing experiences to inform effective responses.

Australia will also engage at CND66 side events that align with our broader commitments, including but not limited to:

- Ensuring access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes,
- Abolishing the death penalty in all circumstances for all people, including for drug-related offences, and
- Advocating for gender equality, and the human rights of all people.

Chair

Australia reaffirms its commitment to the international drug control conventions, and to working with all stakeholders, including other Member States, the broader UN system, international partners, civil society organisations and community to address these issues.

We look forward to a productive CND66 and to our collaboration as we approach the 2024 Mid-Term review.

Thank you.