

STATEMENT BY AUSTRIA

General Debate of the 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

delivered by

**Ambassador Gabriela Sellner
Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations (Vienna)**

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Austria is fully aligned with the Statement made by the Presidency of the European Union, including on Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and would like to add the following:

Let me congratulate you, Mr. Chair and the other bureau members upon your election and thank you and the Secretariat for convening this meeting and your efforts to ensure inclusive and lively discussions. Let me also stress our appreciation for the excellent cooperation with UNODC and thank Executive Director Ghada Waly for successfully promoting the important work of the CND.

Thanks to one of UNODC's key publications, the biannually published World Drug Report, we are all aware of the current and most pressing challenges for drug policies in a constantly evolving drug market. The increasing number of drug-related deaths worldwide and the gender treatment gap regarding people who use drugs are only some of the concerning trends related to the drug market.

Bearing in mind the multifaceted nature of the world drug situation which involves health, security, social, economic and human rights aspects we believe that an effective response needs to be equally holistic. For Austria, there is no doubt that enhancing international cooperation is key to addressing these evolving challenges. This does not only include the close cooperation with other Member States but also a continuous and close exchange with civil society

organisations as they play a crucial role in addressing key challenges and they are often the first ones to notice them on the ground.

Let me underline once more that Austria is strongly committed to a human rights based approach to drug control. It is of great importance that the drug control conventions are implemented in a manner consistent with international human rights standards.

We believe that addiction can not be reduced to a criminal matter. In Austria, we strictly distinguish between drug addiction and drug-related crime. Drug addiction should be addressed through medical and social interventions, whereas drug-related crime (e.g. drug trafficking) should be addressed through criminal procedures. It is of outmost importance that drug policies remain grounded in human rights. There should be no place for human rights abuses such as the use of the death penalty for drug offenses.

In closing, let me reiterate our strong support for the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document with its human rights-centred approach and the 2019 Ministerial Declaration to accelerate the implementation of our joint commitments. We are looking forward to an inclusive and successful Mid Term Review in 2024, with high-level participation.

I thank you Mr. Chair.