



European Union

**EU Statement on
Agenda item 3: General Debate**

**66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

Vienna, 13-17 March 2023

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Ministers, Executive Director of the UNODC, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to speak today on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Ukraine*, the Republic of Moldova*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Georgia, Iceland*, Liechtenstein*, Norway*, Andorra and San Marino.

First, I would like to express our gratitude to you, Mr. Chair, the vice chairs, and the Secretariat of the UNODC for your work during this 66th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

Mr. Chair,

Our activities within this Commission are not immune from the challenging realities we live in. Russia's aggression against Ukraine affects us all. It is a flagrant violation of international law and the UN Charter and thus threatens the foundation, on which our activities here today are based. The war and humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian Federation also hinders our efforts to organise treatment services for people who use drugs, and for people who need controlled medicines. It also creates an environment conducive for criminal organisations to operate unchallenged, including for drug-trafficking. This adds another layer to the devastation. The EU and its Member States condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal military aggression against Ukraine, and we stand in full solidarity with Ukraine and its people.

* Candidate Countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

* Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

Mr. Chair,

The EU's work in the area of drugs is based on the EU Drugs Strategy 2021–2025. Please allow me to particularly highlight two issues of this Strategy today.

Firstly, the EU and its Member States support the full respect of human dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms in international drug policy. Human rights constitute an important cornerstone of drug policy. States must respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the inherent dignity of all individuals and the rule of law in the development and implementation of all drug policies. Measures need to be taken to improve the situation for people in vulnerable and marginalised situations and to reduce stigma and discrimination. Civil society plays an important role in promoting human rights.

The EU Drugs Strategy is based on the founding values of the EU, including those of respect for human dignity and human rights in line with the three International Drug Control Conventions. The EU and its Member States condemn the use of the death penalty and any other form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment for drug-related offences. We oppose these measures firmly and call for them to be abolished

Furthermore, the EU Drugs Strategy also underlines the need for efforts to disrupt and dismantle high-risk drug-related organised crime groups. The illicit drug markets are linked with violence, as underlined in the World Drug Report 2022, and other forms of crime, and more complex and deep investigation of transnational crimes is needed. Drugs can fuel and prolong conflict, and have destabilising effects as well as social and economic costs, which hinder sustainable development. Respect of human rights must be central in addressing these issues.

Secondly, the vast treatment gap for women who use drugs that we witness globally, as also highlighted in the latest World Drug Report, remains of grave concern. More resources and efforts must be used to close this gap and ensure women the right to equal access to treatment and services. For example, improved data collection is necessary to increase the provision of evidence-based interventions for women.

In 2016, the UNGASS Outcome Document called on Member States to mainstream a gender perspective in drug-related policies and programmes. Member States also agreed to ensure the involvement of women in all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies and programmes. We must speed up the implementation of all international drug policy commitments, above all the UNGASS Outcome Document.

The EU will do its part. The EU Drugs Strategy incorporates a gender equality and health equity perspective, and also emphasises the need to promote public health and to ensure a high level of human health protection. In this regard, it is necessary to take into account the health impact of drug use, including on key populations. We are working to address the remaining challenges in this area, for example through ensuring gender-sensitive access to effective evidence-based drug treatment,

tackling gender-based violence, and reducing barriers to treatment and other services for women who use drugs. Fostering women empowerment and measures that contribute to gender equality must be at the core of alternative development interventions as well. We also stand ready to engage with others to improve the situation globally.

Mr Chair,

To conclude, the EU and its Member States look forward to continuing working relentlessly with our international partners to address the world drug situation. We continue to remain a strong partner to UNODC in tackling these issues globally and we welcome its important efforts.

Thank you, Mr Chair.