



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

STATEMENT BY DIRECTOR GENERAL, DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY, THE GAMBIA,

ALH. BAKARY GASSAMA

DELIVERED AT THE 66TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

H.E. Chair of the 66TH Session of the Commission on Narcotics Drugs. The Gambia congratulate you on your election as chair and pledge its willingness to support you during your tenure.

Mr. Chair, The Gambia aligned itself with the statement of the African Group and would like to make this statement in its national capacity. The Gambia recognized the challenges facing the world in tackling the world drug problem, thus affirm its commitment to the initiatives and efforts of the UNODC and the CND to play its part in mitigating the impact of drugs on our societies.

The Government of The Gambia is in the final year of implementation of the first national drug Control Strategy. The goals of this strategy include among others, measures to promote approaching drug abuse as a public health issue by departing from the strict criminal justice approach. It is evident that the seemingly strict criminal laws around drugs have so far fall short of the desired objectives around

the world. The Gambia is currently overhauling the Drug Control Act to create room for greater flexibility for first time offenders for cannabis by introducing non-custodial sentencing such as community service and mentoring. Local seizure records revealed an increasing trend in the abuse of controlled drugs particularly Ecstasy since Covid-19. As a mitigation measure, Drug Demand Reduction activities are intensified but the impact of these efforts are limited due to the lack of rehabilitation facility.

The Gambia, therefore, invite partners to support in the effort towards establishing a rehabilitation center to cater for the peculiar needs of drug users. This is a demonstration of the Gambia's will and commitment to implementation of drug laws that are guided by human rights considerations and comply with recommended international standards and best practices.

The Gambia noted initiatives around the international cannabis control regime, including the rescheduling of cannabis. However, we advocate for responsible national policy frameworks that guarantee the use of cannabis for the intended medical and scientific purposes only. Cannabis is the most abused drug in The Gambia and the same is the experience in most African countries due to its availability and affordability. We will therefore continue to handle cannabis control measures with caution and alertness in order to save our youth.

Consistent with the international drug control conventions, The Gambia pursue a robust international cooperation agenda. We have succeeded in signing bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements with countries in the region and beyond. Currently, we have cooperation instruments that facilitate intelligence sharing and joint investigations with anti-narcotics agencies in Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Nigeria and UK Border Force. Negotiation to signed MoU with the DEA of the United State, NCA of the United Kingdom, DCSA of Italy, the General Directorate of Narcotics Control of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Counter Narcotic Department of Turkey.

I thank you for your kind attention.