

Opening session at the 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotics

Drugs

Vienna, March 13th, 2023

Norwegian statement

Thank you,

Executive Director, Excellencies, representatives of Civil Society, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Firstly, let me welcome you, Ambassador, as Chair of this year's session of the CND. Honour also to the secretariat for their tireless contribution to prepare this session.

Chairperson,

According to the last World Drug Report, most indicators measuring drug related issues are pointing in the wrong direction. The situation calls for changes and action.

The Norwegian Government has announced that a change in the current drug policy is needed and has decided to present a new Prevention and Treatment Reform next year. Through the reform, the Government will prevent drug use better and intervene earlier with good help and follow-up. Substance abuse problems must be identified early, and quick and effective help must be offered and people with substance use disorder must experience dignified lives. The government will not decriminalize the use and possession of drugs or doping agents for personal use, but society's

reactions to illegal possession of drugs for personal use must be proportionate.

Though the challenges may differ between country, international cooperation is needed to meet the situation.

So:

- If we regard the world drug situation as a common challenge.
- If we regard it as a shared and common responsibility.
- If we regard the best solutions to be based upon common ground.
- If all this is the case and based upon present situation and lack of achievements.
- We need to improve.

We also need political will to secure access to legal medicines, to reduce the suffering of individuals, to solve governance challenges and to respect human rights and implement the rule of law.

And importantly, we need political will to include civil society and recognize their valuable contribution in all aspects of drug policies.

We need to agree on the basic assumption that drug policy is about human beings, about promoting health and wellbeing. It is about reducing harm to all those negatively affected by drugs, whether it be individuals, communities, nations, or the world society.

Neither should addressing substance use as a health concern be controversial. The aim is to leave no one behind and ensure a healthy standard of living for all, including people who use drugs.

So also to prioritize prevention and give every child the best start in life. To recognize and attack inequality as a driver for problematic drug use and overdoses.

Furthermore, to tackle discrimination, stigmatization, racism, and their outcomes as a pervasive issue for people living with a substance-use disorder. And not at least, to focus on and prioritize evidence-informed interventions, while respectfully fulfilling human rights obligations when developing and implementing responses to drugs.

Finally, chairperson,
Norway condemns Russia's attack against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. The Russian aggression is a clear violation of international law and Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thank you.