



**European Union**

**EU Statement on**

**Agenda item 5 (b): Challenges and future work of the CND, the WHO and the INCB in the review of substances for possible scheduling recommendations**

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

**Vienna, 13-17 March 2023**

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Türkiye<sup>§</sup>, North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Serbia\*, Albania\*, Ukraine\*, the Republic of Moldova\*, Bosnia and Herzegovina\*, Georgia, Iceland<sup>+</sup>, Norway<sup>+</sup> and Armenia.

Mr. Chair,

The scheduling of substances, especially new psychoactive substances (NPS), is an important element of the work of the CND.

Sustained efforts made by the international community in recent years have had some success, with the global NPS market now having stabilised, according to the World Drug Report 2022. However, new opioids, which are potentially the most harmful group of new psychoactive substances, have in contrast to the general decline, globally continued to grow. Despite sharp regulatory responses, we see the tragic occurrence of new types of potent opioids that are not covered by existing legislation. We are also witnessing new types of synthetic cannabinoids emerging in some parts of the world. Synthetic cathinones are also problematic. This demonstrates that the NPS market is complex and highly dynamic, and rapidly adapts to attempts to disrupt it. Continued strong international cooperation is needed to analyse, detect, monitor, and quickly share information on the use, spread and risks of new psychoactive substances.

We all must make serious efforts, particularly when it comes to protecting our children and young people from harm. Preventive work is particularly needed to avoid the use of harmful NPS by young people and other groups, which are at high risk of ill health, such as marginalised people in society.

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<sup>§</sup> Candidate Country

\* 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.

<sup>+</sup> Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

One of the most important measures within the EU to tackle the new psychoactive substances, is the EU Early Warning System, which marked its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year. The system ensures that the EU and its Member States have state-of-the-art information on NPS and the threats they pose. Our experience is that an early warning system, complemented by a regulation that supports it, can cut down the number of substances. As a result, the annual number of NPS notified for the first time has significantly decreased in Europe since 2015.

Over the last 25 years, the new drugs market has undergone significant change, with more potent and toxic substances putting consumers at greater risk. In the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025, the EU has agreed to take action to roll out targeted rapid alert risk communications and intelligence notifications when dangerous substances, including NPS, or other emerging threats appear on the market. The EU will continue to work to increase our preparedness to react to such new threats. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction – whose mandate we are currently revising – will support us in this endeavour.

Furthermore, production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs is a highly dynamic crime area, subject to rapid change and innovation in terms of substances, production methods and suspects involved. We will make further efforts to reducing the availability of NPS by targeting high-risk organised criminal networks involved in these activities.<sup>1</sup>

I would now like to turn our attention to drug precursors.

The diversion of non-scheduled chemicals and proliferation and trafficking of designer precursors remain a serious concern.

The World Drug Report 2022 states that precursors used in the manufacture of synthetic drugs continue to change rapidly as chemicals become controlled and “designer precursors” emerge.

Designer-precursors are close chemical relatives of scheduled precursors. They are purpose-made to circumvent controls and they do not have any known legitimate use. Illegal synthetic drug producers in the European Union overwhelmingly use such designer-precursors.

The recent evaluation of the EU drug precursors legislation coupled with the conclusions of the ad hoc group tasked to effectively tackle designer precursors paved the way for the start of the revision of the EU legislation on drug precursor control.

However, as already stated in previous years, drug precursor diversion and trafficking, in particular of designer-precursors, is a global phenomenon and thus also requires global action.

The European Union would therefore like to thank the Board for all the activities and

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<sup>1</sup> In light of the EU's exclusive competence in the field of precursors, the part below is inserted after the agreement on the text by the CUG

initiatives it has undertaken in recent years for furthering international cooperation in this regard.

Building on the Board's 'list of options for global action' and last year's CND resolution 65/3, the European Union is organizing a side event in the margins of this 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs called "Progress in addressing the evolution of illicit drug manufacture – Good practices, approaches and experiences in particular regarding designer precursors and innovative ways of scheduling".

Countries will share experiences about innovative ways of scheduling, in particular group scheduling of derivatives and analogues of already scheduled precursors. The objective is to share best practices on new approaches to fight the proliferation and trafficking of designer precursors within the current legal framework.

The EU is committed to working together globally to tackle the problems posed by non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors.

Thank you for your attention. Thank you, Mr Chair!