



European Union

EU Statement on

Agenda item 5(d): International cooperation to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion

**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 honor to participate in this meeting and to speak 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+, Norway+, Andorra and San Marino.

The EU and its Member States continue to underline the importance of ensuring the access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, it is essential that access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines is ensured for patients around the world.

In this context, the EU and its Member States would like to reiterate our grave concern over the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine resulting from Russia's unprovoked, and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. The World Health Organization (WHO) has documented more than 700 attacks on health care in Ukraine since February 2022, including attacks against health care facilities, transport and supplies. The growing humanitarian needs resulting from this emergency situation require urgent action to ensure unimpeded access to medical care and provisions, including medicines containing internationally controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Russia's ongoing campaign of systematic missile strikes against Ukrainian civilians, civilian targets, energy infrastructure and other utilities, to inflict even more suffering on the Ukrainian people, is a crime and it must stop.

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

Mr Chair,

The EU and its Member States would like to once again express their appreciation for the special initiative of the previous Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Ambassador Ghislain D'Hoop of Belgium. It is a positive development in scaling up the implementation of international drug policy commitments on improving availability of and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. The special events highlighted the remaining challenges in this area, raised awareness about this important issue and it will thus help us to move closer to the implementation of our international commitments in the area of availability.

We also welcome the special report on the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes by the INCB, prepared as a supplement to its 2022 Annual Report.

We support such efforts, which are in line with the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025, that also focuses on promoting and implementing capacity-building and awareness-raising activities regarding access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and we are ready to continue working together in this important area.

Thank you, Mr Chair.