

Agenda Item 5d. International cooperation to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion.

Chair of the Commission, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

- Controlled medicines should be both available and accessible to those who need them. This is a basic principle. And this is our responsibility under the implementation of the international drug control treaties.
- Last year, the Chair of the CND, through the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies, launched a dynamic global stakeholder campaign titled “Access and Availability”. The campaign included awareness raising events in Vienna, New York, and Geneva and called on all

Member States to increase their efforts towards ensuring availability and access to controlled medicines for medical and scientific purposes, whilst preventing their diversion and misuse.

- In addition, UNODC has supported Member States to ensure availability and eliminate the barriers that limit access to controlled medicines through three pilot projects which have been implemented in four countries. These projects focus on assessing national legislation and policies, mapping gaps in the supply chain and training policymakers and health workers, in order to ensure access to controlled medicines for the management of pain.
- But, despite these efforts, more than 80 per cent of people around the world, mostly in low- and middle-income countries, still cannot access controlled

medicines. The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as recent humanitarian crises, have further disrupted access to these medicines.

- The World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines includes medicines which contain controlled substances precisely because they provide vital pain relief for people suffering from a wide range of serious illnesses and medical conditions. These medicines also have important uses in life-saving surgical procedures, and are essential for the treatment of mental health illnesses, drug-use disorders and neurological conditions.
- Protecting and promoting people's health and well-being are at the core of the international drug control system. And, while meant to safeguard people from

the harms caused by drugs, this should not result in scarcity or inaccessibility for those in urgent or even desperate need of these medicines.

- We cannot afford to let last year's efforts go to waste. We need to take action and we need to do it now - for the benefit of those who suffer, those who are neglected and those who are often left behind.
- UNODC is preparing to relaunch its strategy, to address the problems which lead to limited availability and barriers to accessing controlled medicines, learning from past experiences and building on the achievements so far. But, to do this, the support of Member States is essential to achieving our goals. People who are suffering and in need of controlled medicines are waiting for our commitment. We cannot afford to fail them.

- Thank you.