

Organizational arrangements of the 2023 Thematic Discussions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

1st and 2nd intersessional meetings of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
at its sixty-sixth session

Vienna, 23-25 October 2023, 4-6 December 2023

Non-Paper by the Secretariat

A. Background

In the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, Member States, while acknowledging that tangible progress had been achieved over the past decade, noted with concern the persistent and emerging challenges posed by the world drug problem and committed to accelerating, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility, the full implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement and the 2016 UNGASS outcome document, aimed at achieving all commitments, operational recommendations and aspirational goals set out therein. In the stocktaking part of the declaration, Member States identified eleven challenges to the effective implementation of international commitments. A core part of the Commission-led follow-up process are annual thematic discussions that are focused on the exchange of good practices, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of all international drug policy commitments.

The Commission adopted in June 2019 a multi-year workplan to discuss how the challenges identified in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration could be addressed through effectively implementing the provisions contained in the 2016, 2014 and 2009 documents. In the workplan, the Commission decided to hold, in the period 2019-2022, thematic discussions of two to three days every year (with one challenge discussed per day, structured along the 11 challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration). It was also laid out in the workplan that immediately preceding the 2024 mid-term review, in 2023 there would be a comprehensive stock-taking of progress made in implementing all international drug policy commitments to address the challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration, complementing the thematic discussions held between 2019 and 2022 (see the Chair's summaries of the [2019](#), [2020](#), [2021](#) and [2022](#) thematic discussions).

B. Programme of work

In line with the workplan, which called for a “comprehensive stock-taking” of progress made, all 11 challenges identified in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration will be discussed during the 2023 Thematic Discussions. It is proposed to organize two sets of discussions, namely 23-25 October 2023 and 4-6 December 2023.

It is proposed to cluster the topics for the two three-day sessions as follows:

a. Thematic Discussion I

i. Day 1: 23 October 2023

Morning: Challenge “both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying”

Afternoon: Challenge “the abuse, illicit cultivation and production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as the illicit trafficking in those substances and in precursors, have reached record levels, and that the illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals are on the rise”

ii. **Day 2:** 24 October 2023

Morning: Challenge “increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in persons, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and money-laundering and, in some cases, terrorism, including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism, are observed”

Afternoon: Challenge “the value of confiscated proceeds of crime related to money -laundering arising from drug trafficking at the global level remains low”

iii. **Day 3:** 25 October 2023

Morning: Challenge “the criminal misuse of information and communications technologies for illicit drug -related activities is increasing”

Afternoon: Challenge “responses not in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and not in conformity with applicable international human rights obligations pose a challenge to the implementation of joint commitments based on the principle of common and shared responsibility”

b. Thematic Discussion II

i. **Day 1:** 4 December 2023

Morning: Challenge “drug treatment and health services continue to fall short of meeting needs and deaths related to drug use have increased”

Afternoon: Challenge “the rate of transmission of HIV, the hepatitis C virus and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use, including injecting drug use in some countries, remains high”

ii. **Day 2:** 5 December 2023

Morning: Challenge “the adverse health consequences of and risks associated with new psychoactive substances have reached alarming levels”

Afternoon: Challenge “synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of prescription drugs pose increasing risks to public health and safety, as well as scientific, legal and regulatory challenges, including with regard to the scheduling of substances”

iii. **Day 3:** 6 December 2023

Morning: Challenge “the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and palliative care, remains low to non-existent in many parts of the world”

Afternoon: ½ day closing with a focus on the way forward

C. Format and organization of work

The thematic discussions will be organized **in a hybrid format** (in-person participation combined with online participation through the InEvent platform). The discussions will be webcast on UN Web TV, thanks to the availability of dedicated XB resources for this purpose.

The thematic discussions will be organized in two parts for each challenge:

- I. Two introductory presentations by UNODC (representative of Research and Trend Analysis Branch and an expert on the topic) followed by a Q&A session;
- II. Guided discussion led by the Chair with interventions from the floor.

The morning meeting will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (Vienna time), and the afternoon meetings from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The thematic discussions are informal meetings which will be held in line with established practice, and in accordance with the applicable rules of procedure.

Statements and presentations can be posted after the thematic discussions on the Commission's dedicated website for the follow-up to the 2019 Ministerial Declaration [Thematic Discussions \(unodc.org\)](#) as well as in the [2019 Ministerial Declaration Follow-up Portal](#).

Participation

As was the case in previous years, the thematic discussions aim to provide an inclusive platform for the exchange of views by governmental experts, representatives from the United Nations system, representatives from international organizations, and experts nominated by civil society through the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs. Experts who presented during panel discussions at the previous iterations of the thematic discussions will be contacted by the Secretariat and be invited to provide an update on the relevant challenges.

Opening on 23 October 2023 and 4 December 2023

A high-level opening will be held at the start of the CND thematic discussions.

Introductory presentations and Q&A

In line with the format of the Commission's thematic discussions held since 2016, each of the thematic sessions will start with introductory presentations by UNODC (not longer than 5 minutes). The floor will then be opened for questions directly addressed to the UNODC presenters.

Guided discussion

Following the introductory presentations and Q&A, a guided discussion with interventions from the floor will be held with all participants. In light of the limited time available per challenge, there will this time not be panel discussions with experts nominated by the Regional Groups.

To promote a focused discussion given the short time available to discuss each challenge, the Chair may ask guiding questions as contained in the discussion guide, which is under preparation. The guided discussion would focus on key updates regarding progress made in addressing each challenge since 2019.

To ensure a dynamic exchange, it is strongly recommended that interventions from the floor are made in the form of short replies to the Chair, replies or questions to other participants, or comments on the specific challenge (**not longer than 3 minutes**), rather than a read-out of written statements prepared in advance.

During the guided discussion, delegates and experts participating in person can raise their flag or nameplate to indicate their wish to speak. Participants

joining the meeting online can indicate in the meeting chat if they wish to intervene. A few speaker slots during each discussion will be provided to experts nominated by civil society through the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs.

It will be the prerogative of the Chair to give the floor to speakers according to the flow of the discussion.

D. Documentation

A discussion guide will be prepared by the Secretariat with information on each of the challenges, including a list of guiding questions. It will be shared in advance of the meeting to facilitate the discussion and debate.

The discussion guide will be published on the website of the meeting.

E. Outcome

As was the case for previous thematic discussions, the outcome of the thematic discussions would be a Chair's summary of the main deliberations, not subject to negotiations. The Chair's summary would be a substantive contribution towards the 2024 mid-term review and would be brought to the attention of the Commission in the form of a conference room paper. This summary will complement the Chair's summaries prepared since 2019.

F. Registration

A note verbale will be sent to Member States in due course with details on registration, which will be done through the Indico system.