"WE HAVE A DUTY NOT TO FORGET OR NEGLECT THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM"

UNODC Executive Director, Ms. Ghada Waly, said the above in her statement at the opening of the CND Thematic Discussion on 23 Oct, delivered on her behalf by John Brandolino, Director of Treaty Affairs.

In the lead-up to the Midterm Review, the 2023 thematic discussions aim to undertake a comprehensive stock-taking of progress made by the international community across all 11 challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration.

The President of the International Narcotics Control Board also reminded delegates in his opening remarks that “the fundamental concern of the conventions is to safeguard the health and welfare of humankind.”

H.E. Mr. Miguel Camilo Ruiz Blanco, Chair of the CND at its 66th session, presided over the meeting.
HYBRID PARTICIPATION

With around 700 registrations not including webcast observers, the meeting brought about experts and policymakers from over 170 Member States, UN entities, intergovernmental organizations, international partners, and civil society experts from around the world.

FORMAT

In 2023, the thematic discussions are conducted over two intersessional meetings in October and December, with half a day devoted to the discussion of one specific challenge. The current report covers the proceedings of the October session. For each challenge, introductory remarks were followed by an open discussion, which will be summarized in a conference room paper to be presented to the 67th CND regular session in March 2024.

23 October
- **Morning:** Expanding & diversifying range of drugs & drug markets
- **Afternoon:** Record levels of drug abuse & illicit cultivation, production & trafficking

24 October
- **Morning:** Increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption & other forms of organized crime
- **Afternoon:** Low value of confiscated proceeds of crime related to money laundering arising from drug trafficking

25 October
- **Morning:** Criminal misuse of information & communications technologies for drug trafficking
- **Afternoon:** Non-compliance of responses with international drug control conventions & human rights obligations

4 December
- **Morning:** Increase in drug-related deaths - unmet need for drug treatment and health services
- **Afternoon:** High transmission rate of HIV, HCV & other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use

5 December
- **Morning:** Adverse health consequences associated with new psychoactive substances
- **Afternoon:** Health & regulatory challenges posed by synthetic opioids & non-medical use of prescription drugs

6 December
- **Morning:** Low availability of internationally controlled substances for medical & scientific purposes
- **Afternoon:** Way forward

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Building on the past CND thematic discussions, a consolidated discussion guide covering all 11 challenges identified in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration was prepared by the Secretariat to facilitate dialogue and an active exchange of best practices.
INTERNATIONAL DRUG POLICY COMMITMENTS

At its 62nd session in March 2019, the Commission adopted by consensus the Ministerial Declaration entitled “Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem”. 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 Ministerial Declaration of 2019, Member States committed to support the CND in continuing transparent and inclusive discussions involving all relevant stakeholders on effective strategies to address and counter the world drug problem, including through the sharing of information, best practices and lessons learned.

Member States further resolved to review in the CND in 2029 the progress made in the implementation of all international drug policy commitments, with a mid-term review in 2024. The Commission decided, in its resolution 66/1, that the mid-term review will consist of a 2-day high-level segment in addition to the 5-day regular session of the CND. The 2-day high-level segment will include a general debate and two multi-stakeholder roundtables on the topics of “Taking stock: work undertaken since 2019” and “The way forward: the road to 2029”.

The opening segment of the intersessional meeting featured remarks by the 66th CND Chair, UNODC Executive Director (delivered on her behalf) by Director of Treaty Affairs) and the INCB president. They emphasized the need to ensure work on the the world drug problem continues amidst ongoing conflict around the world.
23 OCTOBER 2023

THETMIC FOCUS: Both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying

Bryce Pardo, Research Officer, Illicit Crop Monitoring Programme, UNODC, shared an overview of the changing markets, providing a recap of some of the analyses in the most recent World Drug Report. He raised the concern that in order to circumvent regulations, new substances are rapidly entering and exiting the markets, creating confusion and harm, with neither buyer nor seller knowing exactly what was being traded. The rapid emergence of new drugs was due in part to advances in chemistry, the growth of large chemical industries and the ability with which producers can obtain information on the synthesis of new compounds and advertise novel drugs online.

Justice Tettey, Chief, UNODC Drugs, Laboratory and Scientific Services Branch, highlighted the ever-growing health crisis propelled by synthetic opioids. He provided an overview of the solutions that Member States and UNODC have implemented, in cooperation with partners, to respond to the ever-changing nature of the drug markets. These included monitoring of new psychoactive substances markets and placing substances and precursor chemicals under international control, strengthening of early warning systems, the launch of the UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy, and cooperation and information sharing at all levels.

Speakers outlined the scope of harm in their countries and regions caused by the evolving nature of synthetic drugs, highlighting concerns about the vulnerability of youth. They also echoed the growing sophistication of drug trafficking aided by cyberspace. Speakers also emphasized the importance of sharing information and technical support to tackle this challenge.
THEMATIC FOCUS:
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 the illicit demand for and domestic diversion of precursor chemicals are on the rise.

Chloé Carpentier, Chief of Drug Research Section, UNODC, shared an overview of the main concerns of drug trafficking and drug use. She highlighted the record-high production of cocaine in 2021, and record-high seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants. She noted that youth are more vulnerable to drug use than adults, and women are more likely to progress quickly to drug-related harm, with the gender gap in access to treatment remaining wide.

Justice Tettey, Chief, UNODC Drugs, Laboratory and Scientific Services Branch highlighted the challenges faced by Member States in handling seized drugs and chemicals, emphasizing the need for safe disposal practices to ensure the safety of officers and to prevent environmental hazards. He also stressed the importance of alternative development as a means to sustainably reduce illicit crop cultivation.

Member States exchanged information on the unique and common challenges of their regions and countries, with several speakers echoing the importance of alternative development as a key to reducing illicit cultivation, involving multi-sectorial partnership in such endeavors. The need for evidence-based prevention programmes, especially targeting youth, was also highlighted.
THEMATIC FOCUS:

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.

David Rausis, Statistician, Data, Analytics and Statistics Section, UNODC, presented findings on corruption and the drug-crime nexus. He shared the measures of corruption, differences in findings across low- and high-income countries, gender, types of bribery and the common actors involved.

Antonio Valverde, UNODC CRIMJUST Global Programme Deputy Coordinator introduced the Global Report on Cocaine 2023, which highlights the increase in cocaine production and purity. He shared on the evolution of criminal organizations into a multi-criminality model, using drug trafficking routes to also traffic a wide range of other illegal goods, posing a significant challenge for law enforcement and judicial systems.

Speakers from the floor highlighted concerns regarding the escalating interplay between drug trafficking, corruption, firearms trafficking, and violence, with a resultant impact on vulnerable populations, including victims of human trafficking and migrant smuggling, as well as the use of drugs as a means of financing terrorism. Concerns regarding related environmental crimes were also mentioned, as well as the pivotal role of combating money laundering and illicit proceeds in dismantling criminal organizations.
Glen Prichard, Chief, Cybercrime and Anti-Money Laundering Section, UNODC, elaborated on the global challenges in seizing and confiscating proceeds of crime. He stressed the importance of parallel financial investigation alongside drug investigations, and the importance of a international network approach for drug trafficking investigations.

Member States shared the challenges faced in asset recovery in relation to drug trafficking. They also shared best practices such as public-private cooperation, encouraging anonymous reporting by the public, and establishing new laws to tighten financial transactions. Speakers also highlighted the challenges brought about by the use of cryptocurrencies in money laundering, and many speakers also stressed the importance of harmonizing international frameworks and sharing better intelligence.

Antoine Vella, Research Officer, Data, Analytics and Statistics Section, UNODC, shared findings and progress in measurement of illicit financial flows and asset recovery. He elaborated on the value chains and proceeds of drug trafficking, highlighting differences in the start and end of the supply chain. He also covered the conceptual framework for the statistical measurement of illicit financial flows, and emphasized the importance of data collection in this area.
Chloé Carpentier, Chief, Drug Research Section, UNODC provided an overview of the scope of drug trafficking over the internet, including the volatility of drug markets on the dark web and law enforcement action, and the increasing use of social media for buying drugs by end consumers, especially youth.

Glen Prichard, Chief, Cybercrime and Anti-Money Laundering Section, UNODC shared about the characteristics of ICT that allow it to contribute to cost-efficient criminal enterprises, including connectivity, anonymity, decentralized and fast transnational payment methods, and low regulatory frameworks. He also revisited the range of measures to address the misuse of ICT for drug trafficking shared by participants during the 2021 CND Thematic Discussions.

Speakers from the floor spoke about the challenges of anonymity brought about by using ICT as a drug market place, and the trend of using social media for drug trafficking. Speakers also mentioned the challenge of detection due to the use of encrypted devices and applications in drug-related activities, but also observed the importance of data privacy and protection. In terms of solutions, speakers highlighted the need to work with internet service providers, and the need for innovative tools, strategies and capacity building on financial investigations.
25 OCTOBER 2023

THEMATIC FOCUS:

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.

Chloé Carpentier, Chief of Drug Research Section, UNODC, highlighted the different pillars for the protection of public health, welfare and security contained in the international drug control conventions, and alluded to trends on the legalization/regulation of the drug supply chain. She also expounded on the range of human rights relevant to the drug context, such as the right to life, security, and freedom from inhumane treatment.

Chief, UNODC Drugs, Laboratory and Scientific Services Branch emphasized the right of children to be protected from drug use, the need to ensure access and availability of controlled drugs for scientific and medical purposes, and the right to health for people who use drugs and live with drug use disorders.

Many speakers recalled the fundamental aim of the conventions, which is to protect the health and welfare of individuals and society from the dangerous and harmful effects of controlled substances. Speakers also outlined that national responses should be balanced, comprehensive and evidence-based, that they should be designed and implemented in accordance with human rights obligations, and that more work needs to be done to improve the access and availability of controlled substances for medical purposes.
H.E. Mr. Miguel Camilo Ruiz Blanco, Chair of the CND at its 66th session, briefed all interested stakeholders on the 2024 Mid-term Review of all international drug policy commitments, to be held from 14 to 15 March 2024, ahead of the 67th regular meeting of the CND.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and experts,

We would like to express our appreciation for your participation in the first intersessional meeting of the 66th CND held 23 - 25 October 2023.

We look forward to welcoming you again at the second intersessional meeting to be held 4 - 6 December 2023.

With many thanks and kind regards from Vienna,

Jo Dedeyne-Amann, Secretary of the Commission