

**Contribution by the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
To the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

2022 Theme:

“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

I. Introduction

This contribution is submitted by **H.E. Mr. Ghislain D'HOOP (Belgium), the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) at its sixty-fifth session**, in response to a letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council of 23 November 2021, inviting the Commission to provide an input to the 2022 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The 2022 HLPF will be held under the auspices of ECOSOC at the UN headquarters in New York from 5 to 15 July 2022, focused on the theme **“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”**. The present input aims to highlight the guidance and key measures put forth by the CND which contribute from the perspective of the world drug problem to building back better after the COVID-19 pandemic, all while striving to meet the commitments contained in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs, established to assist the ECOSOC in supervising the application of the international drug control conventions, is the **polymaking body of the United Nations with prime responsibility for drug control matters**, together with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), **acts as the governing body of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**. While the CND works on a large portfolio of issues, the ones addressed in **this contribution** do not reflect the work of the Commission in its entirety but instead **focus on the 2022 theme and the selected SDGs, namely SDGs 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 14 (Life below Water), 15 (Life on Land) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)**.

This contribution covers the period March 2021-February 2022¹ and will, therefore, **mainly focus on the action taken during the sixty-fourth session of the Commission, chaired by H.E. Ambassador Dominika KROIS (Poland)**. The **main 64th session was held from 12 to 16 April 2021** in a hybrid format due to restrictions forced by the COVID-19 pandemic, combining an in-person component in the Vienna International Centre with a large online presence. The session was attended by 1,400 participants representing 132 Member States, 7 United Nations Bodies and Agencies, 17 intergovernmental organizations and 76 non-governmental organizations. At the margins of the 64th session, 111 side events were organized, co-sponsored by Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations and civil society - covering all aspects of the world drug problem. More information for the 64th session is available at: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/64_Session_2021/session-64-of-the-commission-on-narcotic-drugs.html.

During its 64th session, the Commission also held **intersessional thematic discussions from 19 till 21 October 2021** on the full implementation of all international drug policy commitments contained in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement and the 2016 UNGASS outcome document, as reiterated in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration on “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”. The 2021 Thematic Discussions focused on three specific challenges identified in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, namely (i) the increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime; (ii) the low value of confiscated proceeds of crime related to money-laundering arising from drug trafficking at the global level; and (iii) the increased criminal misuse of information and communications technologies for illicit drug-related activities. The event gathered nearly 600 participants worldwide, and all three topics included a strong focus on the impacts of COVID-19 and specific proposals to build back better. More information is available at: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/64_Session_2021/thematic-sessions.html

As per usual practice and following the mandates from ECOSOC, the Commission also held **from 20 to 24 September 2021 the meetings of the Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEAS) in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa**, as well as **the meeting of the Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East**. These meetings identify salient policy and enforcement issues in their regions, establish working groups to analyse the issues, and then bring their reports and recommendations to the attention of the Commission. To adjust to the restrictions derived from the pandemic, the 2021 editions were held in a scaled-down, virtual format, and also included a strong COVID-19 and “building back

¹ considering that the submission deadline is 1 March 2022.

better”- perspective. More information on the 2021 Extraordinary Sessions of the CND subsidiary bodies can be accessed via: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Subsidiary_Bodies/extraordinary-sessions-of-the-subsidiary-bodies-of-the-commission-on-narcotic-drugs_2021.html.

The **regular sixty-fifth session of the Commission** will be held **from 14 till 18 March 2022** and more information is posted on the following website: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/65_Session_2022/65CND_Main.html .

During its 65th session, the Commission will devote special attention to the issue of availability and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. There is immense value in stepping up the Commission’s efforts in addressing this issue, as ensuring the availability and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes is a commitment enshrined in the three international drug control conventions. Notwithstanding the universally recognized medical indispensability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, millions of people continue to suffer due to limited access to controlled medicines, thereby making this a major global health problem. A unified global effort in this area is especially critical today, in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated interruptions of the controlled medicines supply chain in several parts of the world. To highlight the importance of this issue, the CND will organize a series of events throughout the course of the year 2022, beginning with a high-level kick-off event on the first day of the 65th regular session. The series of events is envisaged to culminate in a one-day Special Forum tentatively in October, which will dedicate a day to raising awareness on the issue and the need for sustainable funding in this area.

II. Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17 from the vantage point of CND, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the SDGs and targets, including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs and noting that efforts to achieve the SDGs and to effectively address the world drug problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

At its main session in April 2021, the Commission issued a *Joint Statement on the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic on the implementation of Member States’ joint commitments to address and counter all aspects of the world drug problem (CND resolution 64/1)*, in which it recognized the dramatic consequences of the COVID -19 pandemic on all aspects of the world drug problem. The Statement was adopted at the beginning of the General Debate, which was focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Statement was subsequently submitted to the 2021 HLPF.

The **effects of the pandemic and the need to build back better** have also been explicitly recognized by the Commission in *all other resolutions* adopted at its sixty-fourth session.

During the **general debate** at its sixty-fourth session, speakers underscored that drug-related challenges had been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, and shared insights on how the pandemic had impacted, and in many cases reshaped, national drug markets and the delivery of drug demand reduction services and interventions, making reference to increased online sales and “contact-free” drug trafficking, among other issues. A number of speakers underlined that COVID-19-related isolation, distancing and hygiene measures had affected the availability of and access to treatment services, noting that the pandemic had disproportionately affected vulnerable members of society. Several speakers provided examples of national efforts to ensure the provision of drug -related services during the pandemic. Good practices were shared, including practices relating to remote counselling and consultations, telemedicine and tele-health, the supply of protective hygiene equipment, awareness-raising initiatives, specialized facilities for the provision of psychological support, interventions addressing mental health challenges, the facilitation of access to medications, including medications for opioid antagonist treatment in take-home modalities and in prison settings, as well as the provision of temporary accommodation and financial support. Appreciation was expressed for the support provided by UNODC to Member States in ensuring the provision of quality services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Joint Statement, the Commission reflected on new trends, challenges and obstacles that the COVID-19 pandemic posed to all aspects of the world drug problem, inter alia:

- With regard to **demand reduction**, the Commission stressed that the pandemic and resulting lockdowns have led to the development of new patterns of illicit drug use, such as poly-substance use. Emerging evidence in some countries suggested that people with drug use disorders, including those incarcerated, might be at increased risk of more severe illness and mortality from COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions, as well as other factors, which may be exacerbated during the pandemic. The Commission acknowledged that, owing to the nature of the pandemic, the traditional demand reduction infrastructure, which often required in-person engagement, faced increasing challenges in providing prevention, early intervention, treatment, care, recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration measures, as well as measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of drug abuse, at least at the same level as provided before the COVID -19 pandemic. The Commission noted with concern that, owing to challenges that health systems face because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the capacity of drug treatment and health services may be affected, potentially causing an increase in deaths related to drug use.
- The Commission further noted with concern the difficulties encountered by Member States in ensuring the continued **access to and availability of internationally controlled substances**

for medical and scientific purposes throughout the world, and appreciated the work of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and UNODC, within their respective mandates, in supporting Member States to ensure the access to and availability of such drugs, as well as in raising awareness about the problem. The Commission encouraged Member States to continue to address barriers to access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their non-medical use or diversion into illicit channels, including those related to legislation, regulatory systems, health-care systems, affordability, the training of health-care professionals, education, awareness-raising, estimates, assessments and reporting, benchmarks for consumption of substances under control, and international cooperation and coordination, in particular with a view to ensuring improved responses to a possible future pandemic and other emerging threats.

- On **supply reduction**, the Commission noted that the COVID-19 pandemic might have initially affected the illicit cultivation, production and manufacture of and trafficking in drugs, and might have also resulted in new methods of manufacture, distribution and marketing of, and trafficking in, some types of drugs. It recognized that changes in trafficking routes and methods, including increased maritime trafficking and online sales of drugs through both the darknet and the surface web, have resulted in new challenges for law enforcement authorities. The Commission recognized that, in the long term, the COVID -19 pandemic may lead to an increase in illicit drug cultivation, production and trafficking and other drug-related criminal activities, as well as drug use disorders and related health and social consequences.

As already mentioned above, the Commission committed to giving due attention to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during its **thematic discussions in 2021**, aimed at advancing the implementation of all international drug policy commitments. During the 2021 thematic discussions, many speakers addressed **the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** on the three topics discussed. Inter alia, they expressed the concern that criminal groups were adept at turning obstacles into criminal opportunities, and that the COVID-19 crisis could lead to an increase of drug production, trafficking and consumption, which would potentially further strengthen the nexus between drug trafficking and other forms of crime. A number of speakers reported on national experiences involving criminal groups adapting their trafficking routes, means of transportation and other modus operandi to continue their drug trafficking business during the pandemic. For example, it was reported that due to the reduction of commercial flights, drug traffickers in some countries had expanded the use of smaller “narco-planes” and clandestine landing strips, which posed among others also a serious threat to the environment. It was further noted by some speakers that tools and vehicles employed by criminals for drug trafficking, such as drone and submarines, could also be used for other criminal activities, such as firearms trafficking.

Further, some speakers mentioned that the pandemic presented a hindrance to investigating suspects’ assets related to money-laundering crimes. Some speakers further explained that the COVID-19 related

travel restrictions made it more challenging for investigators to conduct financial investigations on the suspected locations of hidden assets. With regard to mutual legal assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was underlined that a lack of political will and the differences in legal systems contributed to the low value of assets seized.

Many speakers shared information on national trends regarding illicit drug-related activities facilitated by the misuse of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Some speakers reported that their countries had during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced a surge in volume and movement of a wide range of controlled substances, because criminals had swiftly adapted and increased the misuse of ICTs to avoid disruptions in supply chains. For example, several speakers reported that during the pandemic, e-commerce and the use of postal services including for the movement of illicit goods, had increased. Several speakers also shared details on the prevalent types of drugs available on the clear web, the deep web, and the dark web. It was further reported that new psychoactive substances were frequently traded on the surface web, and heroin, cocaine, cannabis, and amphetamine-type stimulants were primarily traded via the dark web. It was reported that during the COVID-19 pandemic, drug syndicates adopted trafficking ventures, taking advantage of ICTs to assist them in the transportation of bulk cargo, as well as smaller nodes for redistribution across borders by air, land, and sea.

The section below describes how the pandemic has affected the relevant SDGs under review from the perspective of the work of the CND. It draws from the 2021 UNODC World Drug Report², prepared by UNODC, for which the CND acts as one of the Governing Bodies:

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Low educational attainment is a known risk factor associated with drug use. With most of the world's students affected by partial or full school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, by limited and unequal access to education as well as to other support services, their vulnerability to drug use is on the rise. Many may resort to drug use as a negative coping mechanism to face the stresses of the pandemic. On the other hand, education is a key instrument in the prevention of drug use and demand reduction.

In its *Joint Statement (CND resolution 64/1)*, the Commission acknowledged that, owing to the nature of the pandemic, the traditional demand reduction infrastructure, which often required in-person engagement, faced increasing challenges in providing prevention, early intervention, treatment, care, recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration measures, as well as measures aimed at minimizing the

² See 2021 UNODC World Drug Report: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/wdr2021.html>

adverse public health and social consequences of drug abuse, at least at the same level as provided before the COVID -19 pandemic.

During the 64th session, a number of speakers addressed drug prevention measures and shared examples of national programmes and interventions, such as education platforms for young people, awareness-raising and social media campaigns and prevention programmes for families, schools and communities, including in cooperation with the private sector. A number of speakers referred to the importance of empowering children and young people, highlighting their crucial role in shaping and strengthening communities and supporting the implementation of national demand reduction efforts.

In its *resolution 63/4*, entitled “*Promoting the involvement of youth in drug prevention efforts*”, the Commission recognized the importance of involving young people, their parents and families and of supporting youth-based organizations in appropriate scientific and evidence-based efforts at the national, regional and international levels to prevent the non-medical use of drugs among young people, and called upon Member States to consider ways to increase the meaningful participation of and support youth in raising awareness of the risks and dangers associated with the non-medical use of drugs and in promoting healthy lifestyles among their peers, at educational institutions and within their communities, through community-based interventions led by, or targeted at, young people.³

The Commission has also contributed to the involvement of youth in drug prevention efforts through the UNODC Youth Initiative and particularly through the Youth Forum held since 2012. The youth perspective was strengthened through the launch of the UNODC Youth Forum in Central Asia in November 2021.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

In the context of COVID-19, **women with drug use disorders may face greater vulnerabilities** due to the loss of income and due to increased gender-based violence, which may increase their victimization and risk of exploitation. Some studies show that women who use drugs have a prevalence of gender-based violence two to five times higher than women who do not use drugs⁴. Women who use drugs also face more stigma and discrimination in accessing prevention services and adequate treatment than their male counterparts.

In its *resolution 64/3*, entitled “*Promoting scientific evidence-based, quality, affordable and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services*”, the Commission underlined the importance of increasing the availability, coverage, quality and

³ Operative paragraph 2 of the CND resolution 63/4.

⁴ Louisa Gilbert and others, “Targeting the SAVA (substance abuse, violence and AIDS) syndemic among women and girls: a global review of epidemiology and integrated interventions”, *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*, vol. 69, Suppl. 2 (June 2015), pp. s118–s127, as cited in the 2021 UNODC World Drug Report.

affordability of scientific evidence-based prevention, treatment, including for comorbidities, sustained recovery and related support services that target relevant age, gender and risk groups, including women and vulnerable members of society, including children, adolescents, youth and elderly people, in multiple settings, such as schools, families, communities, workplaces, drug treatment and rehabilitation facilities, social services and criminal justice systems.

The Commission as the governing body of UNODC has also placed emphasis on gender mainstreaming in the programmatic work of the Office. For example, at the **reconvened 64th session**, the importance of ensuring the integration of gender perspectives into all aspects of the programming and work of the Office was highlighted. Appreciation was expressed for the efforts to implement the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV)/UNODC Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, as well as the work of the Gender Team in the Office of the Director-General/Executive Director. Some speakers made reference to the Group of Friends for Gender Equality at UNOV/UNODC and invited Member States that had not yet done so to join the Group.

[SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development](#)

and

[SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss](#)

As mentioned above, the Commission has expressed concern that the COVID-19 pandemic might lead to increased illicit cultivation and to funding shortages and diversion of resources from initiatives to address illicit drugs, including those regarding alternative development programmes which could boost economic recovery. This, in turn, may have an impact on the sustainable use of land and water ecosystems.

In its *resolution 64/2*, entitled *“Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences”*, the Commission recognized the important challenges posed by the pandemic at the international, regional and national levels, which may have increased unemployment, weakened social support systems, deepened inequality, and affected the livelihoods of people vulnerable to the illicit cultivation of drug crops, as well as other illicit drug-related activities that may lead to increases in such illicit cultivation and in drug-related crimes, and may impede the progress of alternative development efforts, and stressed the importance of international cooperation to comprehensively address and counter these challenges on the basis of common and shared responsibility.

During the **thematic discussions in October 2021**, speakers also touched upon the nexus between drug trafficking and crimes that affect the environment. One panellist referred to the example of deforestation and illicit cultivation in Southern America, explaining that illicit cultivation and the consolidation of coca production centres had resulted in the loss of natural resources and impacted protected areas. Another speaker highlighted that deforestation at the national level had been facilitated by the presence of organized crime networks that were related to illicit economies and activities leading to the destruction of forests and natural resources. One of the expert panellists also addressed the convergence between illegal gold mining and illicit cultivation.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Fostering partnerships is key in the Commission’s work. Its sessions include **a standing agenda item on “Inter-agency cooperation and coordination of efforts in addressing and countering the world drug problem”**, during which the Commission discusses joint efforts and the coordination with and among other stakeholders in addressing the world drug problem.

During its deliberations of this agenda item at its 64th session, several speakers stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated challenges regarding the world drug problem and, at the same time, demonstrated the importance of multilateralism, the coordination of efforts and inter-agency cooperation. Several speakers welcomed the cooperation of UNODC with, inter alia, WHO and INCB, including in the implementation of the international drug control conventions and in supporting Member States in ensuring the access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, taking into account their respective treaty-based mandates. It was noted with appreciation that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC had increased its cooperation with relevant United Nations bodies and stakeholders.

<p>III. An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “leaving no one behind” against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, within the areas addressed by CND</p>

The Commission recognizes that, in recovering from the pandemic, efforts should focus on the most vulnerable members of society, guided first and foremost by the principle of “leaving no one behind”.

In the *Joint COVID-19 Statement (CND resolution 64/1)*, the Commission committed itself to promoting the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building to Member States, upon request, in particular those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, in addressing and countering the world

drug problem. The Commission also urged Member States to ensure that no one affected by the world drug problem is “left behind” in the health response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in efforts to mitigate the drug-related consequences of the pandemic.

The principle of “leaving no one behind” features strongly in *CND resolution 64/3 on “Promoting scientific evidence-based, quality, affordable and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services”*. It specifically underlines the need to increase the availability, coverage, quality and affordability of such services for women, youth and vulnerable members of society, including those in prisons and other custodial settings, and for people who experience homelessness who use drugs, who are at particular risk of exclusion. It also calls to provide such services in multiple settings such as schools, families, communities, workplaces, drug treatment and rehabilitation facilities, social services and criminal justice systems.

In its *resolution 64/4, entitled “Improving data collection on, and responses to, the harmful effects of the non-medical use of pharmaceuticals containing narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or new psychoactive substances”*, the Commission encouraged Member States to strengthen effective, comprehensive, scientific evidence-based demand reduction initiatives covering prevention, early intervention, treatment, care, recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration measures on a non-discriminatory basis.

Resolution 64/5 on “facilitating access to comprehensive, scientific evidence-based drug demand reduction services and related measures, including for people impacted by social marginalization” also specifically calls on Member States to provide such services and promote healthy lifestyles for people impacted by social marginalization.

IV. Actions and policy recommendations in areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the implementation of the SDGs under review
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Addressing the world drug problem is essential for our common wellbeing, both in terms of (mental and physical) health and of building peaceful societies guided by the rule of law. As such, it is an important step in moving towards the goals agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In view of the new challenges faced with regards to the world drug problem, and those exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, **the CND resolved** to address them and **to build back better through a variety of measures**. These range from the adoption of relevant resolutions which address specific problems under its purview, to thematic discussions, side events and specific initiatives set up by UNODC upon the mandates derived from the Commission.

The Commission shared national experiences on the implementation of all international drug policy commitments during the **thematic discussions held in October 2021**, referred to above. As already mentioned, discussions – which all included a COVID-19 perspective - focused on three specific challenges, namely the increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime; the low value of confiscated proceeds of crime related to money-laundering arising from drug trafficking at the global level; and the increased criminal misuse of information and communications technologies for illicit drug-related activities. The procedural report can be found on the following website: https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_64/thematic_discussions/Procedural_Report_for_2021_CND_Thematic_Discussions_FINAL.pdf, and a Chair’s Summary contains the salient points brought forward during these discussions, which will be considered by the Commission at its regular 65th session (E/CN.7/2022/CRP.1).

As mentioned above, in order to maintain continuity in its work, the CND has adapted its working methods to temporary COVID-related restrictions for in-person participation by conducting virtual or hybrid meetings – which has provided opportunities for a broad range of stakeholders to meaningfully contribute to its deliberations.

In its *resolution 64/1*, the “*Statement of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the implementation of Member States’ joint commitments to address and counter all aspects of the world drug problem*”, States agreed on a number of actions to take, inter alia:

- Making coordinated multidisciplinary efforts in addressing and countering the world drug problem a top priority in the post-COVID-19 period;
- Considering expanding the coverage of and strengthening drug prevention and treatment systems and related health and social services to increase their resilience in order to respond effectively to possible future pandemics and other emerging health threats, and continuing to develop and implement innovative drug treatment and recovery delivery systems, such as e-health platforms and procedures;
- Promoting viable economic alternatives, in particular for communities affected by or at risk of the illicit cultivation, manufacture, production of and trafficking in drugs, as well as other illicit drug-related activities in urban and rural areas, including through comprehensive alternative development programmes, in particular with reference to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, which may help to mitigate any negative economic consequences of the COVID -19 pandemic;
- Expanding law enforcement activities targeting trafficking modalities that have emerged or increased in the context of COVID-19 and to increase coordination between Member States;

continuing to prevent and counter the diversion of and trafficking in precursors and pre-precursors for illicit use, during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond; and strengthening bilateral, regional and international cooperation to counter the exploitation by drug traffickers of traditional and online trafficking methods and routes during the COVID -19 pandemic and beyond.

In the following, **the actions and policy recommendations by the CND** in areas requiring **urgent attention** in relation to the **implementation of the SDGs** under review are set out in more detail.

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

With regards to the world drug problem, Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education features in the work and several of the **Commission's resolutions adopted in 2021**, namely in the context of ensuring education opportunities for drug users in recovery, of providing tailored capacity-building to professionals working with them, and of ensuring the education sector is included in the partnerships needed to prevent and address substance use disorder.

In *CND resolution 64/3 on promoting scientific evidence-based, quality, affordable and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services*, the Commission recognized the need to adopt an integrated approach in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services, and invited Member States to establish and strengthen partnerships and cooperation among national authorities, in particular in the health, education, social, justice and law enforcement sectors, and including through the involvement of academia. It also encouraged Member States to provide adequate, comprehensive and continued evidence-based training, strengthen professional knowledge and skills and provide capacity-building to health professionals, social workers and other relevant specialists at different levels of education, including through university curricula and in programmes of continuing education, in order to ensure the quality and effectiveness of drug prevention and treatment services and promote non-stigmatizing attitudes.

In *resolution 64/5 on facilitating access to comprehensive, scientific evidence-based drug demand reduction services and related measures, including for people impacted by social marginalization*, the Commission recalled the provisions in the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 for State Parties to take measures for the prevention of abuse of drugs and psychotropic substances, including education of the persons involved. It also recalled resolution 59/5 on mainstreaming a gender perspective in drug-

related policies and programmes, which encouraged Member States to provide training and supervision for all relevant health and social care professionals working with women, including in prison settings.

In its *resolution 63/4, entitled “Promoting the involvement of youth in drug prevention efforts”*, the Commission called upon Member States to consider ways to increase the meaningful participation of and support youth in raising awareness of the risks and dangers associated with the non-medical use of drugs and in promoting healthy lifestyles among their peers, at educational institutions and within their communities, through community-based interventions led by, or targeted at, young people, and encouraged Member States to consider a gender-sensitive approach hereby.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

The Commission has called for the **mainstreaming of a gender perspective** to effectively address the world drug problem, both from a demand and supply angle. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has also a gender dimension, with women and girls facing an increased risk of domestic violence and a heavier burden of household or caretaking chores during the lockdown periods.

In *CND resolution 64/2, entitled “Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences”*, the Commission encouraged Member States to mainstream a gender perspective into, and ensure the involvement of women in, all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of alternative development programmes, as well as to develop and disseminate gender-sensitive and age-appropriate measures that take into account the specific needs of, and circumstances faced by, women and girls with regards to the illicit cultivation of drug crops and other illicit drug-related activities in urban and rural areas.

In *CND resolution 64/3 on promoting scientific evidence-based, quality, affordable and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services*, the Commission encouraged Member States to mainstream an age and gender perspective into all stages of development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services, in order to ensure their quality, inclusivity, safety and efficacy, and ensure that those services, as appropriate, are tailored to the different needs and circumstances of all people who could benefit from such services and measures, in particular women and girls; In the same resolution, the Commission also encouraged Member States to continue developing and implementing scientific evidence-based, quality, affordable, and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, including for comorbidities, care, sustained recovery and related support services, consider measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of drug abuse, in line

with the revised editions of the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention and the International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders, and continue monitoring and evaluating these policies and services, in accordance with national legislation, in order, where appropriate, to protect the health, safety, welfare and well-being of individuals, families, vulnerable members of society, with the aim of preventing social marginalization, as well as communities and society as a whole, giving special attention to women, children and youth, and accounting for specific age and gender needs, with full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals.

Resolution 64/5 on facilitating access to comprehensive, scientific evidence-based drug demand reduction services and related measures, including for people impacted by social marginalization calls on Member States to facilitate non-discriminatory and voluntary access to such services while mainstreaming a gender perspective in their development and implementation.

In addition, in June 2020, the CND and the CCPCJ jointly organized a side event on realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, discussing in particular how the COVID-19 pandemic affects women and girls. More information on the side event is available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/beijing-plus-25.html>

[SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development](#)

and

[SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss](#)

The actions taken by the Commission which relate to Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15 are mostly linked to its work on **alternative development** programmes. These are meant to combat the illicit cultivation of crops and to provide legal livelihood opportunities to the communities affected by, or in some cases vulnerable to, illicit crop cultivation, while taking into account the need to protect the environment. In the ***COVID-19 Joint statement (CND resolution 64/1)***, the Commission encouraged national, regional and international efforts to promote viable economic alternatives to illicit cultivation, manufacture, production of and trafficking in drugs, including through comprehensive alternative development programmes in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development. These Principles include measures to protect the environment at the local level, according to national and international law and policies, through the provision of incentives for conservation, proper education and awareness programmes so that the local communities can improve and preserve their livelihoods and mitigate negative environmental impacts.⁵ In its ***resolution 64/2, entitled***

⁵ Operative paragraph 11 of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development.

“Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences”, the Commission encouraged Member States to increase efforts in promoting alternative development programmes to support populations affected by or vulnerable to the illicit cultivation of drug crops, which may contribute to efforts to build back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, utilizing best practices and lessons learned from the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, and reiterated in that regard that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the world drug problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing. As per the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development⁶, alternative development programmes should include measures to protect the environment at the local level through the provision of incentives for conservation, proper education and awareness programmes so that local communities can improve and preserve their livelihoods and mitigate negative environmental impacts.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

The Commission has called in several of its resolutions for partnerships and enhanced cooperation, for example,

- Cooperation between Member States at the bilateral, regional and international level (**resolution 64/1**); between public health and law enforcement authorities, which may be the result of new and innovative approaches to drug prevention and treatment and related health and social services during the pandemic (**resolution 64/1**);
- Strengthened measures, strategies, and inter-agency and international cooperation and partnerships, to ensure the access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes;
- Cooperation of Member States with each other, as well as with all relevant stakeholders, including regional and international organizations, the private sector, civil society and financial institutions, in the implementation of alternative development projects and programmes (**resolution 64/2**);
- Cooperation among national authorities, in particular in the health, education, social, justice and law enforcement sectors, and between governmental agencies and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, including by involving academia, the scientific community, the private sector, civil society, affected populations and relevant regional, international and non-governmental organizations, taking into account country-specific conditions (**resolution 64/3**); and among national authorities, particularly in the health, education, social, justice and law enforcement sectors, and to consult all other relevant stakeholders, including those from academia, the scientific community, the private sector and civil society (**resolution 64/5**);

⁶ General Assembly resolution 68/196.

- Cooperation of Member States with the INCB and the WHO, as well as with UNODC and other relevant partners, including through the cooperation between the CND and the Statistical Commission, for the collection, analysis and sharing of quality and comparable data (*resolution 64/4*).

V. Policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The following **recommendations** may be considered by the High-level Political Forum with a view to building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic and advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda:

- Reiterate that the **efforts** to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the world drug problem are **complementary and mutually reinforcing**⁷, and that **drug-related challenges are intertwined with all aspects of sustainable development**;
- Mainstream **balanced, integrated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary and scientific evidence-based responses** to the world drug problem⁸ into the COVID-19 recovery plans, with a view to “building back better” and ensure that no one is left behind, thereby maintaining, as appropriate, those adaptations made during the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver drug-related health services which proved effective to increase accessibility and coverage of services, such as the use of technologies for remote access and contactless services;
- **Invest in effective responses to address and counter the world drug problem**, thereby supporting the work of the CND and UNODC, in close cooperation with relevant United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, within their mandates, to ensure an inclusive dialogue and an exchange of good practices on all aspects of the world drug problem and to provide technical assistance and capacity building for requesting Member States;
- Reaffirm the need to address the **key causes and consequences of the world drug problem**, including those in the health, education, social, human rights, economic, justice, public security and law enforcement fields, in line with the principle of common and shared responsibility, and recognize the value of comprehensive and balanced policy interventions, including those in the field of promotion of sustainable and viable livelihoods;⁹

⁷ 2019 Ministerial Declaration, p.4.

⁸ 2019 Ministerial Declaration, p.2.

⁹ 2019 Ministerial Declaration, p.12

- Give priority attention to facilitating healthy lifestyles and prevention programmes among young people through education and vocational training and to promote the involvement of youth in drug prevention efforts;
- Continue to develop and implement **innovative drug treatment and recovery delivery systems**, such as e-health platforms and procedures, in the post-pandemic environment in order to promote efficient, accessible and durable opportunities for treatment and recovery, where applicable;¹⁰
- Allocate sufficient **funding** in national post-COVID-19 budgets for drug prevention and treatment to prevent the acceleration of increasing drug use patterns and to counter drug-related crime;¹¹
- Enhance **international cooperation and coordination**, in particular with a view to ensuring improved responses to a possible future pandemic and other emerging threats. It also called for strengthening bilateral, regional and international cooperation to ensure the access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, and to counter the exploitation by drug traffickers of traditional and online trafficking methods and routes during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond;¹²
- Promote the provision of **technical assistance and capacity-building** to Member States, upon request, in particular those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, in addressing and countering the world drug problem.¹³

VI. Key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2022 HLPF

The following key messages may be included into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2022 HLPF:

- We stress the need to continue to implement coordinated multidisciplinary efforts to ensure that no one affected by the world drug problem is left behind in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in efforts to mitigate the drug-related consequences of the pandemic;
- In this regard, we reiterate the need to step up efforts and continue to implement the commitments made in the joint statement by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic adopted during the 64th of the Commission in 2021, including through the exchange of good practices and lessons learnt during the Commission's annual thematic discussions on the implementation of all international drug policy commitments;
- We resolve to continue our efforts to accelerate the implementation of all international drug policy commitments so that the progress made at the national, regional and global levels is maintained and continued during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁰ Resolution 64/1

¹¹ Resolution 64/1

¹² Resolution 64/1

¹³ Resolutions 64/1 and 3

- We encourage Member States to mainstream an age and gender perspective into all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services, and ensure that those services, as appropriate, are tailored to the different needs and circumstances of all people who could benefit from such services and measures, in particular women and girls