



European Union
Statement on the occasion of
the 63rd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Vienna, 2-6 March 2020

Agenda item 3: General debate

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here and to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. One year ago in this building, we adopted the Ministerial Declaration that should help us fulfil our joint commitments to effectively address the world drug problem, as stated in the UNGASS Outcome Document. The drug situation is worsening in most parts of the world. More than ever, our priority shall now be to accelerate the implementation of these commitments and their operational recommendations.

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The EU and its Member States would like to stress the importance of rebalancing the public health and human rights dimension of the world drug problem so that they receive the same attention and commitment as the supply side, in particular in its law enforcement aspects. We cannot deny that the adverse health consequences of drug use are more severe and widespread than previously thought. We are noticing more opioid users in some parts of the world and people with drug use disorders, having increased death toll, while prevention and treatment continue to fall far short of needs in many parts of the world. New psychoactive substances emerging on the market and synthetic opioids continue to pose a serious threat to health, which requires equally urgent international attention as the non-medical use of painkillers.

We appreciate the efforts of UNODC in supporting countries in the application of international standards on the prevention and treatment of drug use disorders and HIV, Viral Hepatitis, and other blood borne diseases, as well as standards and norms on the administration of justice and the treatment of prisoners, and in providing tailored technical assistance through the field offices and global programmes, through toolkits and research.

The EU and its Member States emphasise that all states are obliged to respect, protect and promote human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals and the principles of the rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies, and we reiterate our commitment to this end. We would like to recall that the death penalty should be abolished globally. We condemn the use of capital punishment in all circumstances and in all cases.

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2019 World Drug Report published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as well as the EU's own 2019 EU Drugs Report and 2019 Drugs Markets Report, not only reminded us of the severity of the issues we are facing, they also underscored their complexity and the need to address them comprehensively, in an integrated, balanced and evidence-based approach.

These reports clearly highlighted both health and security concerns, with increased risks for people who use drugs and major challenges for law enforcement. We need to accelerate the implementation of the seven chapters of the UNGASS Outcome Document in order to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with the international commitment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The reports also underscored the need for broader international cooperation in order to advance our objectives.

The EU and its Member States are active in countering worldwide drug supply together with our partners. The illicit supply of drugs is worth billions of euros each year and is a catalyst for organised crime groups. It forms one of the most lucrative parts of their profit-generating activities linked also to violence, corruption, money-laundering, exploitation of people, trafficking of firearms and other forms of serious crime.

We have acted swiftly in recent years to schedule the most harmful new psychoactive substances (NPS). In addition to that, with the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime, we have been successful in dismantling a number of organised crime groups active across all crime areas, including drugs trafficking. To ensure better control of the illicit manufacture and trafficking of synthetic opioids and other NPS, there is also a need to further develop national monitoring and research capacity to identify and report on the emergence of psychoactive substances.

We have also reviewed our approach to Alternative Development. Alternative Development is key to addressing the underlying root causes of illicit drug economies. However, to succeed, sustained attention and integration into broader development goals is required.

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cooperation through effective multilateralism remains the best way to advance national as well as collective interests. The EU aims at an effective multilateral system that delivers results in tackling today's and tomorrow's global challenges. We need to make international cooperation work, and to make it work for more people. In that context, the EU and its Member States are strongly supportive of efforts to foster coordination between relevant UN entities and regional and international organisations.

We support the UN System's new Common Position on Drugs, and the UN Task Team in charge of its implementation. The EU organised two awareness-raising events last year, in Vienna and in Geneva, and plans on organising a third one in New York in the coming months. We believe this is important to underline the importance of interagency cooperation and collaboration and illustrate it through concrete examples of how UN agencies can cooperate to support the implementation of drug-related commitments in order to advance security, development and human rights.

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our actions also need to develop policies based on evidence and evidence-based practice, supported by objective monitoring and evaluation systems. This approach, which is already at the heart of EU policy on drugs, has not only proven to be the most effective for addressing the drug phenomenon, but also the best for designing responses to new trends and developments. For that reason, the EU and its Member States have strongly supported the strengthening and streamlining of the Annual Reporting Questionnaire. We would like to take the opportunity to thank UNODC for its tremendous efforts in this regard. The reformed questionnaire will help us gain a better understanding of the drug situation worldwide, based also on the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document. In line with this support, you will note that the EU's support to evidence-based policies and practices has translated into several EU-sponsored resolutions and side-events at this Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

It is also worth noting that civil society can contribute to complete the picture on the drug situation. Grass root information can help planners and decision makers to identify emerging trends at an early stage and can assist in designing national and regional prevention and risk and harm reduction strategies.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international community needs to step up its responses to cope with the challenges at stake. We need to accelerate the implementation of our joint commitments. The EU welcomes the fruitful discussions on the occasion of the adoption of the UNODC budget in the reconvened session of the 62nd CND in December 2019. We trust that implementing the resolution adopting the budget for the biennium 2020-2021 under the leadership of the new Executive Director will improve the effectiveness of the important work conducted by

UNODC.

The EU and its Member States remain ready to work in close partnership with UNODC to put into practice the UN reforms in a way which preserves the unique contribution of UNODC to the world-wide promotion of the rule of law and the implementation of the SDGs. We trust you, Executive Director, to uphold a culture of transparency, learning and accountability into UNODC, stay in close dialogue with Member States and make best use of the work of the Independent Evaluation Unit.

The EU and its Member States will continue working relentlessly to address the drug situation, using all the instruments at our disposal: legislation, policies, operational action, and cooperating with our international partners.

Thank you.
