



European Union
Statement on the occasion of the
Special segment on the preparations for the UNGA Special Session on the World Drug
Problem of the reconvened 58th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
9 December 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,
Executive Director, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.¹ The following countries align themselves with this statement: the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Iceland⁺ and Norway⁺, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova.
2. The EU and its Member states consider UNGASS 2016 as a key opportunity for the international community to take stock of the achievements of the international drug control system to date, to elaborate on the immense challenges that remain in the global, national and local response to the world drug problem and to find feasible, operational and sustainable solutions for the longer term within the framework of the international treaties

¹ The way the EU statements are delivered in this Commission is subject to ongoing clarifications in the context of the ECOSOC reform Resolution 68/1.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

3. Relying on decades of experience with **drug policies based upon an integrated, balanced and evidence-based approach**, the EU and its Member States emphasise that drug policies have proved to be most effective when they strike an appropriate balance, in a coordinated manner, between supply and demand reduction measures. A drugs policy which does not combine evidence-based and integrated demand reduction with targeted actions to restrict supply will neither address the objectives set out in the Political Declaration 2009 and Plan of Action for 2019 nor tackle the remaining challenges in dealing with the world drug problem.
 4. We underline that **drug policies should be built upon a sound public health approach**, based on scientific evidence and supported by reliable and objective monitoring systems and evaluation, in compliance with human rights recognized as such by international legal instruments.
 5. **The three UN Drug Control Conventions**, which provide the international legal framework for addressing the drugs phenomenon, **and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights are the cornerstones of the global response to the world drug problem**. While recognizing that drug-related issues are of cross-cutting nature and cannot be solved by a single approach or through a predetermined set of policies, the EU and its Member States reiterate that the drug control treaties must be acknowledged and respected in developing and implementing national drug policies and laws, as well as regional and international programs.
 6. The EU and its Member States maintain a strong and unequivocal commitment to the UN conventions. **There is sufficient scope and flexibility within the provisions of the UN Conventions** to accommodate a wide range of approaches to drug policy in accordance with national and regional specificities.
 7. **Human rights**, including the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, **are an integral part of the international response to the world drug problem**, in line with the key objective of the UN drug control conventions to protect health and welfare of mankind.
 8. The EU and its Member States would like to recall their **strong opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances, including for drug-related offences**, and reiterate that the death penalty undermines human dignity, while failing to act as deterrent to criminal behaviour. The abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances, including for drug-related crimes, as well as the abolition of other practices which are not in line with the principles of human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, solidarity, the rule of law and human rights, is an absolute priority. Independently of the EU's principled opposition to the death penalty, the
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application of the death penalty for drug-related crimes does not meet the threshold of the most serious crimes as in Art. 6 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Therefore we strongly believe that the UNGASS outcome document should invite States Parties to consider abolishing the death penalty for drug-related offences. **Also, the EU and its Member States believe that the principle of proportionate sentencing should serve as a principle applicable for all drug-related offences.**

9. States Parties should also make sure that **access to risk and harm reduction measures is guaranteed**, as such measures have proved effective in reducing the number of direct and indirect drug-related deaths and notably blood-borne infectious diseases associated with drug use.
 10. The EU and its Member States **promote alternative development**, including, where appropriate, preventive alternative development, **as a long term and holistic approach to tackle the root causes and framework conditions of illicit cultivation of drug crops**, such as poverty, poor infrastructure, limited access to sales market for licit products or the weakness of the rule of law. As long as these root causes of illicit cultivation of drug crops in rural producing areas persist, the sustainability and effects of any supply side intervention will be undermined.
 11. The EU and its Member States attach **great importance to the role of civil society and the scientific community, in formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating drug policies** at local, national and international level, especially in the field of drug demand reduction, and believe that a meaningful and participatory role should be recognized for civil society in international drugs policy.
 12. We support the decision of the CND to produce a short, substantive, concise and action-oriented document comprising a set of operational recommendations. The EU and its Member States strongly believe that a set of very concrete operational recommendations would further contribute to the implementation of enhanced drug policies therefore providing a solid input towards the target date of 2019 and beyond. We are looking forward to receiving the draft UNGASS outcome document in December, as to start negotiations on it in January 2016 with a view to endorsing the UNGASS outcome document at the 59th CND session in March 2016.
 13. We welcome the decision to organise five interactive and multi-stakeholder round-table debates during UNGASS. Given the positive experience, we support the idea of conducting these debates in a similar manner as during the 58th CND session this March, where short
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statements by panellists were followed by an interactive discussion with and from the floor. We would also encourage the inclusion of civil society speakers in the official UNGASS 2016 agenda and as was the case for the 58th CND session, civil society should be again given an opportunity to nominate their panellists for round-table discussions. **Also, inviting relevant international and regional bodies with recognized expertise in the field of drugs would enrich the debate.**

14. We appreciate the efforts of the UNGASS Board to guarantee an inclusive and participatory process during the preparatory phase of UNGASS and during UNGASS itself and emphasise the need to ensure the most effective involvement of all relevant UN agencies and bodies, in particular dealing with public health, human rights, development and security matters.
 15. The EU and its Member States reiterate their commitment to provide further inputs as regards the preparatory process, in the hope of bringing a significant added-value to UNGASS 2016. **We stand ready to continue our contribution to the outcome document with operational recommendations.** Finally, the EU and its Member States would like to invite State Parties to a side event that will take place today at 14:00 in Conference Room C2 (on the 7th floor), during which the EU vision on UNGASS will be presented in further detail and would also like to invite State Parties to consult the document which will be shortly published on UNGASS 2016 website, outlining this vision.
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