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Subject:	EU Statement on the occasion of the 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Vienna, 13-17 March 2023) - Agenda item 6: Follow-up on the implementation at the national, regional and international levels of all commitments, as reflected in the Ministerial declaration of 2019, to address and counter the world drug problem.

Delegations will find in the Annex the above-mentioned statement as expressed on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) (13-17 March 2023).



European Union

Statement on

Agenda item 6: Follow-up to the implementation at the national, regional and international levels of all commitments, as reflected in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, to address and counter the world drug problem

66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Vienna, 13-17 March 2023

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Ukraine*, the Republic of Moldova*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Georgia, Iceland⁺, Liechtenstein⁺, Norway⁺ and Armenia.

The EU and its Member States remain firmly committed to the effective implementation of commitments contained in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, as well as in the Outcome Document of the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session, to address the world drug situation in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the drug control conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

* Candidate Countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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

We very much appreciated the thematic focus of the latest round of thematic discussions, held last autumn, on the challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration and set out in the multi- year Workplan of the CND. This was a truly historic moment for the CND. Respecting the international drug control conventions and international human rights obligations in this field are also the focus of the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025.

Following the thematic discussions in the period 2019-2022 in the CND, we look forward to the upcoming comprehensive stock-taking in the lead up to the 2024 mid-term review of the progress made in implementing all international drug policy commitments. We count on the effective organisation and the successful outcome of this stock-taking, which could give an important boost to the next phase and hopefully lead to the adequate implementation of existing drug policy commitments, to be reviewed in 2029.

The EU and its Member States continue to fully support the Outcome Document of the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session. It remains the most comprehensive policy document, and follows a human rights-centred approach, ensuring the promotion and the respect for the dignity and human rights of people who use drugs while promoting sentencing policies, practise and guidelines for drug-related offenses whereby the severity of penalties is proportionate to the seriousness of the offenses.

In light of the World Drug Report 2022, which detailed record rises in the manufacturing of cocaine, the expansion of synthetic drugs to new markets, and continued gaps in the availability of drug treatments, especially for women, we would like to underline the importance of a balanced approach in all our efforts to address the world drug situation. Therefore, in the EU and in its Member States, we are implementing a range of equally important and mutually reinforcing evidence-based measures addressing drug demand, drug supply and drug-related harm.

Drug demand-related measures that we are undertaking aim to contribute to the healthy and safe development of children and young people and to prevention and a reduction of the use of illicit drugs. They also aim to delay the age of onset, to prevent and reduce problem drug use, to treat drug dependence, and to provide for recovery and social reintegration. This requires a comprehensive approach which incorporates a gender and age perspective and promotes both gender equality and non-discrimination of persons in vulnerable and marginalised situations and key populations.

The EU and its Member States are addressing these challenges on the ground and in international fora. In this regard, the CND adopted two EU-sponsored resolutions in the past years: resolution 64/5 on access to drug demand reduction services and related measures and resolution 65/4 on early prevention. In relation to the latter a Conference Room Paper has been prepared for this session on positively redirecting the developmental trajectory of children through promoting comprehensive and scientific evidence-based early prevention, which the EU fully supports.¹

Addressing drug supply is equally important, and we continue our efforts to achieve the disruption of traditional and online illicit drug markets, the dismantling of organised crime groups that are involved in drug production and trafficking, efficient use of the criminal justice system, effective intelligence-led law enforcement, a reduction in the levels of violence associated with the illicit drug markets, and increased intelligence sharing.

Measures to address drug-related harm implemented by the EU Member States contribute to the prevention and treatment of blood-borne infectious diseases, especially HIV and HCV, as well as to the prevention of drug overdoses. The availability, accessibility and coverage of risk- and harm-reduction services should be maintained and improved to reduce the negative health and social impacts of drug use.

¹ NB: The title of the conference paper: A call for action to positively redirect the developmental trajectory of children through "Promoting comprehensive and scientific evidence-based early prevention"

To that end, the EU and its Member States continue to support the active and meaningful participation and involvement of the scientific and expert community, the civil society, including non-governmental organisations, young persons, women, affected communities and people who use drugs in the shaping and in the implementation of drug policies.

We would also like to underline the importance of the impacts that illicit drug markets can have at local, community or individual-level on the environment, as outlined in the special chapter of the 2022 World Drug Report. Such impacts include the carbon footprint, substantial deforestation associated with illicit coca cultivation, waste generated during synthetic drug manufacture, and the dumping of waste which can affect soil, water and air directly, as well as organisms, animals and the food chain indirectly. We therefore remain committed to addressing these challenges as well, inter alia, through fostering development-oriented drug policies with a special emphasis on environmental sustainability.

Distinguished Chair,

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that the EU and its Member States will continue to support the UNODC, to maintain our collective efforts in accelerating the implementation of joint commitments at national, regional and international level, and to embrace an effective and sustainable drug policy towards 2030.

Thank you, Mr Chair.
