



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 8 November 2023
(OR. en)

15063/23

CORDROGUE 112
SAN 639
RELEX 1268

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	WK 9388/2023 REV 3
Subject:	EU Statement on the occasion of the first intersessional meeting of the 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Vienna, 23-25 October 2023) - Thematic session 6: Challenge: "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"

Delegations will find in the Annex the above-mentioned statement as expressed on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the first intersessional meeting of the 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) (Vienna, 23-25 October 2023).



European Union Statement

Thematic Session 6: Challenge: “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”¹

First intersessional meeting

66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Vienna, 23-25 October 2023

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

According to the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025, the EU’s external relations in the field of drugs are based on the **respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law and respect for the international drug control conventions**. We therefore continue to strongly support the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document with a human rights-centred approach and encourage its continued implementation.

On behalf of the EU and its Member States, let me **note a few positive developments** since last year’s session dedicated to this challenge. Last December, the Council of the European Union adopted **conclusions on a human rights-based approach in drug policies** aiming to contribute to promoting a people-centred and human rights-oriented drug policy. The Council invited EU Member States to further support evidence-based policies and interventions that put human rights at the centre of drug responses, whilst countering crime and ensuring public safety and security, sustainable and viable livelihoods and the health of individuals, families, and communities. The Council also recognised that the stigmatisation linked to drug use and

¹ Alignment: North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Norway, and San Marino.

drug-use disorders needs to be addressed, especially as this stigma may have detrimental effects on the mental and physical health of people who use drugs, particularly of those in vulnerable and marginalised situations, and could also act as a barrier to seeking support. It invited Member States to further promote drug policies that address discrimination, and reduce the stigma on people who use drugs in order to ensure voluntary access to drug services, including prevention, evidence-based life skills programmes, risk and harm reduction, early detection and intervention, counselling, treatment, rehabilitation, social reintegration and recovery of people who use drugs, as well as treatment of drug-related comorbidities.

We welcome the **increasing attention for drug-related aspects in other UN bodies**, such as the report by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the Human Rights Council, and this year's resolution of the Human Rights Council with regard to the human rights implications of drug policy. It calls upon States to mainstream a gender perspective and emphasises the essential contribution that civil society and affected communities make to the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies. We look forward to the report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on "human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem" being shared with the CND.

We also welcome the efforts made to **address barriers to access and availability of medicines**. This work should be pursued and we call for continued joint efforts between INCB, WHO and UNODC on this issue.

We believe that for drug policies to be effective and the human-right based approach to succeed, **further efforts are required**, such as gender- and age- appropriate measures and measures reflecting the specific needs of persons in marginalised and vulnerable situations. Special attention should be given to protection of children's rights including protection of children from drug use and to the prevention of the exploitation of children in the illicit production and trafficking of drugs and to ensure that people in the criminal justice system have voluntary access to evidence-based drug services.

The EU and its Member States also promote upholding the principle of an **adequate, proportionate and effective response** to drug-related offences, as highlighted in all UN documents on drug policy. In line with this, the EU and its Member States call for strengthening international cooperation and sharing information to promote the availability, effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of alternatives to coercive sanctions on people who use drugs, particularly those in marginalised and vulnerable situations. Furthermore, the EU and its Member States are strongly and unequivocally opposed to the use of **the death penalty** at all times and under all circumstances, including for drug-related offences.

Distinguished Chair,

Ahead of the mid-term review in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2024, full commitment of all Member States to human rights-based drug policies should remain the cornerstone of our efforts to successfully address the world drug situation.

Thank you, Mr Chair.
