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Subject:	EU Statement on the occasion of the 68th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Vienna, 10-14 March 2025) - Agenda item 3: General debate

Delegations will find in the Annex the above-mentioned statement as expressed on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the 68th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) (Vienna, 10-14 March 2025).



European Union

Statement on agenda item 3: General debate

68th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Vienna, 10-14 March 2025

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here and to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

Mr Chair,

We remain **committed to strengthening the global cooperation** to address drug-related challenges in accordance with an evidence-based, integrated, balanced and comprehensive approach. We acknowledge the important role of UNODC in monitoring the world drug situation, developing strategies on international drug control and recommending measures to address drug-related challenges.

As we meet today, **conflicts and violence** are unfolding in numerous parts of the world. The EU and its Member States call for the full respect for the UN Charter and international law, including international humanitarian law, whether in relation to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, or the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, Sudan, Ethiopia, DRC and elsewhere.

Drug trafficking controlled by organised crime groups threatens public health, our security, our economies and prosperous development worldwide, and even our democratic institutions and the rule of law. This is **an important security challenge that Europe is currently facing**. As demonstrated by the European Drug Report 2024, as a consequence of the high availability of drugs, large-volume trafficking and competition between criminal groups in Europe, some countries are experiencing an increase in violence and other forms of criminality linked to the operation of the drug market.

To address this concern, last November the EU hosted the **European Conference on Drug-related Violence** as part of the implementation of the EU Roadmap to combat drug trafficking and organised crime. At the conference, the EU Drugs Agency called for action on drug-related violence, to encourage and support efforts to enhance safety and security across all sectors of society with measures to anticipate, alert, respond and learn from the growing complexities of drug-related violence. This initiative reflects our collective determination to address the increasing violence linked to drug trafficking.

In line with the pledge of the **Global Coalition to address Synthetic Drug Threats** that the EU committed to in September 2024, we are currently closely monitoring the risks of a potential increase in the supply and demand for **synthetic opioids in Europe**. This possible shift could represent unique challenges for public health systems and law enforcement.

Among such challenges is the growing number of illegal laboratories that produce synthetic drugs. Considering the threat they pose, Poland - on behalf of the EU – has tabled a **resolution that draws attention to the protection of all those that are at the forefront of dismantling drug laboratories**. Our aim is to set the ground for global standards in ensuring the safety of law enforcement officers, and we count on your support for this important resolution.

The EU and its Member States also call for greater consideration of development-oriented drug policies and alternative development measures, as well as the environmental damage linked to the direct and indirect impact of illicit drug crop cultivation, drug production and manufacture and drug policy responses. Conscious of the realities that shape our world, a **resolution addressing the environmental impact of drugs** has been tabled by France on behalf of the EU. This is a topic that needs more engagement from all of us, and we hope that you will back this resolution as well.

The EU and its Member States continue to emphasise that States are obliged to **protect, promote and fulfil human rights, including when they develop and implement drug policies**. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and the EU and its Member States recall that the death penalty should be abolished globally. We condemn the use of capital punishment at all times and under all circumstances, including for drug-related offences. Additional measures should be taken for people in vulnerable and marginalised situations and to reduce stigma and discrimination. **We underline that substance use disorders are a health issue** requiring compassionate and evidence-based interventions. **Stigmatisation and criminalisation** of individuals with substance use disorders should be replaced with a health-centred approach to reduce risks and harm.

Addressing drug-related harm also remains an important pillar of EU drug policy and the EU Drugs Strategy. The EU and its Member States are implementing a **human rights-based approach** with a range of measures in compliance with the three international drug conventions. The aim is to reduce drug supply and to take prevention, treatment, care and recovery measures, to reduce risk and harm to society and to the individual. We also ensure a meaningful involvement of scientific experts, civil society and affected communities. We urge the international community to further embrace pragmatic measures aimed at reducing the health and social harms, both for the individual and for society, associated with drug use. From needle and syringe exchange programmes to opioid agonist therapies, such evidence-based initiatives are essential for safeguarding public health and dignity. Prevention, treatment, care and recovery measures, risk and **harm reduction** must be expanded, adequately resourced, and firmly rooted in respect for human rights, as also set out in last year's CND resolution 67/4 [on preventing and responding to drug overdose through prevention, treatment, care and recovery measures, as well as other public health interventions, to address the harms associated with illicit drug use as part of a balanced, comprehensive, scientific evidence-based approach].

In the context of current global drug-related challenges, it is important to stress that effective solutions can only be achieved through a **balanced and whole-of-society approach as well as by engaging all relevant stakeholders**, including health-care personnel, who provide critical support to those affected by substance use disorders; law enforcement officers, who risk their lives in targeting organised crime groups involved in drug production and trafficking; academia, which contributes with evidence-based research and innovative solutions; civil society organisations, which play an important role in prevention, and in risk and harm reduction initiatives. International cooperation is also indispensable to tackle the global drugs phenomenon and we count on the close **involvement of all relevant United Nations entities, including human rights bodies**, to foster **coordinated international action and inter-agency cooperation**.

As set out in the high-level declaration by the CND on the **2024 mid-term review**, we stress the urgent need for **further ambitious, effective, improved and decisive actions** as well as for more proactive, scientific evidence-based, comprehensive, balanced approaches to address drug-related challenges.

For that, we emphasise the critical importance of thorough **data collection, monitoring, and scientific research**. The European Union Drugs Agency is therefore key in developing Europe's capacity to react to both current and future drug-related challenges, and we have made a concrete **pledge in this regard at last year's High-level segment of the CND**.

Mr. Chair, to conclude,

Continuous drug-related challenges require our united front and cooperation to address them in the most effective and sustainable manner, and we count on global efforts to do so together. The EU and its Member States reaffirm their own commitment to fostering a comprehensive, inclusive, and balanced approach to addressing the world drug situation. We call on all Member States and stakeholders to join us in prioritising health, dignity, and human rights in all aspects of drug policy.

Thank you.
