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Subject:	Joint statement on the occasion of the 69th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Vienna, 9-13 March 2026) - Delivered under agenda item 3: General debate : Joint Statement on the abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offenses and a human rights-based approach to drug policy

Delegations will find in the Annex the above-mentioned joint statement as expressed on behalf of a group of countries, including all EU Member States, at the 69th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) (Vienna, 9-13 March 2026).



European Union

**Joint Statement on
the abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offenses
and a human rights-based approach to drug policy**

Delivered under agenda item 3: General debate

**69th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

Vienna, 9-13 March 2026

Mr Chair,

I have the honour to address the Commission today on behalf of a group of 58 signatories:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, the Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Uruguay and Venezuela.

We address the Commission today to recall the importance of the international guidelines on human rights and drug policy and to strongly reaffirm our unequivocal opposition to the death penalty, in all cases and in all circumstances.

We recognise the serious challenges that Member States face in relation to drug control but express our concern over a trend towards increasingly punitive approaches. We recall the growing acknowledgement by Member States that drug policy needs to be human rights based.

We are concerned about the dramatic increase in the application of the death penalty in this context. In the past years, more than 40 percent of all registered executions were linked to drug related offenses, with an alarming increase in 2025.

International human rights law restricts the use of capital punishment to the most serious crimes, understood as crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing. Resorting to the death penalty to prevent drug production and trafficking does not meet this threshold. It is also ineffective. Punitive and repressive drug policies have neither reduced drug use, nor ended the illicit drug trade. There is no conclusive evidence that the death penalty contributes to curbing or preventing drug trafficking more than other types of punishment. This understanding is reflected in the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy, which affirm that capital punishment for drug offences is incompatible with States' human rights obligations.

It is of shared concern to us that the use of the death penalty is also often discriminatory, with a disproportionate impact on racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, as well as foreign nationals and LGBTI persons.

The death penalty has no place in the 21st century. It is time we move to a human rights-based approach in relation to drug use and drug control focusing on the reduction of drug demand and drug supply. We agree on addressing drug-related harm with an evidence-based, integrated, multidisciplinary, and balanced approach and taking a gender-responsive approach, putting people and their dignity at the centre of our action.

We recall the “Outcome Document of the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem”, which recommends promoting the well-being of society as a whole through the elaboration of effective scientific evidence-based prevention strategies tailored to the needs of individuals, families and communities as part of comprehensive and balanced national drug policies, on a non-discriminatory basis.

We call on Member States to implement measures that aim to address the root causes of drug trafficking, including the social and economic factors that contribute to people engaging in illicit drug markets, such as marginalisation, discrimination, unemployment, and poverty. We stress the importance of taking a human rights-based approach to drug policy, focusing on risk and harm reduction and ensuring active and meaningful participation and involvement of people who use drugs and civil society, including young persons, the scientific community, academia and other experts, in designing and implementing these responses.

Mr Chair,

In this context we call on all Member States to introduce a moratorium on executions, to take active steps to abolish the death penalty for drug-related offences and to commute death sentences that have already been handed down.

I thank you.
