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| From: | General Secretariat of the Council |
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| Subject: | EU Statement on the occasion of the 65th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Vienna, 14-18 March 2022) - Agenda Item 5 (d): International cooperation to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion |

Delegations will find in the Annex the above-mentioned statement as expressed on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the 65th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) (14-18 March 2022).



European Union

**EU Statement on
Agenda item 5d**

**65th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**

Vienna, 14-18 March 2022

International cooperation to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing their diversion

Distinguished Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland⁺, Norway⁺, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino.

At the outset, let me emphasise that Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and premeditated military aggression against Ukraine, in violation of the UN Charter and international humanitarian law, will obviously have devastating consequences for people who need controlled medicines, also as a consequence of becoming casualties in this war.

* Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
⁺ Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

The EU demands that Russia immediately ceases its military actions, withdraws all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respects Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders.

The EU and its Member States have repeatedly underlined the importance of the access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, whilst also acknowledging the risk of misuse and diversion of these substances.

We share the deep concern of the INCB, as expressed on 28 February, over the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. This emergency situation requires urgent action to ensure unimpeded access to medications, including medicines containing internationally controlled narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. As the INCB reminded us, in acute emergencies it should be possible to utilize simplified control procedures for the export, transportation, and provision of medicinal products containing controlled substances. Some EU Member States have already started to act on that advice.

Providing and improving access to, availability and appropriate use of substances for medical and scientific purpose is one of the priority areas in the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025. The EU Drugs Action Plan, which was adopted last year and pursues the aims and objectives of the Strategy, also focuses on promoting and implementing capacity-building and awareness-raising activities regarding access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including by enhancing international cooperation. It also aims at providing an overview of the up-to-date evidence on the use of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

The medical use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and their indispensable role in pain relief is recognised internationally, including in both the Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances. The UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Outcome Document of 2016 reaffirmed the importance of making internationally controlled substances available and accessible for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion.

In 2019, the Ministerial Declaration reiterated our resolve to ensure access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering. It reiterated the need to address existing barriers in this regard, including affordability. The Ministerial Declaration also noted with concern persistent and emerging challenges in this area, including the availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, such as the relief of pain and palliative care, which remained low to non-existent in many parts of the world.

Already during our last session, the difficulties encountered by Member States in ensuring the continued access to and availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes throughout the world was noted with concern. This issue was addressed in the resolution proposed by the European Union and adopted by the CND last year, on ‘Promoting quality, affordable, scientific evidence-based and comprehensive drug prevention and treatment services’, urging the Member States to ensure access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the treatment of drug use disorders.

Despite the efforts made, including through the work of the UN System Coordination Task Team, the progress made in this area is not sufficient, so the concern expressed in the Ministerial Declaration three years ago remains valid. According to the World drug report, disparities in access to essential controlled medicines around the world continue to deny relief to patients in severe pain.

We recognise the important role played by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as the treaty-mandated roles of the International Narcotics Control Board and of the World Health Organization, in facilitating informed scheduling decisions on the most persistent, prevalent and harmful substances, while ensuring their availability for medical and scientific purposes.

We therefore see the importance for the International Narcotics Control Board to continue to develop, in close cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization, guidance to assist Member States in establishing effective, timely and consistent data collection practices that allow for the proper ability to estimate and assess needs for internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

It is also important for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization, to develop and share best practices to prevent non-medical use of pharmaceuticals containing narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and new psychoactive substances, in order to promote, inter alia, the rational use of these substances for medical and scientific purposes.

Distinguished Chair,

The system of control that ensures both the adequate availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, and the prevention of substance use, diversion and trafficking remains important in order to promote the best health of populations around the world and protect the welfare of humankind. The CND, UNODC and INCB should continue to support countries in addressing those problems in the light of the continued global disparities, which have been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This is particularly important bearing in mind the Sustainable Development Goals, including on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. The EU and its Member States believe that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the world drug situation are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Goal 3.8 includes achieving access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all. We would like to urge Member States to further develop national drug control policies, which ensure such access.

Thank you very much, Distinguished Chair.
