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**European Union**

**Statement on the occasion of the**

**Intersessional Meeting of the 58th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

**Vienna,**

**12 November 2015**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States[[1]](#footnote-1). The following countries align themselves with this statement: The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Serbia\* and Albania\*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Iceland+ and Norway+, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Andorra and San Marino align themselves with this Statement.

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the UNGASS Board for providing the revised document containing the elements for the UNGASS outcome document, which represents an important improvement and forms a good basis for our discussions on the UNGASS 2016 outcome document.

We support the decision of the CND to produce a short, substantive, concise and action-oriented document comprising a set of operational recommendations. The EU and its Member States strongly believe that a set of very concrete operational recommendations would further contribute to the implementation of enhanced drug policies therefore providing a solid input towards the target date of 2019 and beyond.

We understand and welcome the intention of the UNGASS Board to advance the negotiations on this revised document and to commence the discussion on the operational recommendations already today. At the same time we believe that an agreement on the structure of the document and elements to be included therein should ideally be reached before starting a more in-depth discussion on operational recommendations. Once a consensus on the structure and major elements to be included in the outcome document has been reached, we are convinced that we can move faster to agreeing on concrete operational recommendations.

The revised version of the "Elements document" contains several noticeable and positive developments:

* + - * We note with satisfaction that the revised document better reflects all the 5 themes mentioned in the 58/8 CND Resolution.
* We also appreciate that the importance of **respecting** **human rights** while addressing drug-related issues is emphasised in the preamble of the revised document, and we would propose to further strengthening the link between drug policies and human rights. We welcome the inclusion of operational recommendations to ensure the implementation of this principle. At the same time we would like to stress the necessity to also include other aspects of implementing drug policies in line with the human rights standards, not only in the field of criminal justice.
* We are happy to see that a call upon Member States to **align drug policies with the** **broader United Nations agenda**, including the call to achieve the targets set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has been included in the preamble of the revised document. We are convinced that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will contribute to tackle the root causes of the world drug problem.
* We also welcome the invitation for UN organs dealing with drug-related issues to enhance their cooperation. The document could further benefit from providing comprehensive and realistic operational recommendations on how to achieve this cooperation in practice. It could also include a reference to other UN bodies, not limiting the scope to CND, INCB and WHO. Also, the UNGASS should call for stronger involvement of the WHO on the broader public health dimension of the world drug problem and for the development of a long term comprehensive strategy on a public health approach to drug policy.

* We also note with satisfaction that the importance of strengthening scientific research is now included in the revised document as an overarching principle and that reference to **evidence-based policies** is made in operational recommendations concerning prevention and treatment. However, the document would benefit from a more clear reference to the principle of evidence-base as being the underlying principle of drug policies, cutting across all our actions, throughout the different pillars of drugs policy, including drug demand and drug supply reduction. As regards possible operational recommendations, we would also like to stress the need for including a reference to objective, reliable monitoring systems as a precondition for developing evidence-based drugs policies.
* We also welcome the inclusion of an operational recommendation to "*implement measures aimed at minimizing the health and social consequences of drug use and increase their coverage within treatment programmes*" and would propose to strengthen this reference to **risk and harm reduction measures**, especially as regards access to and coverage of a wider scope of such measures, not only in the field of treatment, but also in the field of recovery and social reintegration. Also, the UNGASS outcome document should refer to these measures with the term "risk and harm reduction measures".
* We are also happy to see that the revised document stresses the "***role of civil society,******academia and scientific community*** *in formulating and implementing drug programmes, including at local level*". At the same time, we believe that their role should be stressed in the preamble as “*important*”. Even more important, the role of civil society, academia and scientific community should not only be limited to formulating and implementing, but the text should also extend their roles to “*monitoring and evaluation*”.

Finally, the EU and its Member States regret that the revised document does not include a reference to the abolition of the death penalty. We would like to recall our strong **opposition to the death penalty** in all circumstances, including for drug-related offences. We reiterate that the death penalty undermines human dignity, while failing to act as deterrent to criminal behaviour. Therefore the UNGASS outcome document should invite States Parties to consider abolishing the death penalty for drug-related offences.

The EU and its Member States reiterate their commitment to provide further inputs as regards the preparatory process, in the hope of bringing a significant added-value to UNGASS 2016.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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1. The way the EU statements are delivered in this Commission is subject to ongoing clarifications in the context of the ECOSOC reform Resolution 68/1.

\* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)