

**European Union**

**Statement on the occasion of the**

**Intersessional Meeting of the 59th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

**Vienna,**

**27 January 2016**

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,**

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.
2. We support the decision of the UNGASS Board to produce a short, substantive, concise and action oriented document and so, in the same spirit, I will try to keep my contribution short, substantive and concise as well.
3. The EU wants to thank the UNGASS Board for their work on the draft outcome document. We appreciate that you chose to use a new structure, in order to better reflect the full range of challenges that Member States face these days and recognize the need for a more balanced approach towards the drug phenomenon. Also we were happy to note that you decided to introduce new topics like New Psychoactive Substances and dedicated chapter on access to essential medicines. However, for the EU some key elements need to be introduced or further reinforced in the UNGASS outcome document if we really want to meet the ambitions set for UNGASS.
4. First of all, the EU would like to underline that two important elements are missing in the discussion: the abolition of the death penalty and risk and harm reduction. If we are willing to use all the means possible to tackle the world drug problem, and I believe this goal brings us here today, we simply cannot allow ourselves to omit these issues. We firmly believe that in 2016, and after decades of experience, we can no longer deny these aspects and that if we want to set a step forward we must be able to discuss these items.
5. The EU opposes the death penalty in all cases including for drug related offences. The death penalty does not act as a deterrent nor has any proven effectiveness in reducing the world drug problem.
6. On the other hand multiple international organizations such as the UNODC, the WHO and UNAIDS have already recognized the proven effectiveness of risk and harm reduction measures and the UNGASS should recognize this scientific evidence as well. UNGASS 2016 thus provides the opportunity to really take this step forward. We need to seize this opportunity.
7. Secondly, I would like to stress that the that drug policies should be built upon a sound **evidence-based** public health approach, supported by reliable and objective monitoring systems and evaluation. **Furthermore, drug supply reduction measures should be led by a multidisciplinary approach and based upon effective coordination of drug-related policies in support of the objective of a balanced approach**.
8. The EU would like to stress the important role of civil society **and** academia, in all aspects of drug policy, not only in drug control programmes but in particular on health issues. Their important role as advisors of government, on local, national and **international** level, and in the field should be recognized, respected and encouraged. In that regard also the experience of **drug users, clients of drug-related services, their organizations and families** should be taken into account.
9. **Finally, I would like to underline our position that the three UN Drug Control Conventions and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights are the cornerstones of the global response to the world drug problem.** We are convinced that there is sufficient scope and flexibility within the provisions of the UN Conventions to accommodate a wide range of approaches to drug policy in accordance with national and regional specificities. In fact we would like to encourage local, national and international initiatives of developing innovative approaches aiming to achieve experience- and evidence-based knowledge.
10. 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.

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