

Joint Statement
High-Level Segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its 67th session

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished UN Authorities, Heads of Delegations, Ambassadors and Delegates,
Members of Civil Society,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the following Member States...

This group of Member States would like to convey the following key messages today at the opening of the high-level segment of the 2024 Midterm Review:

We are gathering at a time when the international community needs urgent progress against persistent and expanding drug challenges that endanger the health, human rights, well-being, and security of our peoples.

The demand for and supply of illicit drugs have reached unprecedented levels, while illicit manufacturing and trafficking are contributing to alarming rates of violence around the world, causing people to live in fear, unable to protect their children and unable to trust that their governments will protect them, and in some regions the violence and crime fuels and prolongs conflicts.

At the same time, despite their indispensability, millions of people across the world continue to suffer because of inadequate access to and availability of controlled medicines [**, including due to affordability and other existing barriers**]. In many communities, illicit drugs are available; controlled medicines are not. This leads us to conclude that the international drug control system as it is currently applied needs rethinking based on concrete evidence, so we can start making progress together.

Drug-related organized crime thrives worldwide, distorts governance and political processes, damages democratic institutions, incentivizes corruption, takes advantage of the immediacy and anonymity granted by the Internet, and weakens the rule of law. Profits of organized crime groups continue to soar and exacerbate and amplify an array of other illegal economies, including among them human trafficking, and crimes that affect the environment.

This criminality undermines the very existence of states, disrupts the functioning of our societies, and generates high social and economic costs, hence hindering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Patterns of illicit manufacturing and trafficking of drugs are shifting rapidly, the evolution and proliferation of illicit synthetic drugs is expanding at an alarming pace and is creating a global threat, affecting especially young people. These drugs can be extremely lethal and easily trafficked, accessing them is very simple and they are responsible for unprecedented levels of overdose deaths and poisonings around the globe.

All these evolving drug-related issues are ultimately human issues that directly impact the health and well-being of our people.

The number of people who suffer from drug use disorders today has skyrocketed to 39.5 million, a 45% increase in the last decade. Evidence shows that drug use disorders are multifactorial health conditions that can only be effectively addressed through inclusive, rights-based and non-discriminatory treatment, health care, harm reduction, social protection and rehabilitation provided in the context of health systems that guarantee non-stigmatization.

Those in need of treatment and services face persistent barriers; therefore, we recognize the importance of harm reduction approaches, grounded in justice and human rights, and a gender and age perspective into our drug policies in order to reduce the adverse consequences of drugs on both the individual and society, and to contribute to the realization of gender equality and the enjoyment of all human rights.

Putting people first in drug responses is part of our broader efforts: this means prioritizing public health, developing prevention initiatives, eliminating the stigma associated with drug use disorders and ensuring the access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering, by addressing **[affordability and other]** existing barriers in this regard.

Our global policy should treat people with dignity and uphold their human rights, should increase viable economic alternatives through long-term comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable alternative development programs, should include economic solutions for young people, women, rural communities, people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples and homeless populations affected by or at risk of drug related activities.

We regret the disproportionate impact of drug use and drug trafficking on marginalized populations.

We reiterate our support to the International Guidelines on Drug Policy and Human Rights, and we welcome the report released by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on human rights in drug policy as a tool for further discussion, as well as the presence of representatives of relevant UN bodies (WHO, UNAIDS, UN Women, OHCHR) in Vienna to avoid working in silos, and invite them to enhance the regular exchanges between Vienna, Geneva, and New York.

We also commend the important role played by civil society in helping develop and implement many crucial elements of effective drug policies.

In view of our common objectives and shared responsibilities, we appeal for global solidarity and cooperation to reduce the immense human suffering caused by a phenomenon that is occurring worldwide.

If we want to impact the lives of individuals, households, and communities around the globe, we need a transformation in our vision of the world drug policy, based on a realistic evidence-based assessment and a pragmatic response. Therefore, we resolve to jointly review and reassess the international drug control system to ensure weaknesses in implementation are addressed, and that we are appropriately focused on achieving our common goals and objectives to protect the health and well-being of humankind.

The responsibility belongs to us all, individually, and collectively. In this difficult and divided moment, let's meet that obligation for today's and future generations. Despite the challenging social and political environment that we find ourselves in, let's unite for the benefit of all our people, today and tomorrow. Starting here. Starting now.