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Subject:	EU Statement on the occasion of the first intersessional meeting of the 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Vienna, 23-25 October 2023) - Thematic session 1: Challenge: "Both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying"

Delegations will find in the Annex the above-mentioned statement as expressed on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the first intersessional meeting of the 66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) (Vienna, 23-25 October 2023).



European Union Statement

Thematic Session 1: Challenge: “Both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying”¹

First intersessional meeting

66th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Vienna, 23-25 October 2023

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, the European Union and its Member States wish to express our gratitude to you, Mr. Chair, the vice chairs, and the Secretariat of the UNODC for your work during the 66th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. I would like to thank you and the Secretariat for organising this intersessional meeting. These discussions should facilitate the fulfilment of our joint commitment to effectively address the world drug situation, as stated in the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document and reiterated in the March 2019 Ministerial Declaration.

Distinguished Chair,

Before we dive into our discussions, we would like to underline that our activities within this Commission are not immune from the challenging realities we live in. Russia's aggression against Ukraine affects us all. It is a flagrant violation of international law and the UN Charter and thus threatens the foundation, on which our activities here today are based. The EU and its Member States condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal military aggression against Ukraine, and we stand in full solidarity with Ukraine and its people.

The European Union condemns in the strongest possible terms Hamas and its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel and deeply deplores the loss of lives. There is no justification for terror. We strongly emphasize Israel's right to defend itself in line with humanitarian and international law in the face of such violent and indiscriminate attacks. We reiterate the importance to ensure the protection of all civilians at all times in line with International Humanitarian Law.

¹ Alignment: North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Norway, and San Marino.

Turning now to this session:

We all see that the range of drugs for non-medical and non-scientific purposes and related drug markets are expanding and diversifying. While the UNODC World Drug Report 2023² notes that drug related situations may be global, they do not affect all the world equally: we have also experienced that a trend in one part of the world today can affect another one tomorrow. In that context, **sharing information, evidence, best practices and lessons learnt is key.**

According to the European Drug Report 2023³ and to the World Drug Report 2023, the market is characterised by the **increased availability and accessibility of** controlled substances for non-medical and non-scientific purposes, often found in highly potent or pure forms. This is accompanied by a **greater diversity in the substances** on the illegal drug market, exposing consumers to a broader range of psychoactive substances.

This changing drug situation creates new challenges for the health of all people and we need to **adapt our actions, including prevention and early prevention, treatment and harm reduction interventions.** It is important, for example, to have adequate capacity for identifying substances involved in drug-related overdoses and adjusting our response based on evidence.

To better understand the drug markets, the emerging trends and threats, **we need reliable data and research and increased exchange of data at all levels. Two EU bodies play a key role in that matter:** the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol). The EMCDDA is our centre of excellence in terms of developing tools for data collection, research, analysis and reporting on drug related matters. It also provides guidelines for a number of drug supply indicators on markets, crime and supply reduction, which streamline and improve understanding and monitoring of the drugs phenomenon in the EU.

As of July 2024, the **EMCDDA will become the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA).** The collection, analysis and dissemination of data will continue to be a key task of the EUDA and will even be **reinforced:** the new Agency will monitor and address poly-substance use, which is common in Europe among people who seek treatment for drug-related problems; a network of forensic and toxicological laboratories will also be set up to foster information exchange on new trends and developments and train national forensic drug experts. Such scaling up forensic and toxicological monitoring may help identify drug combinations that are appearing on the illicit market, posing acute health risks and necessitating a rapid response.

² World Drug Report 2023, [World Drug Report 2023 \(unodc.org\)](https://www.unodc.org/wdr2023/)

³ European Drug Report 2023: Trends and Developments, [European Drug Report 2023: Trends and Developments | www.emcdda.europa.eu](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/)

As the **EU Criminal Information Hub**, Europol holds a unique capacity for criminal **intelligence** that directly supports the drug trafficking investigations led by the Member States. Criminal analysis indeed is a core element of the support provided by the EU Drugs Unit to national Law Enforcement Agencies. The 2022 recast of its legal basis, the Europol regulation, further enhances this capacity, creating new opportunities to engage in joint operational analysis with national authorities, extending the possibilities to cooperate with private parties and offering new possibilities to process personal data in support of criminal investigation as well as for research and innovation.

As relevant and reliable data is essential worldwide, we are glad that our Agencies, with their new mandates, will be able to contribute with a stronger role in the area of international cooperation.

Distinguished Chair,

The EU and its Member States continue to strongly support an integrated, balanced and evidence-based approach which addresses demand and harm reduction alongside supply reduction in the implementation of joint commitments to address the world drug situation.

Thank you!
