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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
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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 2: Challenge: "The abuse, illicit cultivation and production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as the illicit trafficking in those substances and in precursors, have reached record levels, and that the illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals are on the rise" 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 2: Challenge: “The abuse, illicit cultivation and production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as the illicit trafficking in those substances and in precursors, have reached record levels, and that the illicit demand for and the domestic diversion of precursor chemicals are on the rise”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,

The World Drug Report 2023 highlights a **record level in production of different substances around the world with a high availability of most illicit substances**. Drug trafficking and drug use affect all regions worldwide. In Europe, cannabis remains the most consumed substance, and there is a particular concern over the expanding cocaine market, the increasing use of amphetamine-type stimulants and opiate use.

In line with the **EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025**, the EU takes an evidence-based, integrated, balanced and multidisciplinary approach to the drugs phenomenon, focusing on three policy areas – drug supply reduction, drug demand reduction, and addressing drug-related harm, all with the support of our Agencies – Europol, Eurojust and our European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), which will soon become the European Union Drugs Agency.

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

We consider it crucial to streamline and improve **early warning systems on new psychoactive substances**, which are sold on the darknet and social media and widely trafficked through postal services and courier services. We therefore consider it important to coordinate action between custom authorities and police and other relevant institutions as well as **work closely with the private sector**.

We would also like to highlight the fact that increasing seizures of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, new psychoactive substances and drug precursors are posing **a new challenge: the storage and disposal of these substances** and their environmental, health and safety impacts, as also set out in this year's CND resolution 66/2 on safe handling and disposal of synthetic drugs, their precursors and other chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and in the last two UNODC World Drug Reports. In addition, it is important to consider the associated economic costs of disposal these substances.

In addition to our efforts at EU level and the regular evaluation of our legislations and activities, the European Union will continue to conduct **drug-related dialogues with third countries and to fund cooperation programmes** as well as related development-centred drug policy interventions, on the basis of principles of shared responsibility, multilateralism, the promotion of a development-oriented approach, respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law and respect for the international drug control conventions. Therefore, we will continue to foster our bilateral and regional dialogues on drugs.

Please let me also highlight that parallelly to this session we are celebrating the **10th Anniversary of the adoption of the UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development by the UN General Assembly**, a document elaborated by this Commission. A development-led approach is a key pillar of the global efforts of the EU and its Member States to address the cultivation of illicit drug crops and related phenomena in close cooperation with its partner countries. We are concerned about the constantly high and partly increasing levels of illicit drug crop cultivation, the relation with drug trafficking, corruption, insecurity and also its harmful effect on the environment, as recently outlined by the World Drug Report 2023. We reiterate our commitment to address these issues guided by the UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development.

I would now like to turn our attention to **drug precursors**. The diversion of non-scheduled substances and proliferation and trafficking of designer precursors is challenging drug precursor control and legislation to an extent never seen before. The 2022 World Drug Report states that drug precursors used in the manufacture of synthetic drugs continue to change rapidly as chemicals become controlled and “designer precursors” emerge. Substance-by-substance scheduling has proven not being effective to tackle designer precursors. The INCB’s ‘list of options for global action’ and last year’s CND resolution 65/3, paved the way for innovative methods of dealing with these phenomena including innovative ways of scheduling.

The side-event organized by the EU in the margins of this year’s CND showed successful examples of countries scheduling not only the key precursor, but also its derivatives leading to more seizures without impacting legal trade. It is undisputed that the surge of designer precursors has become a global phenomenon requiring further action at international level to reduce the availability of designer precursors in illicit drug manufacturing. The EU is committed to working together globally to tackle the problems posed by non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors.

Distinguished Chair,

We are aware that the impact of illicit drug use is now seen almost everywhere in our society. Almost everything with psychoactive properties has the potential to be used as a drug. This means that everyone, whether directly or indirectly, can be affected by illicit drug use and the problems associated with it. It is therefore crucial to address this phenomenon and its health and social risks, such as deaths, infectious diseases, dependency, psychical and mental health problems and social exclusion together.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.
