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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 3: Challenge: "Increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in persons, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and money-laundering and, in some cases, terrorism, including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism, are observed"

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 3: Challenge: “Increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in persons, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and money-laundering and, in some cases, terrorism, including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism, are observed”<sup>1</sup>**

### 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,

In accordance with the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025, the EU and its Member States strive to achieve a **multidisciplinary, multi-agency, integrated approach to effectively address illicit drug supply and drug-related crime**. In this respect, we would like to highlight the role of the EU Agencies. Firstly, Europol, the European Union's agency for law enforcement cooperation, supports its Member States in preventing and combating serious international and organised crime and terrorism. Secondly, Eurojust contributes to improving judicial cooperation in the fight against serious crime. Thirdly, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) – which will soon be strengthened to become a fully-fledged EU Drugs Agency (EUDA) - provides the EU and its Member States with an evidence-based data and analysis of the European drug situation.

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

Organised crime groups in the EU are increasingly poly-criminal (40%), using the profits of one criminal activity to finance their expansion into other crime areas. With that in mind, the European Commission adopted in 2021 the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime. The illicit trafficking of drugs remains the **largest criminal market in the European Union**, with an estimated minimum retail value of EUR 30 billion per year in the EU. Nearly half (38 %) of all criminal activities in the EU are connected to drug trafficking, which continues to be one of the most lucrative businesses for organised crime groups. **Violence has become an integral part of the criminal activities** of EU drug trafficking organisations and is a growing source of concern in the EU. Such criminal groups are well organised and mobile. They employ strict internal security procedures, measures and tactics similar to military, intelligence and law enforcement services.

We would also like to underline that **Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal military aggression against Ukraine**, which the EU and its Member States condemn in the strongest possible terms and the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian Federation creates an environment conducive for criminal organisations to operate unchallenged, including for drug-trafficking.

There is also a concern about the **potential links between the illicit trafficking of drugs and terrorism**. The EU Security Union Strategy for the period 2020-2025 highlights the need to tackle the nexus between terrorism and organised crime. It points to the way in which organised crime may feed terrorism through a variety of channels, for instance by supplying weapons, financing terrorist activities through drug distribution and infiltrating financial markets.

It is crucial to acquire a better understanding of the **connections between drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants**. Networks involved in drug trafficking engage also in trafficking in persons to expand their profits. The continuous sexual and labour exploitation of human beings produces enormous financial flows. Moreover, an increasing number of victims is trafficked for the purpose of forced criminal activities, which may include drug trafficking. Trafficking in persons across borders is often linked with another related crime, migrant smuggling. Also, many of the routes along which migrants are smuggled into the EU, and along which potential victims of trafficking in persons reach the EU, are known drug trafficking corridors.

**Corruption** is also a feature of a considerable number of criminal activities in the EU. Almost 60% of the criminal groups reported for the EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA 2021) also engage in corruption. Corruption erodes the rule of law, weakens state institutions and hinders economic development.

Distinguished Chair,

To conclude, we need to further explore addressing poly-criminality and links of between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organised crime in order to more effectively address the world drug situation.

Thank you

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