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NOTE

From: Portuguese Presidency
To: Horizontal Working Party on Drugs
Subject: Report of the Portuguese Presidency on the achievements of the
Horizontal Working Party on Drugs (HDG) - First semester 2021

Delegations will find in the Annex the report of the Portuguese Presidency on the achievements of the Horizontal Working Party on Drugs (HDG) in the first semester 2021.

Report of the Portuguese Presidency on the achievements of the Horizontal Working Party on Drugs (HDG)

The Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU took place in the first semester of 2021 in extraordinary circumstances. When we look back over the last six months, the COVID-19 pandemic and its circumstances were the main challenge we had to deal with. Indeed, COVID-19 imposed a virtual existence on us, transforming 'in person' meetings into virtual meetings, and removing the possibility of contacting colleagues spontaneously, to socialising in the corridors or discussing with them in a face-to-face context.

While challenging to organise, the Portuguese Presidency of the Horizontal Working Party on Drugs managed to hold all six of the informal videoconferences of the Horizontal Working Party on Drugs and the Dialogues with third Countries it had planned, as well as the virtual meetings with the Civil Society Forum on Drugs (CSFD) and the two other events scheduled, i.e. the EU National Drugs Coordinators Meeting and the High Level Meeting of the Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism on Drugs between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean.

I - Portuguese Presidency priorities in the field of drugs:

✓ Drafting and negotiation of the new EU Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025.

Following the approval of the EU Drugs Strategy for the period 2021-2025 in December 2020, under the German Presidency, the Portuguese Presidency prepared a draft EU Drugs Action Plan, which was then amended to take account of the comments made by the HDG members at their informal videoconferences on 19 January, 9 February, 2 March, 15 March and 4 May 2021, and during the written consultations, which ended on 24 May 2021. Following the last written consultation, consensus on the EU Drugs Action Plan 2021-2025 was confirmed at the informal videoconference of the HDG on 8 June 2021. On 16 June, the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) confirmed its agreement on the text of the EU Drug Action Plan 2021-2025, which was approved by the Council on the 21 June¹.

¹ Document ST 9819/21.

The EU Drugs Action Plan 2021-2025 sets out concrete actions that will be implemented to achieve the priorities for EU drug policy for the next 5 years that were identified in the Strategy. The document is based on scientific, realistic and measurable data, with a clear relevance and added value for the EU. The Action Plan aligns priorities and strategic actions, with a specific calendar to be developed, a list of responsible parties and a set of indicators based on the existing information mechanisms.

✓ **Preparation of the 64th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)**

The CND meeting took place in Vienna from 12-16 April 2021, in a format that was almost entirely virtual. On behalf of the EU, the Portuguese Presidency led the preparations for the regular and normative segments of the CND. Six EU statements focusing on the various agenda items were prepared by the Presidency and agreed by the HDG delegates. The statement in the general debate was delivered by the Portuguese Minister of Health, on behalf of the EU, in a video message².

This year's CND was accompanied by over 100 side events, with 11 of them co-organised by the EU. The Portuguese Presidency organised, on behalf of the EU, a side event dedicated to the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025³. In this side event, which brought together over 174 people in virtual format, speakers from Germany, the European Commission, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Europol and the Civil Society Forum on Drugs touched upon the new political framework and the priorities of the EU's drug policy for the next 5 years.

2 https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_64/Statements/13April/European_Union.pdf

3 https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_64/Final_CND_Side_Event_Report_2021_rev.pdf (page 21)

The Portuguese Presidency drafted and negotiated a resolution tabled by Portugal and Austria on behalf of the EU and its Member States, that focuses on 'Promoting scientific evidence-based, quality, affordable and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services'⁴. The informal negotiations of this Resolution were led by Portugal and took place in an extremely constructive spirit, with active participation and relevant inputs, and brought together co-sponsorship from a total of 46 countries from all continents and all Regional Groups.

The Portuguese Presidency effectively led the process of negotiating a Council Decision on the position to be taken, on behalf of the European Union, at the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, on the scheduling of substances under the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971⁵.

The decision was discussed and agreed in the HDG and adopted by the Council on the 22 March.

II - Dialogues and expert meetings with third countries:

- **EU-China Dialogue on Drugs** on 22 January. The first Dialogue with China had been postponed during the Croatian and German Presidencies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Portuguese Presidency and the European Commission, together with the Chinese authorities, decided to hold the first EU-China Dialogue virtually, with the aim of exchanging information and improving cooperation on drug related matters.
- **EU-USA Dialogue on Drugs**, on 15 March. The Portuguese Presidency organised the regular Dialogue with the aim of exchanging views on matters of common interest, this time with a regional focus on West Africa.

4 https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_64/E2021_28_V2103164_Advance_Version.pdf (page 10)

5 Document ST 6193/21

- **Technical Committee Meetings of the Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism on Drugs between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean** on 4 May and 8 June. The Portuguese Presidency convened these two meetings with the main objective of preparing the High-Level Meeting of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs, in particular of taking forward the negotiations of the Biennial Report and the Outcome Document to be adopted by the High-Level Meeting on 22 June.
- **EU-Brazil expert meeting on drugs** on 11 May, which addressed drug-related developments relating to the EU-Brazil policy, international cooperation in the field of drugs, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on the drug markets and on prevention, health and harm reduction services.
- **Dublin Group Meeting** was initially scheduled for June, but was postponed due to the difficulties encountered by the **Dublin Group** members in drafting their reports as a consequence of the pandemic situation. The further preparation of the meeting will be taken over by the incoming Slovenian Presidency.

III - Cooperation with Civil Society Forum on Drugs (CSFD)

The Portuguese Presidency organised two meetings with the Civil Society Forum on Drugs (CSFD). The first one, took place in the margins of the HDG meeting on 15 March to allow for an exchange of views on the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, as well as to share CSFD inputs for the EU Drugs Action Plan, for the Dialogue with the US and for the Expert Meeting with Brazil. Another meeting was organised on 14 April in the margins of the CND to discuss the main topics addressed in Vienna.

IV - Coordination with other Council working parties

One of the priorities of the Portuguese Presidency was the coordination of ongoing work in the field of drugs in the other relevant Council Working Parties. In this connection, the Portuguese Presidency provided HDG delegates with regular updates, which were based on information made available by the Presidency teams, but also on information provided by the European Commission, the EEAS and the Member States. These updates highlighted the coordination with (i) the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI); (ii) the Working Party on Horizontal Agricultural Questions on the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plans Regulation and (iii) the Customs Union Working Party on the EU drug precursors policy.

V - Events during the Portuguese Presidency:

- **EU National Drug Coordinators Meeting**, which took place virtually on the 20 May, with the participation of delegates from all 27 EU Member States, as well as from the EEAS, the European Commission, the EMCDDA and the Secretariat General of the Council. The focus of the meeting was 'Advancing Human Rights-based drug policies'. A paper from the Civil Society Forum on Drugs on the Human Rights and Civil Society Involvement in the EU Drugs Policy had been circulated in advance. Furthermore, a message from António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, addressing the NDC meeting, was shared. The Secretary-General welcomed the new EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025, and called for strengthened international cooperation.

The programme of the NDC meeting joined a panel with Member States, international organisations, academia and civil society speakers, which stimulated the discussion with their interesting presentations, allowing the conclusion to be drawn that it is very important to fully realize what advancing a human rights-based approach might mean, because this will ensure the integration of human rights implications in the international drugs policy in a clear and undeniable way, bringing human rights to the forefront of drugs policy.

- **High Level Meeting of the Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism on Drugs between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the XXIInd High-Level Meeting of the Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs, which was scheduled to take place in Zagreb (Croatia) on April 2020, had had to be postponed. In view of the travel restrictions still in place, the co-Presidencies of the Mechanism, Mexico and Portugal, decided to co-chair the XXIInd High-Level Meeting on 22 June 2021 by videoconference.

The meeting focused on political dialogue and cooperation programmes, on exchanges at multilateral fora, in particular following the 64th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, as well as on the drug situation and policy developments in the EU and CELAC countries, including the production and trafficking of cocaine. Moreover, two thematic debates covered the legal framework and strategies in response to the demand for illicit drugs, and alternative development as a development-oriented policy.

Two documents were officially adopted: the Biennial Report which presents an analysis of the activities carried out over the past two years in relation to the Mechanism, and the Outcome document, which reaffirms the political will for continued coordination and cooperation between EU and CELAC countries on drugs policies.
