



European Union
Statement on the occasion of
the 63rd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Vienna, 2-6 March 2020

Agenda item 5(c): International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)

Distinguished Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

We thank the International Narcotics Control Board for its 2019 Annual Report, with analysis of the drug control situation worldwide, and for the report on precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

The EU and its Member States are committed to the effective implementation of the three UN Drug conventions and we welcome the broad consensus of the international community to these three conventions and the relevant international human rights instruments being the cornerstones of the international drug-control system. We would like to highlight the integral relationship between drug control and human rights, and we welcome the Annual Report's recommendations 4, 5, 6 and 7 underlining that successful and sustainable drug control action needs to be proportionate and consistent with international human rights law, respecting the rights of persons affected by drug use disorders.

We strongly support the INCB in its categorical and unequivocal condemnation of extra-judicial responses to drug-related criminality and appreciate the reference to proportionality. Judicial responses must be in line with the right to a fair trial and with due regard for the principles of the rule of law. In line with the principle of proportionality, the international drug control conventions provide states with the possibility to apply alternative or additional measures of an appropriate nature with regard to conviction or punishment in drug-related cases, such as education, rehabilitation or social reintegration, in particular for persons affected by drugs. We would encourage the INCB to further focus on the issue of proportionality, possibly by updating its 2007 report on the matter. Finally, we very much welcome the report encouraging states that retain the death penalty to consider abolishing it for drug-related offences. The death penalty is cruel, inhuman and degrading in nature and makes any miscarriage of justice irreversible and fatal.

We welcome the fact that the thematic chapter of the 2019 Annual Report is focused on young people. Young people, especially young people in vulnerable are at a particular risk of developing substance use disorders and should be given specific consideration in the design of national prevention and treatment strategies. The EU and its Member States value an integrated, balanced, multidisciplinary and evidence-based approach, and we thank the INCB for highlighting the pressing need to increase availability and coverage of evidence-based prevention and treatment interventions. Prevention measures should include early detection and intervention, including with innovative approaches and the support of new technologies. Moreover, prevention measures should include promotion of healthy lifestyles and targeted prevention directed at young people and families, schools and communities at risk, including in recreational settings.

We also thank and commend the INCB for its continuous analysis and support with regard to the access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. The draft resolution tabled by Australia and EU builds, among other, on the expertise and recommendations put forward by the INCB.

The EU and its Member States are investing in effective risk and harm reduction measures aimed at connecting people who use drugs and public health services, re-integrating people who use drugs into society, and substantially reducing the number of direct and indirect drug-related deaths and infectious blood-borne diseases associated with drug use, such as HIV and hepatitis. Last year, the first ever European guide on health and social responses to drug problems was published by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. The guide addresses a wide range of topics and so will be of interest to diverse audiences with differing needs, also outside of Europe.

Bilateral and regional cooperation is a key priority for the EU and its Member States, and we have agreed Action Plans on drugs with a number of countries and regions. We fund and support a wide range of major drug-related cooperation programmes in third countries, and carry out regular expert dialogues on drugs with third countries and regions. This information exchange and discussion on current and new phenomena, as well as on policy developments, is invaluable for all of us.

Finally, we would like to encourage Member States to further develop dialogue with the INCB in order to reflect on the challenges we continue to face and how we will address them.

Thank you very much, Distinguished Chair!
