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Vienna, 11 September 2015

Your Excellency,

The members of WEOG are committed to playing an active role in the preparations for the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem.

Responding to the call made by the Board tasked with UNGASS preparations in the last intersessional meeting of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, our regional group has embarked on a process of reflection and coordination on the scope and content of the outcome document for UNGASS 2016. It was a useful process, during which the members of the group were able to discuss and assess their views on the different topics that will feature prominently at UNGASS.

Several individual contributions were submitted through the group, namely by Australia, the European Union and its Member States, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, which I now have the pleasure of forwarding to the Board. These are all rich and complex documents. Each of them will provide the Board with valuable input with which to prepare the first version of the draft outcome document for UNGASS.

It is possible to identify in the documents many concerns and priorities. My intention is not to provide a summary of nor to try to find a lowest common denominator to all the contributions that have been submitted, an exercise which could reduce the richness and complexity of each individual document and limit their comprehensiveness at this initial stage of the debate.

I would simply take this opportunity to highlight, on my own initiative, some elements contained in those inputs:

- . The three UN Drug Control Conventions, together with other relevant international law instruments, in particular the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights, form the basis of the global response to the world drug

problem. Their provisions allow States sufficient flexibility to adapt drugs policies to their national and regional specificities;

. The need to coordinate drug policy with the broader agenda of the United Nations and promote system-wide coherence;

. The priority of reinforcing the human rights and public health dimensions of national and global drug policies;

. The need to address substance use disorders as a chronic health condition and to provide people with substance use disorders with access to drug demand reduction measures;

. The commitment to improve measures in the field of substance use prevention and early intervention, adapted to specific settings and target groups;

. The call for States to further expand measures aimed at reducing the transmission of HIV and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use, namely by implementing the comprehensive package recommended by WHO, UNAIDS and UNODC and other evidence-based interventions;

. The call for States and relevant international organizations to take effective measures to ensure the availability and accessibility of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering, in conformity with the Conventions and WHO guidance;

. The importance of guaranteeing that legal frameworks for drug-related offences adhere to the principle of proportionality and, thus, that the severity of the penalties is consistent with the gravity of the offences;

. The request for States to consider appropriate alternatives to incarceration and coercive sanctions for drug-related offences of a minor, non-violent nature;

. The relevance of mainstreaming a gender perspective into drug policies;

. The need to improve access to treatment and other health care measures in prisons, with the aim of achieving a quality of care equivalent to that provided in the community;


. The importance of promoting efforts aimed at reducing drug supply at the international level, including by enhancing judicial cooperation and mutual legal assistance instruments, border control capacities and mechanisms to counter illicit drug production, drug trafficking and money laundering and preventing the diversion of chemicals for illicit production;

. The need to develop and adapt national and global responses to the challenges posed by new psychoactive substances (NPS), namely through the further enhancement of early warning mechanisms, the development of tailored demand and supply reduction approaches, including domestic and international control measures supported by evidence-based recommendations and risk assessment procedures and the sharing of information through the INCB, UNODC and WHO;

. The benefits of promoting international cooperation in responding to amphetamine-type stimulants, including methamphetamine;

. The support for the continuing international efforts to implement holistic and comprehensive alternative development and sustainable livelihoods programmes, aligned with the holistic approach of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals and with the goal of addressing the framework conditions of illicit drug crop cultivation and reducing it on the long term.

I would like to reiterate that over the coming months the members of WEOG will be ready to participate in a constructive way, alongside the wider UN membership and civil society, in the dialogue and negotiations aimed at producing a short, concise, substantive and action-oriented outcome document for UNGASS.



Pedro Moitinho de Almeida  
Permanent Representative of Portugal

To

H.E. Mr. Khaled Shamaa, Permanent Representative of Egypt and  
Chair of the Board tasked with UNGASS preparations