

**INTERVENTION BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PHILBERT JOHNSON
CHAIR OF THE CND AT ITS 67TH SESSION**

**intersessional panel discussion on human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of
the world drug problem
Human Rights Council, 5 February 2024**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by extending my warm congratulations to you, Ambassador Omar Zniber, on your election as the new President of the Human Rights Council - I have no doubt that under your guidance, the Council will continue to make significant strides in the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.

While I would have liked to join you in person, I appreciate the opportunity to share some inputs to this important discussion through this message.

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs, as you are aware, serves as the central policymaking body within the United Nations system for addressing all aspects of the world drug problem. This includes a strong commitment to upholding - namely to respecting, protecting and promoting - all human rights and fundamental freedoms in our efforts. We must help ensure that all people can live in health, dignity and peace, with security and prosperity.

I am both honoured and humbled to lead the Commission at this crucial point, when we prepare for the midterm review of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration. From 14 to 22 March, the international community will gather in Vienna to take stock of the progress we made over the past five years. On 14 and 15 March, we will have a high-level segment with a general debate, interactive multi-stakeholder round table discussions as well as a range of high-level events.

I also launched a Pledge4Action initiative to mobilize Member States to pledge concrete, impactful actions along the challenges outlined in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration. This initiative is gaining momentum, and it provides an excellent platform to spotlight specific areas in relation to the world drug problem. I hope that all of the Member States present in today's discussion will consider making their pledge in March in Vienna.

We have also embarked on the negotiations of an outcome document to be adopted at the opening with the high-level segment, that will focus on taking stock and accelerating action to address the challenges identified in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration.

As you may know, one of these challenges in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration specifically addresses the compliance of drug policies with our international human rights obligations and the international drug control conventions. It's a challenge that we take very seriously, and I believe this meeting at the Human Rights Council can contribute to our deliberations, including in the period ahead, as we move to 2029 and a final review of the implementation of all our policy commitments.

Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We need to work together constructively to find solutions.

As the platform for addressing all aspects of the world drug problem, the Commission provides a forum for the many stakeholders engaged. We very much value the interventions and contributions we have received from Geneva throughout the preparatory process leading up to the review, in particular in the context of the thematic discussions during which participants have come together to share expertise and experiences, lessons learned and good practices.

The world drug problem is a complex challenge that requires a multidimensional approach, and your insights are important as we work to ensure that Member States adopt well-informed policy decisions.

I look forward to a continued collaboration in the months and years to come. Thank you for your attention, and I wish you a productive and successful session.