



Contribution by the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

To the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

2023 Theme:

“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”

I. Introduction

This contribution is submitted by **H.E. Miguel Camilo RUIZ BLANCO (Colombia), the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) at its sixty-sixth session**, in response to a letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council of 10 November 2022, inviting the Commission to provide an input to the 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

The 2023 HLPF will be held under the auspices of ECOSOC at the United Nations headquarters in New York from 10 to 19 July 2023, on the theme **“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”**. The input aims to highlight the guidance and key measures put forth by the CND which contribute from the perspective of the world drug problem to building back better after the COVID-19 pandemic, all while striving to meet the commitments contained in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The CND is the **principal drug policy-making body within the United Nations** and, together with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), **functions as one of the two governing bodies of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which acts as the focal point for measuring and monitoring progress across many of the indicators of SDG16**. The Commission works on a large portfolio of issues; the ones addressed in this contribution do not reflect the work of the Commission in a comprehensive manner, but represent **examples related to the 2023 HLPF theme and the SDGs under thematic consideration this year, namely SDGs 6 on clean water and sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals**.

This contribution covers the period **March 2022-February 2023¹** and complements the contributions submitted in previous years.

Policy framework:

At its **62nd session in March 2019**, the Commission adopted by consensus the **Ministerial Declaration** entitled “*Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem*”. In the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, Member States, while acknowledging that tangible progress had been achieved over the past decade, noted with concern the persistent and emerging challenges posed by the world drug problem and committed to accelerating, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility, the full implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement and the 2016 UNGASS outcome document, aimed at achieving all commitments, operational recommendations and aspirational goals set out therein.

In the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, under the heading “Way forward”, Member States committed to supporting the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in continuing transparent and inclusive discussions involving all relevant stakeholders on effective strategies to address and counter the world drug problem, including through the sharing of information, best practices and lessons learned. On the basis of the challenges identified in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, the Commission adopted in June 2019 a **multi-year workplan of thematic discussions to discuss how those challenges could be addressed through effectively implementing the provisions contained in the documents adopted in 2016, 2014 and 2009.**

Work undertaken in 2022:

The **65th session of the CND, chaired by H.E. Ghislain D’HOOP (Belgium), held its main session from 14 to 18 March 2022** in a hybrid format. The session gathered more than 1,300 participants representing 132 Member States, 7 United Nations Bodies and Agencies, 16 intergovernmental organizations and 80 non-governmental organizations.² At the margins of the 65th session, 120 side events were organized, co-sponsored by Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations and civil society, covering all aspects of the world drug problem.

Held during the intersessional period (21-22 September 2022), this year’s **thematic discussions on the implementation of all international drug policy commitments, following-up to the 2019 Ministerial Declaration**, focused on the following: “*responses not in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and not in conformity with applicable international human*

¹ considering that the submission deadline is 1 March 2023.

² https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/65_Session_2022/65CND_Main.html

rights obligations pose a challenge to the implementation of joint commitments based on the principle of common and shared responsibility”, as stated by Member States in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration. The event gathered nearly 700 participants worldwide, participating in person or online. The discussion also focused on specific proposals to accelerate the recovery from COVID-19. The procedural report can be found on the following website: [Procedural report 2022 CND Thematic Discussions \(adobe.com\)](#), and a Chair’s Summary containing the salient points made during the Thematic Discussions has been submitted for consideration by the CND at its regular 66th session in March 2023 (E/CN.7/2023/CRP.1).

During its 65th session, the Commission devoted special attention to the issue of availability and access (A&A) to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. The Commission considers it of great importance to step up its efforts in addressing this issue, as ensuring the availability and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes is a commitment enshrined in the three international drug control conventions. Notwithstanding the universally recognized medical indispensability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, millions of people continue to suffer due to limited access to controlled medicines, thereby making this a major global health problem. A unified global effort in this area is especially critical today, in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated interruptions of the controlled medicines supply chain in several parts of the world. To highlight the importance of this issue, the A&A initiative began with a high-level kick-off event on the first day of the 65th regular session, followed by a series of events in the New York United Nations Headquarters in June, and at Palais des Nations in Geneva in September, and concluded with a One-day Special Forum in Vienna in October 2022. During the reconvened 65th session of the Commission held in December 2022, an **e-Learning tool on "Availability of and Access to Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes"** developed by the Commission Secretariat was launched. More information can be found on the following website: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/65_Session_2022/availability_and_access.html

As per usual practice and following the mandates from ECOSOC, the Commission also held **from September to November 2022 the meetings of the Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEAS), namely in Europe (12-16 September), Latin America and the Caribbean (4-7 October), Asia and the Pacific (25-28 October), and Africa (7-11 November), as well as the meeting of the Subcommittee on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East (22-25 November).**³ These meetings identified salient policy and enforcement issues in their regions, established working groups to analyze the issues, and brought their reports and

³ https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Subsidiary_Bodies/Subsidiary-Bodies_Index.html

recommendations to the attention of the Commission, which will be available as one of the pre-session documents for consideration by the Commission at its 67th session (E/CN.7/2023/7).⁴

The **regular sixty-sixth session of the Commission** will be held from **13 to 17 March 2023**.

I. Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, 17 from the vantage point of CND, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and interlinkages across the SDGs and targets, including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs.

In the 2019 *Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of Our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem* mentioned above, Member States reiterated their resolve, in the framework of existing policy documents, inter alia, to address drug-related socioeconomic issues related to illicit crop cultivation and the production and manufacture of and trafficking in drugs, including through the implementation of long-term comprehensive and sustainable development-oriented and balanced drug control policies and programmes.

In its *resolution 64/1*, entitled “*Statement of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the implementation of Member States’ joint commitments to address and counter all aspects of the world drug problem*”, the Commission recognized the dramatic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on all aspects of the world drug problem, recalled the commitments of Member States to strengthening actions at the national, regional and international levels to accelerate the implementation of the joint commitments to address and counter the world drug problem, and encouraged Member States to continue their efforts, taking into consideration the drug-related consequences of the pandemic.

SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all,
and

SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all:

The implementation of the provisions of the drug control conventions and of the policy commitments adopted by the Commission since 2009 is crucial to further the attainment of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. From illicit cultivation and production to trafficking and non-medical drug use, the world drug problem, with all its ramifications, is intertwined with a vast array of social,

⁴ E/CN.7/2023/7, Report of the Secretariat on action taken by the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

economic, and environmental issues. Addressing them can support the broader implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including **SDG6 on clean water and sanitation**, in particular **target 6.3, to improve water by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping, and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials** and **SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy**.

The Commission has contributed to the achievement of SDGs 6 and 7 in particular through the angle of addressing **illicit crops and the illicit manufacturing of drugs**. **Alternative development** has been recognized by the General Assembly since its twentieth special session (September 1998) as “a process to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotics and psychotropic substances through specifically designed rural development measures in the context of sustained national growth and sustainable development efforts in countries taking action against drugs, recognizing the particular socio-economic characteristics of the target communities and groups, within the framework of a comprehensive and permanent solution to the problem of illicit drugs.” Alternative development measures have regularly included **environmental protection components relating to issues such as reforestation and agroforestry**. More recently, projects have also started focusing on **integrating environmental policy instruments such as carbon credits and schemes involving payment for environmental services**.

In its *resolution 65/1*, entitled “*Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment*”, the Commission underscored that alternative development programmes should include measures to **protect the environment at the local level**, according to national and international law and policies, through the provision of incentives for conservation, proper education and awareness programmes, so that the local communities can improve and preserve their livelihoods and mitigate negative environmental impacts. In the resolution, the Commission also welcomed the holding of the virtual expert group meeting on alternative development, on the theme “Promoting sustainability in alternative development”, hosted by Germany, Peru, Thailand and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on 26 and 27 January 2022, involving the participation of Member States, international organizations, representatives of civil society and academia. The Commission further encouraged Member States to examine and address, within the efforts of alternative development, the harmful impact of the illicit cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs on the environment, which may lead to deforestation and the pollution of soil and water, and to seize the opportunities offered by alternative development with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of the environment and the protection of biodiversity. In its *resolution 64/2*, entitled “*Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences*”, the Commission had noted with concern that in the pandemic and post-pandemic period there may be funding shortages and diversion of resources from drug-related initiatives, including those

relating to alternative development,⁵ which, in turn, may have an impact on the availability and the sustainability of water and sanitation, as well as access to sustainable energy.

As mentioned above, a **virtual Expert Group Meeting, convened on 26–27 January 2022**, provided space to discuss **the interface between drug economies, alternative development and the environment**. The importance of factoring environmental considerations into project design and opportunities for communities to benefit from environmental protection were discussed and explored. Hence, **environmental protection was understood to be a key component of communities' livelihoods** and would continue to shape the design of alternative development projects aiming at reducing the illicit cultivation of drugs. To further align development-oriented drug control with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the EGM discussed responses to the current climate crisis, youth engagement and opportunities for household income diversification through environment-related mechanisms. Moreover, to ensure that alternative development products can compete in the global market, private sector collaboration and the application of business strategies were agreed to be paramount. The EGM identified that alternative development interventions should **consider social, cultural, economic, political, educational and environmental aspects**.

The Commission has also addressed **environmental issues linked to the manufacturing of drugs, which often has a negative impact on water-related ecosystems, including through dumping and untreated wastewater**, in particular in its *resolution 65/3*, entitled *“Intensifying efforts to address the diversion of non-scheduled chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and the proliferation of designer precursors”*.

On 28 June 2022, the Commission held a **Special Event in commemoration of the United Nations International Day against Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking**. During the event, the World Drug Report 2022 was launched. The report presents an overview of the current trends on global drug markets and includes the latest information on drug use, production, and trafficking and includes – for the first time - **a section with a specific focus on the impact of drugs on the environment**.

[SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation, and](#)

[SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant increase of people using drugs, largely due to social isolation and pandemic-related stress factors, thereby challenging care facilities, personnel and risk reduction plans.⁶ The increase in the number of people using drugs has not been accompanied by the

⁵ Resolution 64/2, Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences.

⁶ World Drug Report 2021, Booklet 5.

necessary follow-up in terms of medical infrastructure to efficiently support patients in need. This directly relates to **SDG9 (resilient infrastructure)** in particular **target 9.1 on “quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access”** and **SDG 11 (inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities), in particular target 11.1 on “adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services”**. The lack of health care centres has not only been increasingly challenging in urban settlements, but also in rural areas – also considering that people who use drugs and live in rural areas may be disproportionately impacted by changes brought on during the pandemic, given that they may also experience higher levels of stigma about their drug use, which may contribute to a greater likelihood of using drugs alone and a reluctance to seek medical care.

As part of the efforts to achieve a more inclusive, safe and sustainable society, every patient must have access to adequate care and medicine. The Commission has addressed these challenges by placing emphasis on the **access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and on comprehensive demand reduction services**.⁷

As mentioned above, the Chair at its 65th session led an **“Access and Availability” awareness-raising campaign** which aimed at scaling up the implementation of the international commitments on improving availability of and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, to ensure that **no patient is left behind (#NoPatientLeftBehind)**. This initiative follows earlier resolutions by the Commission such as *resolution 53/4 on “Availability of Internationally Controlled Licit Drugs for Medical and Scientific Purposes”* and *resolution 54/6 on “Availability of Internationally Controlled Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes”*. During the deliberations of the Commission at its regular 65th session, reference was made to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic was a further impediment to the achievement of that goal, including with regard to treatment services and medications for people affected by drug use disorders. Reference was also made to regulatory actions related to the COVID-19 pandemic aimed to ensure the availability of controlled substances for the treatment of affected patients.

Further, in its *resolution 65/4*, entitled **“Promoting comprehensive and scientific evidence-based early prevention”**, the Commission called upon Member States to facilitate access to **comprehensive, scientific evidence-based demand reduction services and related measures, including early prevention**, and to expand their capacity and availability to vulnerable members of society, especially children, in socially and economically marginalized situations and in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, while increasing **possibilities to promote healthy lifestyles and addressing individual and environmental, including social, risk and protective factors**, through broader social policy in accordance with national legislation. In its *resolution 64/3*,

⁷ https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/65_Session_2022/availability_and_access.html

entitled *“Promoting scientific evidence-based, quality, affordable and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services”* and *resolution 64/5, entitled “Facilitating access to comprehensive, scientific evidence-based drug demand reduction services and related measures, including for people impacted by social marginalization”*, the Commission focused on the importance of **accessible treatment services**.

The Commission has also addressed **urban safety issues** by highlighting the links between drug trafficking and firearms trafficking, thereby contributing to the achievement of **SDG 11, Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**. In its *resolution 65/2* entitled *“Strengthening international cooperation to address the links between illicit drug trafficking and illicit firearms trafficking”*, the Commission expressed “deep concern at the high price paid by society and by individuals and families as a result of the links between illicit drug trafficking and illicit trafficking in firearms, and paying special tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives, in particular law enforcement and judicial personnel, and to the health-care and civil society personnel and volunteers who dedicate themselves to countering and addressing this threat”. The Commission encouraged Member States to better address the human dimension of the challenges posed by the links between illicit trafficking in drugs and illicit trafficking in firearms, and recognizes the importance of considering the situation of the victims of those crimes, including the families of law enforcement personnel who lost their lives; and encouraged States to take appropriate measures consistent with their domestic legal frameworks and their respective obligations under the international instruments to which they are a party, as well as other relevant international commitments, as appropriate, to prevent and combat the links between illicit drug trafficking and illicit trafficking in firearms.

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

The regular session of the CND includes a standing agenda item on “**Inter-agency cooperation and coordination of efforts in addressing and countering the world drug problem**”, during which the Commission discussed joined efforts and the coordination with and among other stakeholders in addressing the world drug problem. During the deliberations of this agenda item at its 65th session, several speakers stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the challenges of the world drug problem and had at the same time demonstrated the **importance of multilateralism, the coordination of efforts and inter-agency cooperation**. It was underscored that the world drug problem remained a common and shared responsibility that should be addressed in a multilateral setting through effective cooperation at all levels. The principal roles of the Commission as the policymaking body of the United Nations in drug-related matters and the role of UNODC as the leading entity in the United Nations system for drug-related matters were recalled by many speakers. It was noted with appreciation

that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC had increased its cooperation with relevant United Nations bodies and stakeholders.

In its *resolution 65/2*, entitled “*Strengthening international cooperation to address the links between illicit drug trafficking and illicit firearms trafficking*”, the Commission recognized that the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility that should be addressed in a **multilateral setting** through effective and increased international cooperation and demands an integrated, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing, balanced, scientific evidence-based and comprehensive approach.

The Commission also **sought synergies and cooperation within the ECOSOC system and the United Nations system**. H.E. Mr. Federico VILLEGAS, the President of the 16th Cycle of Human Rights Council participated in the 2022 Thematic Discussions, and Dr. TEDROS Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) joined the Joint Call for Action on Availability of and Access to Controlled Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes. H.E. Mr Collen V. KELAPILE, the President of the Economic and Social Council and Dr. TEDROS Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director General of WHO, participated in the opening of the 65th regular session of the Commission. Ms Jagjit PAVADIA, the President of the INCB, actively participated at all of these occasions.

<p>II. Three key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and three key areas where support is most urgently needed, with regard to the cluster of SDGs under review in July 2023.</p>
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The Commission accelerated progress towards **SDG 11** in promoting **the availability of and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes**. The Commission devoted great attention to scaling up the implementation of international drug policy commitments on improving availability of and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes. More details can be found above.

With regards to **SDG 17**, the **annual inter-sessional thematic discussions** have proven to be good opportunities for Member States to hold transparent and inclusive discussions involving all relevant stakeholders on effective strategies to address and counter the world drug problem and to address the challenges identified in the “stock taking”- part of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration. Member States further resolved to review in the CND in 2029 the progress in the implementation of all international drug policy commitments, with a mid-term review in 2024.

With regards to **SDG 6 and SDG 7**, a key area where support is urgently needed concerns the **link between illicit drugs and the environment**, which continues to remain under-researched and underreported. As indicated in the Booklet 5 of the World Drug Report 2022, dedicated to drugs and

the environment, the **research around this topic remains very limited** and does not allow for a global analysis.

III. Examples of specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress towards multiple SDG targets, including actions identified by your intergovernmental body, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs

The effects of the pandemic on the world drug problem and specific actions to further sustainable recovery are well reflected in the *Joint statement of the CND on the impact of COVID-19*, adopted during the sixty-fourth session in 2021, and in the *resolutions adopted at the sixty-fifth session in 2022*, inter alia, on sustainable livelihoods, drug trafficking and firearms trafficking, designer precursors and early prevention:

- In its *Statement on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the implementation of Member States' joint commitments to address and counter all aspects of the world drug problem* (resolution 64/1), the Commission stressed that that addressing and countering the world drug problem require coordinated multidisciplinary efforts and that such efforts should become a top priority in the post-COVID-19 period. In the statement, the Commission also urged Member States to strengthen bilateral, regional and international cooperation to counter the exploitation by drug traffickers of traditional and online trafficking methods and routes during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.
- In *resolution 65/1*, entitled “*Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment*” the Commission encouraged Member States to increase efforts in promoting alternative development programmes to support populations affected by or vulnerable to the illicit cultivation of drug crops, including through a market-driven approach, which may contribute to efforts to build back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, utilizing best practices and lessons learned from the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, and reiterated in that regard that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the world drug problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing.
- In its *resolution 65/4*, entitled “*Promoting comprehensive and scientific evidence-based early prevention*”, the Commission called upon Member States to facilitate access to comprehensive, scientific evidence-based demand reduction services and related measures, including early prevention, and to expand their capacity and

availability to vulnerable members of society, especially children, in socially and economically marginalized situations and in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

IV. Assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental body, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs has to be considered **in the context of the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world on all aspects of the world drug problem**, as underlined by the Commission in its *Statement of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the implementation of Member States' joint commitments to address and counter all aspects of the world drug problem (resolution 64/1)*. In the same resolution, the Commission noted with concern that, in the pandemic and post -pandemic period, there may be **funding shortages and diversion of resources away from drug-related initiatives**, including those relating to drug prevention and treatment and related health and social services, alternative development and law enforcement.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being and

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

With a view to the SDGs particularly under the purview of the Commission, this leads to the following short assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 agenda and the SDGs:

Regarding the achievement of SDG 3, the Commission has in this context stressed that the pandemic and resulting lockdowns have led to the development of **new patterns of illicit drug use**, such as poly-substance use. At the same time, serious challenges were observed in the **demand reduction systems** (prevention, early intervention, treatment, care, recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration). The Commission notes with concern the difficulties encountered by Member States in ensuring the continued **access to and availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes**. The Commission also acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic had led to the **development of new and innovative approaches to drug prevention and treatment and related health and social services**, and that some health systems had introduced or expanded **e-health platforms and procedures** to prevent drug abuse and provide medications, counselling and

consultations, including telemedicine, and that these innovations may lead to new treatment strategies in future. The Commission encouraged Member States and relevant stakeholders, within their national contexts, to **continue to develop and implement innovative drug treatment and recovery delivery systems.**

Regarding the achievement of SDG 16, the Commission has expressed its commitment to **respecting, protecting and promoting all human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity** of all individuals and the **rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies**, including in its **responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.** The Commission has recognized the **efforts of law enforcement authorities and members of security forces in the fight against drug trafficking and related crimes**, noting that their sustained efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, often undertaken at great risk to their health and that of their families, have resulted in increases in arrests, seizures of drugs and property and the freezing of assets. The Commission also noted that the pandemic may have resulted **in new methods of manufacture, distribution and marketing of, and trafficking in,** some types of drugs. Changes in trafficking routes and methods, including **increased maritime trafficking and online sales of drugs** through both the darknet and the surface web, have resulted in new challenges for law enforcement authorities. The Commission emphasized the importance of the **use of existing online database platforms**, such as those operated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board, **for effective and increased cooperation among law enforcement and forensic officials** in gathering and sharing data needed to identify and detect substances. The Commission encouraged Member States to **expand law enforcement activities targeting trafficking modalities that have emerged or increased in the context of COVID-19** and to increase coordination between Member States.

[SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, and](#)

[SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all](#)

Elements on **the protection of the environment, including with a view to protecting water-based ecosystems and sustainable water management**, have been addressed by the Commission since a number of years. The *UNGASS outcome document from 2016*, one of the guiding policy documents prepared by the Commission,⁸ in its Chapter 4 includes elements on the protection of the environment related to the cultivation and eradication of illicit substances and its impact on the environment. In *recommendation 4(i)*, Member States committed to ensuring that measures to prevent the illicit cultivation of and to eradicate illicit plants, take, inter alia, due count of the protection of the environment.

⁸ [Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem, 2016](#)

The Commission has since strengthened the environmental approach in particular when encouraging Member States to develop viable economic alternatives through comprehensive alternative development programmes, which is notably reflected in the above-mentioned *resolution 65/1*, entitled *“Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment”*, *resolution 64/2*, entitled *“Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences”*, and *resolution 63/5*, entitled *“Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy”*. The Alternative Development Programmes of UNODC, for which the Commission acts as a governing body, also include **assistance to Member States in implementing electrification projects**, to address the underlying problem of geographical and infrastructural marginalization of regions where illicit crops are cultivated, thus permanently restructuring the economy of such regions and opening doors to shift to licit and income-generating alternatives.

SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation, and

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

The Commission is promoting the **appropriate utilization of technology to prevent and treat drug-abuse, through the introduction or the expansion of platforms and procedures to provide medication, online counselling and consultations, including telemedicine, and that these innovations may lead to new treatment strategies in the future.**⁹ Already in the *UNGASS outcome document*, the General Assembly encouraged the promotion of inclusive economic growth and support for initiatives that contributed to poverty eradication and the sustainability of social and economic development, developed measures for rural development, improving infrastructure and social inclusion and protection, addressing the consequences of illicit crop cultivation and the manufacture and production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances on the environment, with the incorporation and participation of local communities, and considerations of voluntary measures to promote products stemming from alternative development, including preventive alternative development, as appropriate, to gain access to markets, consistent with applicable multilateral trade rules and with national and international law, within the framework of comprehensive and balanced drug control strategies; thereby supporting the **implementation of SDG 9 and its targets.**

⁹ [Statement of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the impact of the coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) pandemic on the implementation of Member States’ joint commitments to address and counter all aspects of the world drug problem](#)

The recommendations contained in the UNGASS outcome document support the **implementation of SDG 11**. Further, Member States highlighted the importance of providing access for children and youth to regular sports and cultural activities, with a view to promoting healthy lives and lifestyles including through the **recovery and improvement of public spaces** and promote the exchange of experiences and good practices in this field to further enhance effective preventive interventions¹⁰. The Commission promotes implementing population-wide, targeted, and indicated prevention measures which strengthen resilience among youth and children and support efforts of the international community to **achieve SDG target 11.7**. In **resolution 63/4**, entitled *“Promoting the involvement of youth in drug prevention efforts”*, the Commission encouraged Member States to consider a gender-sensitive approach when seeking the involvement of youth in the development, implementation and evaluation of drug prevention and health promotion efforts, as appropriate, in the framework of domestic drug policies.

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

All resolutions adopted by the Commission in 2022 called for the strengthening of international cooperation and multi-stakeholder engagement in their respective thematic areas. **In addition**, the Commission regularly discusses international cooperation on drug-related matters during **its agenda item on “Inter-agency cooperation and coordination of efforts in addressing and countering the world drug problem”**.

The **2022 inter-sessional thematic discussions**, held in September 2022 in a hybrid format, brought together more than **700 experts and policy makers from more than 100 Member States, United Nations entities, intergovernmental organizations, international partners, and civil society experts** from around the world. In addition to expert panelists nominated by Member States through the regional groups, representatives nominated by 11 intergovernmental organizations and 8 non-governmental organizations made statements.

Parallel to the 65th regular session of the Commission, the **UNODC Youth Forum (28 February- 4 March 2022)** brought together young people from around the world to strengthen their knowledge in substance use prevention, engage with one another through interactive discussions, and be empowered to bring a positive change in their community. This year's Youth Forum incorporated a special session with **Youth Alumni**, with participants of previous Youth Fora warmly welcoming the youth participants of 2022. With the ongoing celebration of a decade since the launch of the Youth Initiative, the Youth Initiative continues to encourage young people to reflect on the potential impact of substance

¹⁰ <https://www.unodc.org/documents/postungass2016/outcome/V1603301-E.pdf>

use in their schools and communities, and to start taking effective and evidence-based action to prevent substance use.

Also at the margins of the 65th session, the **UNODC-WHO Informal Scientific Network (ISN), a platform for academia to be in dialogue with policymakers on how to counter the world drug problem**, was reconvened to develop a statement on “Substance Use Prevention and Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Care for Girls and Women”. More than 30 leading scientists agreed on key recommendations during two virtual sessions held on 10 and 11 March. On 17 March, during the 65th CND Plenary session, key points of the ISN statement were presented to the plenary of the 65th session, focusing on recommendations for girls and women with substance use disorders.

V. Key messages for inclusion into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit
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The following key messages may be included into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit:

- We recall the need to continue implementing coordinated multidisciplinary efforts to ensure that no one affected by the world drug problem is left behind in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in efforts to mitigate the drug-related consequences of the pandemic;
- We recall the need to accelerate the implementation of all international drug policy commitments so that the progress made at the national, regional and global levels is maintained and continued in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- We encourage all States to allocate sufficient funding in national post-COVID budgets for drug-related initiatives, including those relating to drug prevention and treatment and related health and social services, alternative development and law enforcement;
- We encourage Member States to further strengthen measures, strategies, and inter-agency and international cooperation and partnerships to ensure the access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, which may improve responses to future emergencies, including emergency medical care situations;
- We encourage all States to take into consideration in their efforts to address the world drug problem the links between drugs and the environment, including through long-term comprehensive and sustainable development-oriented and balanced drug control policies and programmes;
- We encourage Member States to mainstream an age and gender perspective into all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services, and ensure that those services, as appropriate, are tailored to

the different needs and circumstances of all people who could benefit from such services and measures, in particular women and girls;

- We refer to the thematic discussions held under the auspices of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, on implementation of all our international drug policy commitments, following up to the 2019 ministerial declaration, centred on the world drug problem and how to build back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and call upon Member States and all other interested stakeholders to actively participate in upcoming thematic discussions in the lead-up to the mid-term review in 2024 and the end-of-cycle review in 2029.