



**Contribution by the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
To the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

2024 Theme:

“Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”

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I. Introduction

This contribution is submitted by **H.E. Ambassador Philbert JOHNSON (Ghana), the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) at its sixty-seventh session**, in response to a letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council of 10 November 2023, inviting the Commission to provide an input to the 2024 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The 2024 HLPF will be organized under the auspices of ECOSOC at the UN headquarters in New York from 8 to 17 July 2024, on the theme **“Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”**.

The CND is the policy-making body of the United Nations with prime responsibility in its thematic area of work and, together with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), acts as the governing body of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 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 **recent examples related to the 2024 HLPF theme and the selected SDGs, namely SDGs 1 on end of poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and 17 on partnerships for the Goals**.

This contribution covers the period from **March 2023 to February 2024**.

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 outcome document of the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS)**, aimed at achieving all commitments, operational recommendations and aspirational goals set out therein.

The **2024 Midterm Review, to be held 14-15 March 2024**, will serve to assess progress made in the implementation of all international drug policy commitments as set forth in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration. Preceding the 2024 midterm review was a comprehensive stock-taking of all challenges related to the world drug problem identified in the Ministerial Declaration, which took place during the thematic discussions held on 23-25 October and 4-6 December 2023. An end-of-cycle review of the implementation of all international drug policy commitments is planned for 2029.

The 66th session of CND, chaired by H.E. Miguel Camilo Ruiz BLANCO (Colombia), held its **main session from 13 to 17 March 2023** and gathered more than 2,500 participants representing 139 Member States, 6 United Nations Bodies and Agencies, 19 intergovernmental organizations and 134 non-governmental organizations.¹ At the margins of the 66th session, 155 side events were organized, co-sponsored by Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations and civil society, covering various aspects of the world drug problem.

As per usual practice and following the mandates from ECOSOC, the Commission also held **from June to November 2023 the meetings of the Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEAS) in Europe (20-23 June), Africa (26-29 September), Latin America and the Caribbean (3-6 October) and Asia and the Pacific (24-27 October)**, as well as **the meeting of the Subcommittee on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East (21-24 November)**.² These meetings identify salient policy and enforcement issues in their regions and then bring their reports and recommendations to the attention of the Commission.

The **regular sixty-seventh session of the Commission** will be held **from 18 to 22 March 2024**, preceded by the **Mid-term Review of 2019 Ministerial Declaration on 14 and 15 March 2024**.

¹ [66th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs \(unodc.org\)](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Sessions/66th_Session.html)

² https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Subsidiary_Bodies/Subsidiary-Bodies_Index.html

II. Impacts of multiple crises on the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental / expert body

From illicit cultivation and production to trafficking and non-medical drug use, the world drug problem is intertwined with a vast array of social, economic, public health, safety and environmental issues.

Alternative development programmes are cross-cutting actions which contribute, inter alia, to the implementation of SDG1, in particular **targets 1.1 and 1.2**, as recognized in the CND's **Resolution 63/5**. The overdose crisis in North America **and the increased non-medical use of tramadol** in North Africa, West Africa, the Near and Middle East and South-West Asia³ continued to show the harmful effects of synthetic drugs (**Resolution 64/4**).⁴ Barriers to drug treatment remained and have been exacerbated during conflicts. The **access to and availability of medicines** containing controlled substances was further restricted in conflict situations. The instability resulting from conflicts also fuelled drug trafficking, as conflicts and weak rule of law facilitate the drug economy.⁵

The Commission has in its **resolution 66/4**⁶ encouraged Member States to take into account land rights and other related land management resources when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating alternative development programmes, and, as appropriate, preventive alternative development programmes, including the land rights and other related land management resources of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, in accordance with domestic law, thereby addressing **SDG 2**, specifically **target 2.3**.

In the same resolution, the CND has encouraged Member States to take into account and strengthen climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation and other policies and measures to protect the environment when implementing alternative development programmes in a properly sequenced manner and, as appropriate, preventive alternative development programmes in the context of long-term, comprehensive and sustainable development-oriented and balanced drug control policies (**SDG13, in particular target 13.3**).

The **world drug problem** exacerbates some of the multiple crises as it can be, inter alia, linked to issues such as violence and violent deaths, transnational organized crime, corruption and firearms trafficking (**SDG16, in particular targets 16.1 and 16.4**). In its **Resolution 65/2**⁷, the Commission noted with concern that drug traffickers accept or demand firearms as payment in kind for illicitly trafficked drugs, and expressed concern that, as a result of that trade, they are able to increase their capabilities by

³ World Drug Report 2023 – Executive Summary: [WDR23_Exsum_fin_SP.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

⁴ [resolution_64_4.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

⁵ World Drug Report 2023 – Special Points: [Special_Points_WDR2023_web_DP.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

⁶ [2305857E.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

⁷ [V2201790.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

accessing a wide variety of illicitly trafficked firearms and pose a significant threat to law enforcement entities, and expressed deep concern at the high price paid by society and by individuals and families. The Commission also underlined the importance of addressing, in an integrated manner, the global challenge posed by the multifaceted links between illicit drug trafficking and illicit trafficking in firearms, while recognizing the specific and increasing challenges faced in different regions of the world and 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.

The world drug problem remains a **common and shared responsibility** that should be addressed in a multilateral setting through effective and increased international cooperation, as recognized by the Commission in multiple resolutions (**SDG17**). The Commission has therefore **sought synergies and cooperation within the ECOSOC system and the United Nations system, for example, during the 66th session, with the World Health Organization and the INCB.**

III. Three key areas where sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2024, considering the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets

Area 1: Alternative development in rural and urban areas (SDG1, 2, 13, 16, 17)

In the **2016 UNGASS outcome document**, the General Assembly dedicated an entire chapter to the need to strengthen subregional, regional and international cooperation to support comprehensive and sustainable alternative development programmes.

In its **Resolution 66/4⁸**, the CND encouraged Member States to develop policies and programmes that take into account an evidence- and science-based assessment of the potential impact of alternative development on the illicit cultivation of crops used for the illicit production and manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and on **sustainable rural and socioeconomic development, that empower women and girls and that include measures to protect the environment.**

Long-term, comprehensive and sustainable development-oriented drug control policies and programmes, including alternative development programmes, can be implemented both **in rural areas**, as they help to integrate people into a labor market beyond illicit cultivation, **and in urban settings**, preventing young people from being drawn into drug-trafficking groups or cartels.

Area 2: Effectively ensuring crisis preparedness regarding the continuous supply of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes (SDG 1, 16, 17)

The current situation has increased awareness for the need to **prepare for crises by securing the continuous supply of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes,**

⁸ [2305857E.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

and of access to and availability of controlled substances. Ensuring access to and the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering, and address existing barriers in this regard, including affordability, is one of the commitments expressed in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration.

In 2021, the **INCB, the WHO and the UNODC** called through a **Joint Statement on Access to Controlled Medicines in Emergencies**⁹ on Governments to facilitate access to medicines containing controlled substances in emergency settings, including during pandemics and climate-related disasters. In 2023, the INCB continued to conduct regional trainings based on the INCB Learning module on the availability of drugs for medical and scientific purposes. The Chair of the Commission 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”; follow-up activities were undertaken in 2023.

Area 3: Facilitating dialogue among Member States and stakeholders to implement international drug policies that better address and counter the world drug problem (SDG 17)

Member States committed in the **2019 Ministerial Declaration** to supporting the CND in continuing transparent and inclusive discussions involving all relevant stakeholders on effective strategies to address and counter the world drug problem. On this basis, the CND adopted a multi-year workplan setting up thematic discussions which culminated in 2023 in a comprehensive stock-taking during **two intersessional sessions in October and December**, alongside with Secretariat-led informal fireside chats aiming to strengthen stakeholder engagement, particularly with the scientific community, civil society and youth.

During the mid-term review (14-15 March 2024), a concise, action-oriented document focusing on progress made in implementing all international drug policy commitments and on accelerating their implementation by 2029 will be adopted (**Resolution 66/1**¹⁰).

IV. Three examples of specific actions, policies and measures that are most urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to eradicate poverty and reinforce the 2030 Agenda, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs

Example 1: Need to improve data collection (SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 13, SDG 16, SDG 17)

Although many initiatives are in place to provide data on trends in the world drug problem, of which the updated **Annual Report Questionnaire** adopted by the CND in its decision 63/15 is the central

⁹ [INCB, UNODC and WHO Joint Statement on Access to Controlled Medicines in Emergencies](#)

¹⁰ [2305857E.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

tool, data collection remains a challenge. Member States recognized in the Ministerial Declaration 2019 that “geographical coverage and availability of reliable data on the various aspects on the world drug problem requires improvement.” Difficulties remain as many Member States do not necessarily have the capacity or resources to collect data (e.g. lack of dedicated scientific laboratories, lack of statistical data collection systems), also in view of the increased complexity of world drug supply and demand trends.

[Example 2: Need to effectively strengthen international cooperation in criminal matters \(SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 13, SDG 16 and SDG 17\)](#)

The world drug problem is linked to a whole range of challenges associated with transnational organised crime and terrorism, corruption, money-laundering, firearms trafficking, crimes that affect the environment and migrant smuggling.¹¹ In the **2019 Ministerial Declaration**, Member States committed to strengthening bilateral, regional and international cooperation and promoting information-sharing, in particular among judicial and law enforcement authorities.

In its **resolution 65/2**¹², the CND encouraged Member States to adopt and strengthen coordinated border management strategies, if needed, as well as to increase the capacity of border control and law enforcement agencies, including through technical assistance, in particular for developing countries, upon request. The CND also called upon Member States to continue to exchange information and provide judicial cooperation in this regard.

[Example 3: More attention is needed for the environmental aspects of the world drug problem \(SDG1, SDG 16, SDG17\)](#)

The environmental impact of drug cultivation, production, manufacture, trafficking and use as well as the environmental consequences of drug policies may be a challenge in some cases. In its **Resolution 66/2**¹³, the CND encouraged Member States to establish and implement, in accordance with their domestic law, adequate practical procedures for the **safe handling and disposal of synthetic drugs, their precursors and other chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs**, including those encountered in drug control efforts, that are informed and guided by scientific evidence, are environmentally responsible and ensure the health and safety of persons, especially those on the front line of drug control and response, as well as other relevant personnel, bearing in mind the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Synthetic Drug Strategy 2021–2025. The CND encouraged Member States to establish and implement, in accordance with their domestic law, adequate practical procedures for the safe handling and disposal of synthetic drugs, their precursors and other chemicals

¹¹ World Drug Report 2023: [Special Points_WDR2023_web_DP.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

¹² [V2201790.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

¹³ [2305857E.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#)

used in the illicit manufacture of drugs that are informed and guided by scientific evidence, are environmentally responsible.

These challenges have also been addressed during **the second intersessional meeting of the CND Thematic Discussions in December 2023**, where several speakers noted the negative impact that the expansion of the drugs market was having on the environment through water pollution and criminal activities such as illegal logging and illegal mining. Also during the **2023 HONLEAs**, each region formulated specific recommendations on the links between drugs and the environment.

V. Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental / expert body to support implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit

In the **Political Declaration of the SDG Summit** adopted in September 2023, topics related to the Commission’s work were addressed especially in the third part of the Declaration, “Call to action – turning our world towards 2030”. In paragraph 38 **sub-paragraph (g)**, Member States ensured to address gaps in preventing, preparing for, and responding to current and future pandemics and health emergencies. Second, in **sub-paragraph (vi)**, Member States committed to preventing and combating illicit financial flows and strengthening international cooperation and good practices on assets return and recovery. They also reaffirmed their obligations to prevent and combat corruption, bribery and money-laundering in all their forms enshrined in the existing international architecture. Other topics, related to SDG16 in particular, were also addressed in **paragraph 20**, when Member States reaffirmed the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights, on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions. Factors which give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice, such as inequality, corruption, poor governance and illicit financial and arms flows, are addressed in the 2030 Agenda.

The Commission is dedicated to the implementation of the **Political Declaration of the SDG Summit**. At its regular sessions, held each year in March, the CND contributes directly to the implementation of international commitments which aim at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. It has, for example, during its 66th session in 2023, addressed topics dealing with the interlinkages between drug trafficking and other criminal activities, drugs and health or drugs and the environment, amongst others. These topics were also addressed during the **CND Thematic Discussions**, the last of which were held in October and December 2023. Promoting equal access to health-care services and the protection of the environment, not necessarily in relation to drugs, are enshrined in the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit.

2024 is the year of the **Midterm Review of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration** which will serve to assess progress made in the implementation of all international drug policy commitments as set forth in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, which will also have a positive impact on the achievement of all SDGs.

As part of the Midterm Review, the Chair of the Commission has proposed a voluntary “**Pledge4Action**” initiative to mobilize Member States’ commitment toward concrete, impactful actions along the key challenges outlined in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, which are closely related to those enshrined in the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit. By pledging publicly, Member States demonstrate leadership in addressing these key challenges, share success stories with the international community, and inspire others to take action. The pledging will take place during the General Debate of the Midterm Review in March 2024. Member States will be invited to provide updates on their pledges in the CND from 2024 to 2028, in the lead-up to the 2029 final review.

VI. Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 HLPF

The following key messages may be included into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 HLPF:

- We recognize the impact of multiple interlinked crises on the world drug problem and stress that addressing and countering the world drug problem requires coordinated multidisciplinary efforts to ensure that no one affected by it is left behind and to better implement the SDGs under in-depth review in 2024;
- We recall the need to accelerate the implementation of all international drug policy commitments so that progress made at the national, regional and global levels is maintained and enhanced;
- We undertake to further strengthen measures, strategies and international cooperation to enhance access to and availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relieve of pain and suffering, thereby addressing affordability and other existing barriers in this regard, which may improve responses to future emergencies and multiple crises;
- We commit to further addressing the international challenges posed by the non-medical use of illicit drugs, including synthetic drugs, and the negative public health consequences, and to ensure access to prevention, treatment and recovery services in this regard;
- We commit to improve data collection and evidence-based analysis to better address the various issues related to the world drug problem;
- We commit to increase our efforts to prevent drug abuse, with a particular emphasis on children and youth, and to strengthen drug treatment services to contribute to the implementation of SDG3, as well as to further examine and address the harmful consequences on the environment of drug cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking and thereby contribute to the implementation of SDG 13.