

**Opening session at the 66th Session of the Commission on
Narcotics Drugs**

Vienna, March 14th, 2023

Norwegian statement

By Ambassador Susan Eckey

Chair,

Executive Director, Excellencies, representatives of Civil Society, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me congratulate you, Ambassador Ruiz Blanco, as Chair of this year's session of the CND. We are grateful to you, the bureau and the secretariat for your tireless contribution to prepare this session.

Chair,

According to the last World Drug Report, most indicators measuring drug related issues are pointing in the wrong direction. The situation calls for changes and action.

The Norwegian Government has announced that a change in the current drug policy is needed, and has decided to present a new "Prevention and Treatment Reform" next year. Through the reform, the Government will prevent drug use more effectively and intervene earlier with better assistance and follow-up. Substance abuse problems must be identified early, and quick and effective help must be offered. People with substance

use disorder must live dignified lives. The government will not decriminalize the use and possession of drugs . But society's reactions to illegal possession of drugs for personal use must be proportionate.

Though the challenges may differ between countries, international cooperation is needed to address the situation.

So:

- If we regard the world drug situation as a common challenge.
- If we regard it as a shared and common responsibility.
- If we regard the best solutions to be based upon common ground.
- If all this is the case, and based upon the present situation and limited achievements.
- We need to improve.

We need political will to secure access to legal medicines, to reduce the suffering of individuals, to solve governance challenges and to respect human rights and implement the rule of law.

And importantly, we need to include civil society and recognize their valuable contribution in all aspects of drug policies.

We need to agree on the basic assumption that drug policy is about human beings, about promoting health and wellbeing. It is about reducing harm to all those negatively affected by drugs, whether it be individuals, communities, countries, or the world at large.

Addressing substance use as a health concern should not be controversial. The aim is to leave no one behind and ensure a healthy standard of living for all, including people who use drugs.

To prioritize prevention and give every child the best start in life. To recognize and address inequality as a driver for problematic drug use and overdoses.

Furthermore, we need to tackle discrimination, stigmatization, racism, and their consequences for people living with a substance-use disorder. We need to focus on and prioritize evidence-informed interventions, while respectfully fulfilling human rights obligations when developing and implementing responses to drugs.

Chair,

Norway condemns Russia's attack against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. The Russian aggression is a clear violation of international law and Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The consequence of this is also felt in the area discussed at this session of the CND.

Thank you.