



European Union
EU Statement on
Agenda item 1(a)

1st intersessional meeting
64th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Vienna, 19 – 21 October 2021

Agenda item 1(a): Increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organised crime, including trafficking in human beings, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and money-laundering and, in some cases, terrorism, including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism, are observed.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland+, Norway+, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and San Marino.

Madam Chair, I would like to thank you and the Secretariat for organising this intersessional meeting in which we can exchange information on drug supply reduction and related measures. We welcome this opportunity to continue to apply the Multiyear Workplan 2019-2023, as agreed in the 2019 ministerial declaration. It is, indeed, of utmost importance to keep a joint focus on implementing all our international commitments, first and foremost the 2016 Outcome Document of the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS), which is the most comprehensive policy document in this area.

Building on experience, the European Union and its Member States emphasise the point that drug policies based on an integrated, balanced, evidence-based and multidisciplinary approach prove to be the most effective for addressing the world drug situation. This approach is reaffirmed in the new EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025 setting

* Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

out the overarching political framework and priorities for the EU's drugs policy for the next five years. Importantly, Madam Chair, in June 2021 the Council of the EU adopted the related EU Action Plan for the years 2021 to 2025, which translates the priorities defined in the EU Drugs Strategy into measurable actions. Together, their main objective is to ensure a high level of health protection, social stability and security. In addition, they aim to contribute to awareness-raising. At their core are respect and the promotion and protection of human rights. These encompass gender equality and health equity perspectives. The measures in the EU Action Plan address the challenges of the drugs phenomenon and adopt a future-oriented approach, taking on board the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. The main strategic priorities include the targeting of high-risk drug-related organised crime groups operating in, originating in or targeting the EU Member States. They include, too, the efforts made to identify links with other security threats, and to improve crime prevention.

The EU and its Member States strive to achieve a multidisciplinary, multi-agency, integrated approach to effectively address illicit drug supply and drug-related crime. In this respect, we would like to highlight the role of the EU Agencies. Firstly, EUROPOL, the European Union's agency for law enforcement cooperation, supports its Member States in preventing and combating serious international and organised crime and terrorism. Secondly, EUROJUST contributes to improving judicial cooperation in the fight against serious crime. Thirdly, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) is of fundamental importance as it provides the EU and its Member States with an evidence-based overview of the European drug situation. It also provides policymakers with the data and analysis they need in order to draw up informed drug laws and strategies.

Madam Chair, in the EU, a large majority (80 %) of criminal activities perpetrated by criminal networks involves drugs, organised property crime, various types of fraud, and crimes exploiting people as a commodity. While some groups are specialised in a particular criminal market, others are increasingly poly-criminal, using the profits of one criminal activity to finance their expansion into other crime areas. Around 40% of the criminal networks active in the EU engage in more than one main criminal activity. Moreover, the organised crime landscape is characterised by a networked environment, with organised criminal groups cooperating with each other and with providers of services, such as document fraud, or criminally motivated legal advice, or encrypted communications or transportation. While specific forms of crime require a dedicated response, it is crucial to dismantle the criminal infrastructures behind the various criminal activities. With that purpose in mind, the European Commission adopted on 14th April 2021 the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime. This strategy sets priorities for the next five years.

The illicit trafficking of drugs remains the largest criminal market in the European Union, with an estimated minimum retail value of EUR 30 billion per year. It continues to be one

of the most lucrative businesses for organised crime groups. More than one third of the organised crime groups active in the EU are estimated to be involved in the production, trafficking or distribution of drugs. Violence, corruption, document fraud and the use of new technology are common features of European drug markets. The illicit trafficking of cocaine, heroin, cannabis, synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances is a major threat to the EU owing to the levels of associated violence, the multi-billion euro profits generated and the substantial harm caused by such trafficking.

Violence became an integral part of the criminal activities of EU drug trafficking organisations and crime networks involved in the global supply, trafficking or distribution of illegal commodities. Violent crime groups are well organised and mobile. They employ strict internal security procedures, measures and tactics similar to military, intelligence and law enforcement services.

Corruption is a feature of a considerable number of criminal activities in the EU. Corruption erodes the rule of law, weakens state institutions and hinders economic development. Corruption is a key threat to be addressed in the fight against serious and organised crime. Almost 60% of the criminal groups reported in the EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA 2021) also engage in corruption.

There is concern about the possible links between the illicit trafficking of drugs and terrorism both in Europe and globally. The EU Security Union Strategy for the period 2020-25⁽¹⁾ highlights the need to tackle the nexus between terrorism and organised crime. It points to the way in which organised crime may feed terrorism through a variety of channels, for instance by supplying weapons, financing terrorist activities through drug distribution and infiltrating financial markets.

The connections between drugs and trafficking in human beings are yet to be fully understood. Many of the routes along which migrants are smuggled into the EU are known drug trafficking corridors. While there are no apparent structural, sustained or widespread links between drug trafficking and migrant smuggling, it is clear that a number of links do exist. New information is needed to shed more light on these interactions.

To conclude, Madam Chair, it is apparent that there are growing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organised crime, including environmental crime. And it is only by working together to strengthen our action and our cooperation, and to accelerate the implementation of our joint commitments, that we can reach our goals and effectively address the world drug situation.

¹ European Commission, 2020. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on the EU Security Union Strategy. COM/2020/605 final. Available online at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1596452256370&uri=CELEX:52020DC0605>

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.