



**REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS**

COUNTRY STATEMENT BY  
THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
CYPRUS TO UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN  
VIENNA,  
H.E. MS. ELENA RAFTI

AT THE  
MINISTERIAL SEGMENT OF THE  
62<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

VIENNA  
15 MARCH 2019

Mr. Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to express my Delegation's congratulations to Ambassador Mirghani Bakhet on his election as Chair and to the other elected members of the Bureau and to assure of our cooperation and commitment to the success of this Special Segment and the regular session of the Commission. I also take the opportunity to express thanks to the Secretariat of UNODC for all their effort and work and to Ambassador Vivien Okeke for facilitating the negotiations on the Ministerial Declaration.

The Republic of Cyprus fully aligns with the EU statement delivered yesterday but I would like to add a few remarks on our national capacity.

Mr. Chair,

The Declaration adopted yesterday represents another tool in our joint efforts aiming at the implementation of the commitments we have undertaken emanating from the International Drug Control Conventions, the 2009 Political Declaration and of course from the UNGASS Outcome Document which constitutes the most comprehensive and most recent text of the global drug policy. In this vein, the Republic of Cyprus reaffirms its unwavering commitment to implementing the Recommendations of the UNGASS Outcome Document in order to obtain concrete improvements and achieve measurable progress by 2030. Cyprus supports a balanced and evidenced-based approach on drugs with a main focus on the individual, without neglecting the protection of the society as a whole. Against this background, drug policies in the Republic Cyprus encompass

both supply and demand reduction measures, as well as measures aiming at the reduction of the harmful impact of the use of drugs.

Along these lines, and on the basis of the National Strategy on drugs, Cyprus is undertaking concerted efforts to reduce criminal activity connected with the illicit trafficking of substances, to address the issue of the availability of drug precursors, pre-precursors and new psychoactive substances, and to counter the legalization of proceeds derived from drug related criminal activity. We support, and are actively engaged in, efforts and to enhance the effectiveness of international cooperation.

Mr. Chair,

The Republic of Cyprus considers drug dependence as a health disorder with the concomitant implication that it has to be managed in an integrated, comprehensive manner. In this context, and whilst recognizing the complexity of the issue, my country puts special focus on the health aspect of the drug dependence phenomenon.

The Cypriot National Strategy focuses on the provision of treatment to drug users and to a targeted approach tailored towards the needs of sub groups with specific vulnerabilities, such as migrants and patients with dual diagnoses. The gender dimension is not neglected, with a specific emphasis on female drug users. The main goals of the Strategy are to enhance treatment- effectiveness, to increase retention rates of those undergoing treatment and to improve the delivery of treatment within the criminal justice system. We aim also and provide support to individuals in order to allow for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society also, and crucially, through efforts to reduce the social stigma attached to drug use.

Harm reduction measures provide a solid basis to address health risks associated with drug use, such as the transmission of infectious diseases. In our search for best practices, we have adopted the innovative measure of installing vending machines providing sterile syringes and other harm reduction material to injecting drug users. The anonymity provided by the machines and the 24-hour availability of the material, has increased the access of this high-risk group thereby reducing the transmission of blood-borne diseases such as hepatitis C, the high incidence of which among drug users is a cause of grave concern. Initial evaluation of this measure points to encouraging signs of a reduction in the transmission of blood borne diseases.

Coming now to the institutional/legal framework, I would like to mention the recent amendments of relevant national legislation, marking a shift to a therapeutic approach by allowing for the possibility of referral to treatment for drug users and drug dependent individuals. Young, first time offenders may be referred by the Police, in the pre-trial phase, to treatment centres as an alternative to prosecution. This provides an opportunity for early intervention and treatment rather than sentencing, in specific cases. Treatment remains available during the serving of prison sentences but also subsequently during the post-imprisonment period. We have also established a residential treatment centre for adolescents to provide intensive care for minors who face addiction problems, in an in-house context.

Mr. Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

The Republic of Cyprus strongly believes that intensified efforts should be invested in all areas of drug policy. The principles of adequate, proportionate and effective response to drug related offences, should inform our policies in full conformity with the International Drug Control Conventions, international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, safeguarding the inherent dignity of all individuals.

Cyprus firmly believes that we should all step up our efforts, by taking tangible measures and developing concrete policies that will benefit the lives drug users. In this vein, I would like to conclude by paying tribute to all engaged in many different and diverse ways, in addressing the effects of drug dependency, from law enforcement agents, to health and community workers, NGOS and civil society, and last but not least to all those who struggle with drug dependency, the families and drug users themselves.

I thank you Mr. Chair.