

**Statement of the
Portuguese National Coordinator on Drugs, Drug Addiction
and the Harmful Use of Alcohol,
Dr. João Goulão,
at the 65th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
General Debate
Vienna, 14 March 2022**

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be able to address in person the Commission at its 65th session in this unprecedented time that unfortunately, for several reasons, we're still living.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, and the Secretariat, for your tireless efforts to ensure that this session allows for fruitful discussions on the important topics of the agenda. Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its Member States.

Mr. Chair,

Over the last two years, in Portugal, as in all over the world, the Covid pandemic has and continues to have a strong impact in the drug situation, with repercussions that may be long lasting.

But it has also encouraged creative and resilient responses. Portugal has implemented several measures to mitigate the impact of the lockdowns and the pandemic itself, namely in the responses available for people who use drugs. It is important, more than ever, to prevent the negative health and social consequences of drug use.

The current situation underscores the relevance of our approach that encompasses a model of decriminalisation as part of a broader approach designed to deter drug use and promote measures directed to public health concerns, with social benefits to all involved.

In these demanding times, the international community needs more than ever to step up its responses to cope with the persistent and emerging trends and challenges.

Mr. Chair,

Portugal would like to highlight the extremely valuable work the UNODC is developing in the field of evidence-based drug prevention and treatment, and we are pleased to continue our cooperation in this and other matters, namely towards the implementation of resolution 64/5 of the CND, which was presented by Portugal on behalf of the EU and its MS and adopted at the 64th CND session.

At this time of great suffering for mankind we strongly believe that UN Member States should ensure that international drug policy is strongly grounded in human rights principles to secure that drug control efforts are effectively designed to protect people.

As I touch the subject of human rights, we would like to strongly condemn the military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and reaffirm our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine. We express our full solidarity with the Ukrainian people and Government.

Mr. Chair,

Allow me to share with you that Portugal has a new policy document, the National Plan for the Reduction of Addictive Behaviors and Dependencies 2021-2030, which clearly reaffirms the integration of human rights principles in our policy in a clear and undeniable way. Based on the results of an external evaluation the new Plan takes a broad and integrated view of addiction problems and addresses illicit drugs, new psychoactive substances, alcohol, prescribed medicines, doping and gambling.

In line with this model, Portugal strongly condemns the application of capital punishment in cases of crime offenses related to drug use. As a matter of fact, Portugal unequivocally opposes the death penalty in all circumstances.

We would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the role of civil society in drugs policy. During this crisis, it has been again underlined that we need close cooperation between different actors when solving multifaceted problems.

Mr. Chair,

I will now address you very briefly in my capacity as Presidency of the Pompidou Group, of the Council of Europe.

First of all, also on behalf of the Pompidou Group, I would like to express our full support to our newest member state, Ukraine, which joined the Pompidou Group as of January 2022.

For the Pompidou Group, 2022 will be marked by collective reflections among its 42 member states on the main priorities for the next three-year work cycle (2023-2025) to make the Group fit for addressing future drug-related challenges. The new work programme will be adopted at the Pompidou Group's 18th Ministerial Conference planned in Lisbon on 13-14 December 2022.

In parallel with discussing new ideas, the Portuguese Presidency will be dedicated to finalising the current work programme (2019-2022), maintaining a strong focus on human rights in line with the 50th Anniversary motto: "Human rights at the heart of drug policies".

The revised statute of the Group was adopted on 16 June 2021. This year will be crucial for setting the Group on the path of using the full potential of its new mandate. The modernised statute should lead to:

- an extended scope of the Group's work to include addictive behaviours related to licit substances (such as alcohol or tobacco) and new forms of addictions (such as Internet gambling and gaming);
- a human rights approach in all our actions, being the only international drug policy platform with a statutory mission to promote and protect the rights of all individuals, including those who use drugs and their relatives;
- a reinforced multidisciplinary approach to addressing the drug challenge which can only be tackled effectively if policy, practice and science are linked;
- a strong focus on synergies, both within the Council of Europe and outside (with both our main international partners and civil society).

To achieve these goals, we will build on the success of the Pompidou Group's 50th Anniversary celebrated in 2021 and its reinforced identity as part of Europe's leading human rights Organization which is also reflected in the Group's new name: Council of Europe International Cooperation Group on Drugs and Addiction.