

CONCEPT NOTE

High Level General Assembly Thematic Debate in support of the process towards the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem 7 May 2015

Introduction

Pursuant to resolution 69/201 of the General Assembly, the President of the General Assembly, in cooperation with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), as the central policymaking body within the United Nations system dealing with drug-related matters and having the leading role in the preparation of the special session of the Assembly, will hold a high-level thematic debate in support of process towards the 2016 special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem with Member States and other relevant stakeholders.

Background

Through its resolution 67/193, the General Assembly decided to convene in early 2016 a special session for reviewing the progress in the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, including an assessment of the achievements and challenges in countering the world drug problem, within the framework of the three international drug control conventions and other relevant United Nations instruments.

In March 2014, the CND adopted a Joint Ministerial Statement of its high-level review of the implementation by Member States of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action. The Joint Statement reiterated that the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility that should be addressed in a multilateral setting through effective and increased international cooperation and demanded an integrated, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing, balanced and comprehensive approach to supply and demand reduction strategies.

The Joint Statement also recognized that, 15 years after the commitments made in 1998 at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly to address the world drug problem, notwithstanding the ever-increasing efforts and progress made by States, relevant international organizations and civil society, the drug problem continues to pose a serious threat to the health, safety and well-being of all humanity, in particular youth.

The Joint Statement also took note of the ongoing discussions in some regions on how to address the world drug problem, in the light of the current situation and policies, and emphasized the importance of a broad, transparent, inclusive and scientific evidence-based discussion among Member States, with inputs from other relevant stakeholders, on the most effective ways to counter the world drug problem.

At its 69th Session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/200, in which it stressed the importance of the special session in 2016 as a milestone on the way to 2019, which had been set as the target date in the Political Declaration for the review of its implementation.

In the resolution, the General Assembly stated that the CND as the central policymaking body within the UN system dealing with drug-related matters shall lead that process by

addressing all organizational and substantive matters in an open-ended manner. In this regard, the President of the General Assembly was invited to support, guide and stay involved in the process. The Assembly noted with appreciation the efforts made by the CND to ensure adequate preparation for the special session in 2016, and requested that the Commission continue to take all necessary measures to prepare for the session. In preparation for the special session, the 58th Session of the CND adopted resolution 58/XX, entitled “Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem to be held in 2016”.

Objectives of the High Level Thematic Debate

The high level thematic debate will contribute to the ongoing General Assembly 2016 special session preparatory process discussions led by the CND.

It will address the progress in the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action, including an assessment of the achievements and challenges in countering the world drug problem, within the framework of the three international drug control conventions and other relevant United Nations instruments by, *inter alia*, addressing measures to reach an effective balance between supply and demand reduction measures and addressing all the consequences of the world drug problem, including in the health, social, human rights, economic, justice and security fields.

The event will also serve as an opportunity to discuss and highlight concrete measures that can strengthen international cooperation and promote the effective implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action’s underlying principle of ‘common and shared responsibility’ when addressing the world drug problem.

Format

This will be a one-day event consisting of an opening session, a high-level segment, two interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions and a closing session.

The morning panel will focus on achievements and challenges by Member States in countering the world drug problem.

Some questions to guide the panel discussion are as follows:

1. What have been the major achievements and challenges in addressing the world drug problem?
2. To this end, what lessons have been learned and what best practices in dealing with the drug world problem can be shared?
3. What should be the priorities in reviewing the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action?

The afternoon panel will focus on the importance for Member States of implementing a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach in addressing the world drug problem.

Some questions to guide the panel discussion are as follows:

1. What approaches are being followed to facilitate a multi-dimensional approach, covering the health, social, human rights, economic, justice and security fields?

2. What coordination mechanisms exist at national level; which departments/actors are involved; and what are the challenges they face?
3. What kind of cooperation, if any, exists between Governments and other stakeholders, including the non-governmental organizations, the scientific community, youth, the private sector; and what lessons could be shared?

To foster an interactive debate, participants are encouraged to make succinct interventions, not exceeding three minutes. Complete statements can be posted on the PaperSmart portal.

Outcome

President's Summary will be circulated to all Member States and stakeholders, as well as transmitted to the CND for consideration.

Participation

Consistent with the existing practice and in line with the resolutions 69/200 and 69/201 of the General Assembly, the high level thematic debate will be open to Member States, organs, entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, relevant international and regional organizations, civil society and other stakeholders. Participants are encouraged to attend at the highest possible level.

Provisional Programme

High Level General Assembly Thematic Debate
in support of the process towards the
2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem

7 May 2015
Trusteeship Council Chamber

Time	Morning
10:00 – 10:20	Opening Session <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly• H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations• H.E. Mr. Arthayudth Srisamoot, Chair of the 58th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations in Vienna
10:20 – 11:30	Plenary Session with High Level Representatives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Mr. Yesid Reyes Alvarado, Minister of Justice and Law, Colombia• Hon. Mr. Mark J. Golding, Minister of Justice of Jamaica• Hon. Mr. Miguel Ángel Osorio, Secretary of the Interior, México• H.E. Ambassador Rodrigo Vielmann, Vice-minister of Foreign Affairs, Guatemala• H.E. Juan Carlos Molina, Secretary of State of the Secretariat for the Prevention of Drug Addiction and Fight of Drug Traffic, Argentina• H.E. Rodrigo Velez, National Secretary of the Council on Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control, Ecuador• Ambassador Mr. Luis E. Arreaga, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, United States of America• Mr. Fidias Aristy Payano, President of National Council for Drugs, Dominican Republic• Mr. José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the Organization of American States• Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu, Director of the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
11:30 – 13:00	Morning Session <p>Topic: “Achievements and challenges by Member States in countering the world drug problem”</p>

	<p>Co-Chairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ms. María Emma Mejía Vélez, Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations • H.E. Mr. Alvaro José de Mendonça e Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Milton Romani, National Drug Board Secretary, Uruguay • H.E. Mr. Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations in New York • H.E. Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations in New York • H.E. Ms. Ruth Dreifuss, Member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy and Former Swiss President <p>Discussion – Interactive interventions from the floor (limited to 3 minutes)</p>
	<p><i>Afternoon</i></p>
<p>15:00 – 17:45</p>	<p>Afternoon Session</p> <p>Topic: “The importance for Member States of implementing a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach in addressing the world drug problem”</p> <p>Co-chairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Andrej Logar, Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations • H.E. Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ms. Györgyi Martin Zanathy, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to the International Organisations in Vienna • Mr. Ahmadu Giade, Chair and Chief Executive of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Nigeria • H.E. Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations • Mr. Dispanadda Diskul, Chief Development Officer, Doi Tung Development Project/ Mae Fah Luang Foundation, Thailand • Ms. Sandy Mteirek, Advocacy Coordinator at Skoun, Lebanese Addictions Center, Lebanon <p>Discussion – Interactive interventions from the floor (limited to 3 minutes)</p>

17:45 – 18:00

Closing Session

- **H.E. Mr. Khaled Shamaa**, Chair of the UNGASS Preparations Board, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations in Vienna
- **H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa**, President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

8 June 2015

Excellency,

It is my pleasure to forward herewith the President's Summary of the High-Level General Assembly Thematic Debate in support of the process towards the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem, that was held at the UN Headquarters in New York on 7 May 2015.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam K. Kutesa', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sam K. Kutesa

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

**High-level General Assembly Thematic Debate
in support of the process towards the
2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem**

New York, 7 May 2015

President's Summary

Introduction

The President of the General Assembly convened a High-level Thematic Debate in support of the process towards the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem on 7 May 2015. The debate was organized pursuant to resolution 69/201 of the General Assembly, requesting the President of the General Assembly, in cooperation with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), as the central policymaking body within the United Nations system dealing with drug-related matters and having the leading role in the preparation of the special session of the Assembly, to hold such a thematic debate with Member States and other stakeholders.

The debate addressed progress in the implementation of the *Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem*, including an assessment of the achievements and challenges in countering the world drug problem, within the framework of the three international drug control conventions and other relevant United Nations instruments by, *inter alia*, “addressing measures to reach an effective balance between supply and demand reduction measures and addressing all the consequences of the world drug problem, including in the health, social, human rights, economic, justice and security fields”. It also served as an opportunity to discuss and highlight concrete measures to strengthen international cooperation and promote the effective implementation of the *Political Declaration and Plan of Action's* underlying principle of “common and shared responsibility” in addressing the world drug problem.

Key Messages

The one-day High-level Thematic Debate consisted of an opening session, a plenary session with high-level representatives and two interactive panel discussions addressing the achievements and challenges by Member States in countering the world drug problem; and the importance for Member States of implementing a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach in addressing the world drug problem, respectively. Interventions from the floor followed both interactive panels with a closing segment concluding the event. The following are the key messages that were shared by participants throughout the High-level Thematic Debate:

Preparations for UNGASS 2016: Many speakers reaffirmed their support for the CND as the central policymaking body in the United Nations on drug-related issues and acknowledged its leading role in preparations for the UNGASS. They noted that UNGASS could serve as a milestone towards the 2019 target date for the review of the *Political Declaration and Plan of Action*. Furthermore, they underscored that UNGASS should avail Member States and other

stakeholders an opportunity to engage in an open and transparent, evidence-based discussion on the achievements and remaining challenges, including those pertaining to the spread of new psychoactive substances (NPS). It was noted that a special segment on UNGASS preparations was held during the 58th session of the CND in March 2015 involving interactive discussions on several key thematic areas, including; drugs and health; drugs and crime; drugs and development, as well as cross cutting issues, including; human rights and new challenges, threats and approaches. It was highlighted that these interactive discussions included the exchange of expertise, practical experiences and lessons learned by Member States, United Nations entities and agencies and civil society, and that the chairs' summaries are available on the UNGASS 2016 website (www.ungass2016.org).

Drugs and Health: Participants underscored that health care and social protection must be part of any comprehensive approach to the world drug problem. They noted that the world drug problem affects national institutions and challenges overburdened health systems, especially in developing countries. Sharing their national experiences, some participants underlined that there is compelling evidence that the countries that integrated public health aspects into their drug control efforts realized greater social benefits, while also enhancing the rule of law and the safety of their citizens. In this regard, they emphasized the need to exert more efforts to effectively treat, rehabilitate and socially reintegrate drug dependent persons, in line with the three international drug control conventions. Participants emphasized the importance of public awareness campaigns as a preventive measure, focusing on the most vulnerable groups, especially the youth. Participants also noted that drug regulation should take into account the need to ensure the availability of and accessibility to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while avoiding their diversion to use for other purposes.

Drugs and Crime: Speakers underlined the perilous link between drug trafficking and terrorism, extremism, armed conflict and trafficking in small arms and light weapons. They noted that drug trafficking finances violent non-state actors, thus destabilizing governments and endangering the safety of communities. It was also stressed that drug trafficking flourishes in places that are already affected by conflict, which in turn exacerbates and further destabilizes the situation. In this vein, some speakers underscored the importance of fighting corruption and money laundering with a view to bolster local, national, regional and international efforts to address the drug problem. Given these threats, speakers stressed the importance of combating drug trafficking as a regional and international security issue, including by supporting the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and making effective use of its policies and programmes. In this regard, some speakers also stressed the importance of the seizure of drugs-related proceeds, and shared their national experiences on how they have put seized assets to constructive use, including in the health and education sectors.

Drugs and Development: Participants noted that drugs and crime undermine social and economic development, the rule of law, and threaten the security and stability of countries and societies. A number of speakers emphasized that the socio-economic phenomenon of drugs should be addressed by empowering communities and reducing their vulnerabilities. They also noted that those involved in the production of drugs are often members of vulnerable groups, which struggle to identify opportunities for alternative livelihoods. In this context, speakers called for alternative development measures to be promoted to tackle the root causes of drug cultivation,

underlining that only by addressing poverty and the lack of opportunities can such problems be addressed in a sustainable manner. They underscored, in this regard, the importance of addressing and integrating the world drug problem into the post-2015 development agenda. Speakers also noted the impact of drug crime and drug abuse on youth, which is often compounded by poverty, lack of skills, education and employment. While suggesting several measures to address these challenges, participants noted that families, caretakers, educators and community leaders have particularly important roles to play in providing guidance and alternatives to young people.

Human Rights: Speakers highlighted the importance of aligning drug policies with human rights commitments, and of placing people and societies at the centre of such policies. Many also pointed out that a balanced drug policy approach must uphold human rights, including through health and social risks and harm reduction measures, and by devoting special attention to the most vulnerable – particularly youth, women and children. The need for a people-centered approach, in-line with the principles of non-discrimination, human dignity, solidarity, the rule of law and human rights, including the right to life and the right to health, was highlighted by some as integral to the efforts to address the drug problem. Many interventions called for the use of the full range criminal justice tools to ensure proportionality of sentencing and the promotion of alternatives to incarceration, where appropriate. In this regard, they proposed that custodial measures should be reserved for the most dangerous drug trade offenders, not the weakest and most vulnerable drug chain participants. Some speakers asserted that the death penalty should not be used under any circumstances, while others reported that the “zero tolerance approach” had produced drug- and crime-free societies. A few speakers welcomed the engagement and contributions of the Human Rights Council to the UNGASS 2016, including through its resolution A/HRC/28/L.22, of March 2015.

Regional and International Cooperation and Partnerships: Participants called for the strengthening of international cooperation and the promotion of comprehensive policies based on international commitments by States. They noted that a comprehensive approach would necessitate technical assistance to all affected States, including transit States, to address the multitude of challenges precipitated by the illicit drug trade. They highlighted the need for regional approaches and cooperation given the proximity, commonalities and knowledge of the challenges facing them. They also emphasized the importance of regional and international cooperation in information sharing and capacity building; including in collecting and processing data; disrupting and dismantling organized criminal networks; and extradition and judicial assistance. Concerning partnerships, speakers encouraged the participation of civil society, religious leaders, local authorities, scientific institutions and others in the development and implementation, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of drug policies. They also underlined the importance of fostering greater coordination between UNODC, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and others to ensure balanced results, and stressed that the CND and UNODC must continue to lead these efforts.

Implementation of the International Drug Control Conventions: Many speakers underscored the importance of the full implementation of the three international drug conventions, which they

said, remain the best tools for achieving progress in addressing the world drug problem. They noted that when applied together with other relevant international instruments, including the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), as well as relevant international human rights instruments, the conventions could promote an effective response to the world drug problem. In this regard they stressed that States and regions should have flexibility to pursue their own responses to domestic and regional challenges, while respecting the legitimate interests of other States and regions.

Approaches: Participants underlined the need for a more comprehensive approach to address the world drug problem, taking into account different national and regional realities and circumstances, in full adherence of the three drug control conventions. They stressed the importance of the human dimension of the drug issue and called for a greater focus on public health, rehabilitation and reintegration. Some speakers noted that decriminalization has allowed for the creation of a legal framework to reduce the negative impact of drug use, while others argued against the legalization of narcotic drugs. While this discussion was underway, it was cautioned that some of these approaches were still in the experimental phase and thus required further evaluation to assess their effectiveness in addressing the world drug problem.

New challenges and threats: Speakers noted that the spread of new substances was a major challenge, which should be further explored in the context of the UNGASS 2016. In the meantime, they called for strategies to address the proliferation of NPS and amphetamine, the dynamic illicit drug market, use and abuse of technology, prevention of diversion of precursors and essential chemicals used in the production of drugs, and the link between drugs and organized crime, including wildlife and forest crime.

UNODC: Many speakers noted the valuable expertise and technical assistance provided by UNODC to States through its integrated, interlinked country, regional and global programmes and its network of field offices. Others highlighted UNODC's important contributions through its research activities, health-based approaches to treating drug addiction and countering the spread of HIV, as well as its work on harm reduction and alternative development. Speakers also noted the SADC-UNODC joint programme on drugs, the Container Control Programme and the global SMART programme as being particularly effective. Some participants called on Member States to provide UNODC with adequate, predictable and stable resources.

Conclusion

The High-level Thematic Debate featured informed and insightful contributions on how best to address challenges presented by the world drug problem. As such, it contributed to the ongoing UNGASS 2016 preparatory process by fostering an open and inclusive discussion on good practices, lessons learned and strategies pertaining to drug use, production and trafficking. The perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders were heard, including those of Member States, relevant United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, civil society and the scientific community – underlining the importance of a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and collaborative approach to finding practical and sustainable solutions to the drug issues facing communities throughout the world.

7 May 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the High-Level Thematic Debate on the World Drug
Problem**

**Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates and participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this High-level Thematic Debate, in support of the preparatory process for the 2016 Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS) on the World Drug Problem.

I am particularly heartened to welcome the numerous dignitaries here this morning: His Excellency Yesid Reyes Alvarado, Minister of Justice and Law of Colombia; His Excellency Mark J. Golding, Minister of Justice of Jamaica; His Excellency Miguel Ángel Osorio, Secretary of the Interior of México; and His Excellency Rodrigo Vielmann, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala.

The Special Session constitutes a unique opportunity for an open, inclusive and wide-ranging discussion among Member States, ahead of the 2019 target year for the implementation of commitments and targets set out in the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem.

As set out in General Assembly Resolution 69/201, I have worked closely with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) to organize today's thematic debate. I welcome the efforts undertaken by the CND thus far, in preparing for the UNGASS, and also thank Member States for their initiative and keen interest in addressing the world drug problem.

Today's debate comes at a critical juncture. As you may recall, we just recently concluded the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime and Criminal Prevention in Doha. Its outcome underlines our collective resolve to intensify efforts to address the world drug problem, based upon the principle of "common and shared responsibility". The outcome also elaborated on the need for a comprehensive and balanced approach to supply and demand reduction strategies.

Excellencies,

No country or society is immune from the menace of illicit drugs and their attendant effects. The world drug problem does not discriminate rich from the poor, although the poorest and most vulnerable in our societies are the worst affected, owing to the multitude of challenges they face.

Drug trafficking is a multibillion dollar enterprise which has infiltrated societies, governments, and national and international institutions, including those that are responsible for its control. Worldwide, annual proceeds from the illicit drug market are estimated to be around US\$ 322 billion. While drug barons and their criminal networks thrive, millions of men, women and children are trapped in poverty, languish in prisons and challenge already overburdened health systems, particularly in developing countries.

People must be at the centre of all our efforts and we must do what we can to support and empower them to overcome their vulnerabilities, which exposes them to illicit drugs and crime.

As many participants noted in the High-level Thematic Debate I convened in February on crime prevention and criminal justice, drugs and crime undermine social and economic development and the rule of law. This is in addition to threatening the security and stability of many societies. This underlines the importance of integrating crime prevention and criminal justice into the post-2015 development agenda.

Excellencies,

Combating the world drug problem is an urgent and imperative need. Countries have been fighting back with some success, but the resources directed at this problem could have been more effectively utilised for development. Our collective efforts must focus on prevention, while also rendering treatment and care to persons affected by drug addiction and those needing help to alleviate pain and suffering. We must also scale up interventions and international cooperation to resist and combat drug-related international organized crime.

In this regard, I underscore the importance of the full implementation of the three drug control Conventions, which provide the legal basis for our interventions in this area. Although implementation of the Conventions has been uneven and incomplete, we can do better as individual nations and collectively, through increased international cooperation.

In addition to the three drug control Conventions, we need to make effective use of other tools contained in the United Nations Conventions on corruption and transnational organized crime, to combat drug trafficking, money laundering, wildlife and forest crime and many other illicit activities.

There is also a need to balance demand and supply reduction strategies, while also raising awareness of the impact of drug consumption on producer and transit countries and implementing alternative development strategies. We must also address the new trafficking trends, adopting and staying ahead of

emerging dynamics. There is also an urgent need to give attention to the link between illicit trade in drugs and terrorism financing, corruption and trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

I commend the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for its alternative development programmes, aimed at improving the livelihood of farmers, especially women, in different parts of the world.

Let us use this debate to have an open and inclusive exchange of views on what approaches have worked, while also identifying areas for improvement in our efforts. I hope today's discussion will serve as a valuable contribution to the preparations for the Special Session in 2016.

I thank you for your kind attention.

High-level Thematic Debate in support of the process towards the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem

H.E. Mr. Khaled SHAMAA

Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations (Vienna) and Chair of the Board tasked by the CND with UNGASS Preparations

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a great pleasure for me to speak to you today in my capacity as Chair of the Board tasked by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs with UNGASS preparations.

I would like to thank H.E. Mr. Kutesa, the President of the General Assembly, for the invitation.

I would also like to thank all of you for the interesting statements and the lively discussion today.

As we were reminded today: while there have been many achievements in addressing the world drug problem, many challenges remain. The deliberations today have shown again that, while we all face challenges, the realities on the ground are different from region to region, and within regions, from country to country. **Learning from each other – discussing the challenges faced, successes gained and lessons learnt - is crucial in our preparations for 2016.**

In that spirit, we have committed ourselves to **inclusive** preparations – **inclusive** when it comes to the substantial issues covered and **inclusive** when it comes to the involvement of all concerned throughout the process.

In terms of **substance**, a number of issues have been raised today: the importance of a balanced approach covering the health aspects, including prevention, treatment, HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care as well as access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes; the need to address drug-related crime, including the various forms of organized crime and money laundering, while considering new threats and emerging issues; the importance of upholding human rights, while giving special

attention also for the needs of women, children and youth as well as the need to address socio-economic issues and the importance of strengthening alternative development and international cooperation.

As you will recall, these issues have been dealt with in the interactive discussions held by the Commission during the *special segment on UNGASS preparations* in March, and they are also covered in the interactive multi-stakeholder round tables which the Commission has recommended for holding at UNGASS 2016. Hence, we should endeavour to make good use of the opportunity to look into these matters in further depth.

In order to make a real impact and to focus on urgently needed results, we need to take a practical, operational, approach with a view to strengthen the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action, whose underlining principle is the principle of “common and shared responsibility”. Special attention is thereby to be paid to the needs of the developing world.

In terms of **participation**, let me reiterate that, pursuant to the mandate provided by the Assembly, the UNGASS preparations led by the CND are conducted in an open-ended manner.

As I mentioned at many occasions before, we also need to hear the voices from those based on the ground. Therefore the CND will further make best possible use of the tools it has developed to involve those who cannot take part in person: by further webcasting its meetings, using video-conferencing and skype and promoting the UNGASS website, which is our joint online platform.

In terms of involving the **various stakeholders**, I would like to applaud civil society, who has enthusiastically responded to the opportunities provided to enrich the work of the Commission: more than 200 representatives from around 70 NGOs participated in the March CND session, each of the interactive discussions during the UNGASS Special Segment benefited from the expertise of panellists chosen by the Civil Society Task Force.

We have also heard today about the importance of involving **UN entities and specialized organizations**. The last CND session very much benefited from the expertise brought by WHO and many other UN entities and we look forward to hearing from all United Nations and intergovernmental bodies, organs, agencies, entities and organizations. Speaking about the UN system, it is imperative to note the major contributions made by **UNODC**, which has been called upon by the Assembly to maintain its leading role in the international efforts to counter the world drug problem.

We all agree that we need to base our discussions on **evidence** – “what works” and “what does not work”. I am pleased that our March CND session could take advantage of the

input from **participants of the Scientific Consultation**, which was held in parallel, as was already mentioned by Ambassador Srisamoot, Chair of the current 58th session of the CND, this morning. We look forward to a continued interaction with the scientists in the future.

As essential is the involvement of the **youth**, our most precious good, our leaders of tomorrow. Their reporting back from their own youth forum, also held in parallel to the March CND session, has been refreshing and inspiring. We need more of their views and ideas.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNGASS 2016 should be, and will be, about **human beings**. It is our collective responsibility to make sure that addressing the world drug problem in 2016 is based on ensuring the well-being of peoples and societies.

Thus, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, through its UNGASS preparations Board, will continue exerting all efforts throughout the preparatory process with that goal in mind.

Thank you.

**Remarks by the UNODC Director, Division for Policy Analysis and
Public Affairs**
**High Level General Assembly Thematic Debate in support of the
process towards the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on
the World Drug Problem**
New York, 7 May 2015

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

From the outset, allow me to express gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for his leadership in convening this discussion.

The debate represents an opportunity to hear different perspectives on the many challenges posed by the production, trafficking and use of illicit drugs, and to reflect and learn from each other as we work towards the 2016 special session.

Member States have repeatedly reaffirmed that the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility, notably in the Joint Ministerial Statement adopted in 2014 at the high-level review of the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action.

In the Doha Declaration agreed at the 13th Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice just last month, Member States further pledged to intensify efforts to address the world drug problem “through a comprehensive and balanced approach”.

We at UNODC much welcome the fact that the debate towards the 2016 UNGASS has helped to focus international attention on a serious and complex problem.

Preparations for the UNGASS have been underway now for some time, led by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which had been tasked by the General Assembly with overseeing an inclusive preparatory process.

As other distinguished speakers have already mentioned, the most recent CND session in Vienna in March devoted a special segment on UNGASS preparations and recommended for eventual adoption by the GA a resolution that defines the modalities for the UNGASS.

The preparatory process so far has benefitted from the active engagement of Member States, as well as from the substantive contributions made by UN partners, international and regional organizations, and civil society.

Furthermore, the discussions have brought a welcome emphasis on the human dimensions of the world drug problem, and the need for evidence-based approaches.

They have also helped to further promote inter-agency cooperation, strengthen the dialogue with the scientific community, Civil Society Organizations and increase engagement with young people.

In all, the process leading to UNGASS 2016 has provided a crucial opportunity to discuss and highlight concrete measures that can strengthen international cooperation, and promote the effective implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on the world drug problem.

UNGASS 2016 can thus serve as a milestone on the way to 2019, which has been set as the target date in the Political Declaration for the review of implementation.

Meanwhile, UNODC remains committed to supporting Member States on the ground, including through our integrated, interlinked country, regional and global programmes through the network of field offices, as well as through our research expertise.

Our work includes support for robust criminal justice responses to disrupt illicit drug trafficking, through such initiatives as the Container Control Programme and Networking the Networks.

UNODC also supports Member States to ensure access to controlled medications for medical purposes; to implement evidence- and health-based approaches to preventing and treating drug use disorders as well as HIV; and to promote alternative development to reduce the vulnerabilities of poor farmers to illicit drug cultivation.

Alternative development is in fact the focus of this year's World Drug Report, which also features an expanded section on prevention and treatment.

The World Drug Report 2015 aims to provide useful research inputs to the UNGASS process, and we look forward to sharing these findings with you when the report is released in June.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It leaves me to thank you for your kind attention.

7 May 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the High-Level Thematic Debate on the World Drug
Problem**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I thank our panellists, speakers and all participants for their valuable contributions throughout this High-level Thematic Debate convened in support of the process towards the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS).

As noted in my opening remarks and reiterated by a number of speakers today—we must engage in an open discussion on how to best address the challenges posed by drug use, production and trafficking.

In doing so, we need to take into account the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders. I am convinced that the lessons learned, strategies and views we have exchanged today will constitute a valuable input in the lead-up to the Special Session next year.

Today, many speakers emphasized that the world drug problem is a complex, transnational threat that should be addressed collectively, bearing in mind the principle of “common and shared responsibilities”.

Participants underlined the need for a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach. Many acknowledged the important insights brought to the discussion by civil society and the scientific community.

Participants called for greater international cooperation and a global response, in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Many noted that the three United Nations Drug Conventions should be the cornerstone of international efforts to address the challenges posed by drugs, although participants stressed that Member States must have flexibility to craft their own responses to address drug-related issues.

Speakers also pointed to the need to undertake a comprehensive review of existing drug policies, with a view to identify areas requiring improvement, as well as new approaches.

Many speakers stressed the importance of the human dimension of the drug issue and called for greater focus on public health, rehabilitation and re-integration. Special attention should be devoted to the most vulnerable – particularly women and children – in the design and implementation of drug policies.

Health care and treatment, including specific initiatives to address drug abuse and dependence, should be part of a comprehensive approach.

Others stressed that prevention efforts should be focused on providing opportunities and empowering people to reduce their vulnerabilities, including through increased social integration and improved access to education.

Families, caretakers, educators and community leaders have particularly important roles to play in providing guidance and positive alternatives to young people.

Some participants expressed concern that valuable and often limited resources were being diverted from other pressing challenges, particularly development needs.

Throughout the debate, speakers pointed out the link between the world drug problem and peace and security emphasizing that drug trafficking finances violent non-state actors, which in turn undermines governments and endangers the safety of communities.

Speakers also underscored the perilous link between drug trafficking and terrorism, extremism and armed conflict noting that the former exacerbates and flourishes in places already overwhelmed by these destabilizing elements.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

It was encouraging that today all speakers expressed determination to continue to support efforts to find practical solutions to the drug challenges facing our communities.

It is of crucial importance that all stakeholders including relevant United Nations entities, civil society and the scientific community fully contribute to the preparatory process for UNGASS 2016.

I am convinced that through a broad, inclusive, collaborative effort, UNGASS 2016 will be a success.

I will prepare a Chair's summary of today's deliberations and transmit it to all Member States and other stakeholders, including the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for consideration.

I thank you for your participation and kind attention.