

8 May 2015

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

Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the President of the General Assembly

Yesterday, a 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, was organized by the General Assembly in close cooperation with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND).

In his opening statement, the President of the General Assembly (PGA), H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, reminded participants that “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”.

The PGA recalled that “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”. He noted that “worldwide, annual proceeds from the illicit drug market are estimated to be around US\$ 322 billion”.

The PGA said that “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. This underlines the importance of integrating crime prevention and criminal justice into the post-2015 development agenda”. The PGA went on to say that “resources directed at this problem could have been more effectively utilized for development”.

Scaling up international cooperation

Participants noted the need to focus on prevention, treatment and care of affected persons to alleviate pain and suffering; the implementing of alternative development strategies, and the need to scale up international cooperation, including the full implementation of the three drug control Conventions. The link between illicit trade in drugs, terrorism and the spread of weapons was also stressed.

The Deputy Secretary-General (DSG), H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, underscored the importance of consolidating approaches and integrating a range of perspectives on drug issues. He recalled that the drugs trade poses a threat to peace and security at the national, regional and international levels. He reminded the audience that “criminal networks which thrive on the drug trade are threats to strong,

stable societies. Organized crime undermines institutions, feeds corruption and obstructs democratic governance”.

The DSG stated that “this despicable trade fuels violence and instability – threatening hard-won progress on peace, development, respect for human rights and the rule of law”. He emphasized that ‘at the international level the ever stronger links between transnational organized crime, terrorism and extremist violence constitute a very serious new threat”.

Participants were reminded that people who use drugs face special barriers, burdens, traumas, discrimination and stigmatization, which include the negative effects of serving lengthy prisons sentences for minor drug offences. It was emphasized that focus on public health, prevention, treatment and care – as well as on economic, social and cultural effects and strategies – can provide a viable approach to the problem.

The event took place ahead of the 2019 target year for 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. It also took place in the wake of the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime and Criminal Prevention in Doha, which emphasized a comprehensive and balanced approach to supply and demand reduction strategies.