

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.