

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.