

**Statement by Ambassador Juan Ramon de la Fuente,  
Special Envoy of the Government of Mexico at the General  
Debate of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission on Narcotic  
Drugs**

Vienna, Austria, 15 March 2019

Chairperson of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs,

Distinguished Ministers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to make this statement on behalf of the Government of Mexico. Today, we reaffirm our conviction that multilateralism represents the best option for addressing more efficiently the various facets of the world drug phenomenon.

It is time to recognize the new dynamics and social demands, in order to jointly strengthen the international strategy.

Mexico subscribes the Ministerial Declaration hoping that the innovative elements supporting it shall constitute a guide for the future, namely: a reinvigorated focus on public health, respect for human rights and for contributing towards achieving the sustainable development goals.

Over the last decades, we have undertaken unprecedented efforts worldwide to eradicate crops, seize larger drug shipments, destroy clandestine laboratories and dismantle drug-trafficking organizations. Notwithstanding the enormous efforts and the high costs involved, the excessive emphasis on the punitive and prohibitionist approach has only generated a spiral of violence, insecurity and social break down.

The need to enrich that exclusively punitive vision has become an urgent demand for Mexico and all countries. The Special Session of the General Assembly of 1998 and the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction, with the Political Declaration and Plan of Action of 2009 and the Ministerial Commission on Narcotic Drugs of 2014 have consolidated three key elements for international drug policy.

1. **Balance.** On the need to restore to the original equilibrium that had been lost, by giving the same weight and drive to the commitments to reduce both supply and demand.
2. **Comprehensiveness.** If we have learnt something over these past years, it is that fragmented actions are of little to none utility.
3. **Common and shared responsibility.** The importance of bringing all States together in searching for effective solutions, regardless of their roles in the illicit drug market chain.

It is based on these evolving foundations that the Outcome document of the Special Session of the General Assembly, UNGASS 2016, offers a more comprehensive and more action-oriented guide for the future of international drug policy.

Moving on from discourse to the instrumentalization of the operative recommendations of 2016 could be the main outcome of this Commission for “safeguarding the future” from problems linked to drug abuse and the illicit market, while avoiding to continue with failed policies that have caused much more damage than the substances themselves.

From our perspective, a thoughtful multilateral reflection is needed, without prejudices or visions that do not embrace, as a minimum, the following five elements:

### **1. More humane law enforcement.**

The enforcement of inhuman, cruel and disproportionate sentences has resulted in an ineffective punishment of the weakest links of the chain, which are often coopted by the threat of criminality as the only alternative for their survival.

None of the international instruments currently in force prescribe that incarceration must be the response to drug consumption and to any other drug related infraction. However, the reality across the world reveals a saturation of penitentiary systems for minor infractions, with unbearable costs for the State, but more importantly, for the social fabric and families, affecting women in particular.

It is imperative, thus, to advance in the decriminalization of consumption and some other practices, and to develop an international catalogue of alternative types of punishment.

## **2. Recognizing the problem as a matter of public health.**

In recent years, the number of people with drug abuse problems in the world has been increasing at the same rate as the population growth, while in several regions of the globe register records of first drug use at younger ages.

This is proof that the international strategy has not yielded the expected results, and it is therefore necessary to favor a public health approach beyond simple reduction of demand, that promotes preventive interventions and harm reduction programs.

Persons with drug abuse problems require medical and psychosocial support and treatment. It has been proven that criminalizing, stigmatizing and incarceration that do not counter the problem, but rather worsen it.

## **3. Differentiation of substances by control policies.**

Not all substances under the international control regime produce the same effects, neither do they create the same levels of dependence. Either tobacco or alcohol are sometimes more harmful than some substances under strict international control, such as marijuana.

It is necessary then to come up with policies that control and regulate substances differentiating among them, recognizing without bias, both their effects and therapeutic qualities.

It is inadmissible that more than three fourths of the world population suffer from and die in pain because lack of access to therapeutic derivatives for palliative care, such as morphine.

## **4. Address the causes of violence and the spread of crime through the strategy of sustainable development.**

Entire regions of the world have experienced increases in the number of violent homicides. In the case of Mexico, violence as a tool of criminality and the emergence of new criminal expressions are clearly linked to the illicit drug trade.

The most vulnerable communities have been victimized and coopted by the many branches of criminality, leading to cycles of disintegration and tearing apart the social structure. The response for these populations,

which have been forgotten or made invisible, cannot continue to rely on the use of force. Rather, what is needed are opportunities, services and development alternatives to address the structural causes, with a long-term vision.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers the ideal framework for efforts regarding drugs to acquire a social dimension, and to contribute to achieving peaceful, inclusive and prosperous societies.

### **5. A more coherent and efficient international cooperation.**

International cooperation is an ideal space to equally share successes and failures. No Convention forbids us to ask questions or imagine answers that seek to overcome the obstacles the world face today. International cooperation should not be neither a precondition nor a straitjacket; it must be a tailor-made suit.

International organizations, and the United Nations System in particular, play a central role in triggering this cooperation. We can only overcome overstretched efforts, duplication, politicization and inefficient use of resources through greater coordination and collaboration among organizations. I trust that we will all support making concerted strides in this direction.

Thank you very much.