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Global health and foreign policy

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2023

[without reference to a Main Committee ([A/78/L.24](#))]

78/131. Enhancing action at the national, regional and international levels to address the global public health and security challenges posed by synthetic drugs

The General Assembly,

Recognizing that the world drug problem continues to constitute a serious threat to public health and security and to the well-being of humanity, and recognizing in particular the significant challenges posed by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic drugs, as well as their distribution, consumption and use for non-medical and non-scientific purposes,

Recalling that, in the Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of Our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem of 2019,¹ Member States reaffirmed their shared commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem through concerted and sustained action at the national, regional and international levels, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility, including accelerating the implementation of existing drug policy commitments contained in the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, held in 2016, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”,² in the Joint Ministerial Statement of the 2014 high-level review by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the implementation by Member States of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem³ and in the Political Declaration and Plan of

¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2019, Supplement No. 8 (E/2019/28)*, chap. I, sect. B.

² Resolution [S-30/1](#), annex.

³ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2014, Supplement No. 8 (E/2014/28)*, chap. I, sect. C.



Action of 2009,⁴ and that Member States have recognized those documents as complementary and mutually reinforcing,

Stressing with grave concern the international challenge, particularly to public health, welfare and security, including law enforcement, posed by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic drugs, as well as their distribution, consumption and use for non-medical and non-scientific purposes, and reaffirming its determination to prevent and treat the non-medical use of such drugs, minimize the adverse health and social consequences associated with their use and prevent and counter their illicit production, manufacture, diversion and trafficking,

Recognizing that the world drug problem, including the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic drugs, as well as their distribution, consumption and use for non-medical and non-scientific purposes, remains a common and shared responsibility that should be addressed, inter alia, in a multilateral setting through effective and increased international cooperation and demands an integrated, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing, balanced, scientific evidence-based and comprehensive approach,

Underscoring that the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol,⁵ the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971,⁶ the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988⁷ and other relevant international instruments constitute the cornerstone of the international drug control system,

Reaffirming the principal role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as the policymaking body of the United Nations system with prime responsibility for drug control and other drug-related matters, and of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as the leading entity in the United Nations system for addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem, as well as the treaty-mandated roles of the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization, and recognizing the relevant contributions of other relevant United Nations entities and international organizations, including the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), within their respective mandates,

Reaffirming also its unwavering commitment to ensuring that all aspects of demand reduction and related measures, supply reduction and related measures, and international cooperation are addressed in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁸ with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, all human rights, fundamental freedoms, the inherent dignity of all individuals and the principles of equal rights and mutual respect among States,

Recalling relevant United Nations resolutions, including all General Assembly resolutions related to addressing and countering the world drug problem, the most recent of which is resolution [77/238](#) of 15 December 2022, entitled “Addressing and countering the world drug problem through a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach”, as well as all relevant resolutions and decisions adopted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs,

Reaffirming its commitment to the goals and objectives of the three international drug control conventions, including concern about the health and welfare of

⁴ Ibid., 2009, *Supplement No. 8 (E/2009/28)*, chap. I, sect. C.

⁵ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 976, No. 14152.

⁶ Ibid., vol. 1019, No. 14956.

⁷ Ibid., vol. 1582, No. 27627.

⁸ Resolution [217 A \(III\)](#).

humankind as well as the individual and public health-related, social and safety problems resulting from the abuse of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, in particular among children and young people, and drug-related crime, and reaffirming its determination to prevent and treat the abuse of such substances and prevent and counter their illicit cultivation, production, manufacturing and trafficking,

Reaffirming that the three international drug control conventions seek to achieve a balance between ensuring access to and the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances under international control for medical and scientific purposes and preventing their diversion and misuse,

Noting with deep concern that the availability of internationally controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering, remains low to non-existent in many countries, in particular in developing countries, and highlighting the need to enhance national efforts and international cooperation at all levels to address that situation by promoting measures to ensure their availability, affordability and accessibility for medical and scientific purposes, within the framework of national legal systems, while simultaneously preventing their diversion, abuse and trafficking, in order to fulfil the aims and objectives of the three international drug control conventions,

Stressing with grave concern the increase in the number of overdose deaths associated with the use of synthetic drugs, and the urgent need to raise awareness of and improve access to the prevention and treatment of drug overdose,

Underscoring the need for Member States, consistent with their national legislation and contexts, to facilitate non-discriminatory and voluntary access to drug-related prevention, treatment, education, care, sustained recovery, rehabilitation, social reintegration and related support services, in particular for people who may face obstacles when accessing those services, including those impacted by social marginalization, while mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development and implementation of those services,

Recognizing that civil society, as well as the scientific community and academia, play an important role in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem, and noting that affected populations and representatives of civil society entities, where appropriate, should be enabled to play a participatory role in the formulation, implementation, and the providing of relevant scientific evidence in support of, as appropriate, the evaluation of drug control policies and programmes, and recognizing the importance of cooperation with the private sector in this regard,

Taking note of the publication of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime *World Drug Report 2023*, in particular its chapter entitled “The synthetic drug phenomenon,” and noting with concern its findings that synthetic drugs are proliferating globally and offer criminals, including organized crime groups, significant advantages with regard to the scalability of manufacturing, operational costs, geographic flexibility and reduced risks of detection, interdiction and prosecution, that consumers of synthetic drugs face growing challenges related to the unknown pharmacology and harms of such drugs, lack of available treatments, therapies or antagonists for some new drugs, the potential development of an underground and unsafe market for such therapies, with the inherent risks of misuse and abuse of an unregulated practice, and increasingly dangerous mixtures of harmful substances in the drug supply, and also that developments in digital communications platforms have added a new dimension to drug distribution, including the use of the clear web, encrypted communications tools, certain social media applications, and darknet markets,

Taking note with appreciation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Synthetic Drug Strategy 2021–2025,

Taking note of the report on precursors of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2022, in which the Board expressed its readiness to fully support Governments in their efforts to implement articles 12 and 13 of the 1988 Convention, with regard to precursors under international control, chemicals not included in the tables of the Convention, and illicit drug manufacturing equipment,

Bearing in mind that, in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019, Member States resolved to review in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2029 progress in implementing all international drug policy commitments, with a midterm review in the Commission in 2024, and that Member States decided, in Commission resolution 66/1 of 17 March 2023,⁹ to convene in 2024 a high-level segment of the Commission to take stock of the implementation of all international drug policy commitments and outline the way forward to 2029,

1. *Calls upon* Member States, consistent with the principle of common and shared responsibility, to carry out coordinated actions at the national, regional and international levels to address, in accordance with domestic law and circumstances, the global public health and security challenges posed by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic drugs, as well as their distribution, consumption and use for non-medical and non-scientific purposes, including through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as the body with a treaty-mandated function to consider all matters pertaining to the aims of the three international drug control conventions and as the policymaking body of the United Nations system with prime responsibility for drug control and other drug-related matters;

2. *Encourages* Member States, as appropriate, to explore innovative and forward-looking approaches to more effectively address the threats posed by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic drugs, as well as their distribution, consumption and use for non-medical and non-scientific purposes, by involving all relevant sectors, building the capacity of law enforcement and health-care systems to respond to those threats, broadening domestic, regional and international controls over synthetic drugs, and voluntarily establishing and strengthening partnerships or cooperation with civil society, academia, and private sector entities where relevant and in accordance with domestic law, as well as addressing drug-related socioeconomic factors;

3. *Urges* Member States to develop and carry out comprehensive, balanced, scientific evidence-based and forward-looking strategies at all applicable levels to effectively address and counter challenges posed by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic drugs, as well as their distribution, consumption and use for non-medical and non-scientific purposes, including interventions related to prevention, treatment and recovery support, measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of synthetic drug use, as well as preventing and countering drug-related crime and violence and the trafficking and diversion of synthetic drugs, their precursor chemicals, including non-scheduled and designer precursor chemicals, and equipment used in the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs;

4. *Calls upon* Member States to improve access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes by appropriately addressing existing barriers in this regard, including those related to legislation, regulatory systems, health-care systems, affordability, the training of health-care professionals, education, awareness-raising,

⁹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2023, Supplement No. 8 (E/2023/28)*, chap. I, sect. B.

estimates, assessment and reporting, benchmarks for consumption of substances under international control and international cooperation and coordination, while concurrently preventing their diversion, abuse and trafficking;

5. *Encourages* Member States to enhance information exchange on the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic drugs and trafficking and diversion of scheduled and non-scheduled precursor chemicals through existing international and regional mechanisms, including those operated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board, as well as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and to share best practices to counter these threats;

6. *Also encourages* Member States to continue to collect and share information, in accordance with domestic law, on the adverse impacts and risks to public health and safety posed by new psychoactive substances, using chemical and toxicological data, data from hospitals and treatment and toxicology centres and data reported by individuals;

7. *Calls upon* Member States to continue to advance efforts to address and counter international challenges related to synthetic drugs through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, taking into consideration the midterm review in the Commission in 2024 to take stock of the implementation of all international drug policy commitments and outline the way forward to 2029;

8. *Invites* relevant United Nations entities, in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as the leading entity in the United Nations system for addressing and countering the world drug problem, within existing mandates and upon request, to continue to provide technical assistance, including capacity-building, to Member States to support their efforts to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic drugs, as well as their distribution, consumption and use for non-medical and non-scientific purposes;

9. *Encourages* enhanced cooperation and collaboration within the United Nations system in accordance with established mandates, and with relevant international organizations within their respective mandates, including INTERPOL, and invites the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization to continue to undertake their treaty-mandated roles.

*48th plenary meeting
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