

**Remarks by the UNODC Director, Division for Policy Analysis and
Public Affairs**
**High Level General Assembly Thematic Debate in support of the
process towards the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on
the World Drug Problem**
New York, 7 May 2015

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

From the outset, allow me to express gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for his leadership in convening this discussion.

The debate represents an opportunity to hear different perspectives on the many challenges posed by the production, trafficking and use of illicit drugs, and to reflect and learn from each other as we work towards the 2016 special session.

Member States have repeatedly reaffirmed that the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility, notably in the Joint Ministerial Statement adopted in 2014 at the high-level review of the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action.

In the Doha Declaration agreed at the 13th Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice just last month, Member States further pledged to intensify efforts to address the world drug problem “through a comprehensive and balanced approach”.

We at UNODC much welcome the fact that the debate towards the 2016 UNGASS has helped to focus international attention on a serious and complex problem.

Preparations for the UNGASS have been underway now for some time, led by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which had been tasked by the General Assembly with overseeing an inclusive preparatory process.

As other distinguished speakers have already mentioned, the most recent CND session in Vienna in March devoted a special segment on UNGASS preparations and recommended for eventual adoption by the GA a resolution that defines the modalities for the UNGASS.

The preparatory process so far has benefitted from the active engagement of Member States, as well as from the substantive contributions made by UN partners, international and regional organizations, and civil society.

Furthermore, the discussions have brought a welcome emphasis on the human dimensions of the world drug problem, and the need for evidence-based approaches.

They have also helped to further promote inter-agency cooperation, strengthen the dialogue with the scientific community, Civil Society Organizations and increase engagement with young people.

In all, the process leading to UNGASS 2016 has provided a crucial opportunity to discuss and highlight concrete measures that can strengthen international cooperation, and promote the effective implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on the world drug problem.

UNGASS 2016 can thus serve as a milestone on the way to 2019, which has been set as the target date in the Political Declaration for the review of implementation.

Meanwhile, UNODC remains committed to supporting Member States on the ground, including through our integrated, interlinked country, regional and global programmes through the network of field offices, as well as through our research expertise.

Our work includes support for robust criminal justice responses to disrupt illicit drug trafficking, through such initiatives as the Container Control Programme and Networking the Networks.

UNODC also supports Member States to ensure access to controlled medications for medical purposes; to implement evidence- and health-based approaches to preventing and treating drug use disorders as well as HIV; and to promote alternative development to reduce the vulnerabilities of poor farmers to illicit drug cultivation.

Alternative development is in fact the focus of this year's World Drug Report, which also features an expanded section on prevention and treatment.

The World Drug Report 2015 aims to provide useful research inputs to the UNGASS process, and we look forward to sharing these findings with you when the report is released in June.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It leaves me to thank you for your kind attention.