**OHCHR, Report on human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem, Austrian contribution**

Human rights constitute an important cornerstone of drug policy. For Austria, it is of outmost importance that drug policies remain grounded in human rights. Addiction cannot be reduced to a criminal matter. Therefore, in Austria we strictly distinguish between drug addiction and drug-related crime. Drug addiction should be addressed through medical and social interventions, whereas drug-related crime (e.g. drug trafficking) should be addressed through criminal procedures. There should be no place for human rights abuses such as the use of the death penalty for drug offenses.

States must respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the inherent dignity of all individuals and the rule of law in the development and implementation of all drug policies. There is a need for equal and effective protection against discrimination, ensuring that particularly marginalised or vulnerable groups can effectively exercise and realise their human rights.

Women, children, young people and vulnerable groups must be considered in drug-related policies and programmes. These policies should focus on promoting and protecting health, improving access to health and social care, safety and well-being, including reducing stigma and ensuring a non-discriminatory approach. People who use drugs and people with a drug dependence should be offered a broad range of voluntary and evidence-based drug services, including care, treatment and harm reduction, based on informed consent and managed by health professionals.

It is of great importance to implement the commitments set out in the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document to integrate a gender and age perspective in drug-related policies and programmes while ensuring the involvement of women in all stages of their development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Furthermore, the severity of penalties must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and alternative measures to conviction or punishment should be implemented in each legal system. Such measures include education, rehabilitation or social reintegration, as well as treatment, aftercare and recovery. The adoption of such measures is an integral part of a balanced and human rights-based approach to drug policy and help to prevent crime, decrease stigma, reduce recidivism, support social reintegration, enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system and look at reducing health-related harms and minimising social risks.

Drug policies should be guided by the three international drug control conventions and the UNGASS 2016 outcome document. Austria fully supports the promotion of an evidence-based approach that takes into consideration public health and human rights aspects. We affirm the importance of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as the main policymaking body of the United Nations on the all aspects of the world drug problem, as well as the important role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board.