**Government of the Republic of Mauritius**

**Challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem Resolution 52/24 of the Human Rights Council**

The Republic of Mauritius has ratified all conventions on; the Single Convention on domestic drugs 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971 and the United Nations Convention against illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988.

The Government of Mauritius is committed to pursue its efforts to combat drug abuse. Legislations to curb drug trafficking, money laundering, and financial crime, such as (i) The Dangerous Drugs Act 2000; (ii) the HIV and AIDS Act 2006; (iii) the Financial Intelligence and Anti Money Laundering Act 2002; (iv) Prevention of Corruption Act (2002), and (v) the Bank of Mauritius Act 2004.

**1. The approach towards addressing and countering the world drug problem.**

The National Coast Guard (NCG) is responsible for the detection, prevention and suppression of any illegal activity within our maritime zones.

The Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) collaborates with other office and neighbouring countries to collect and share information on movements of vessels and persons of interests travelling on board to counter drug trafficking.

Mauritius along with Comoros Island, Madagascar, Reunion Island and Seychelles are party to a Mauritius Security initiative funded by the European Union and it is ready to collaborate with any legal initiative aimed at disrupting heroin trafficking in the east coast of Africa.

The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, in collaboration with Customs, conducts regular visits to enterprises involved in the handling of precursors to monitor their activities. The Ministry, along with the Pharmacy Board also oversees the importation of medications and pharmaceutical products.

Drug stores are monitored to prevent sale of psychotropic substances. The regulations governing the access to controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes are outlined in existing legislations such as the Dangerous Chemicals Control Act, the Dangerous Drugs Act, and the Pharmacy Act.

Capacity-building exercises and training programs are conducted to enhance the skills and knowledge of healthcare professionals and officers. The objective is to ensure appropriate access to controlled substances for medical purposes and to engage law enforcement in reinforcing systematic procedures that prevent diversion, while simultaneously improving access to medical care.

**2. Measures taken by the government to actively promote a society free of drug abuse.**

The Government of Mauritius remains steadfast in its commitment to creating a society free from drug abuse. A comprehensive approach to tackle the drug problem effectively has been adapted: -

1. Legislative Measures through the implementation of various laws to regulate the production, possession, trafficking, and usage of drugs. These laws also impose strict penalties for drug related offenses and establish a framework for prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of drug users.
2. Educational Initiatives through the introduction of comprehensive educational programs aimed at increasing awareness about the hazards associated with drug abuse. These programs primarily target young individuals and emphasize the risks of drug consumption, the consequences of addiction, and the available treatment alternatives.
3. Treatment and Rehabilitation Facilities through the establishment of dedicated centers to provide treatment and rehabilitation services for individuals struggling with drug addiction. These facilities offer a range of support, including counseling, medication, and support groups.
4. Prevention Strategies through the implementation of proactive prevention programs to diminish the demand for drugs. These initiatives focus on early identification of vulnerable youth, family support, and community-based projects.
5. Strengthened Law Enforcement through the enhancement of its law enforcement efforts to combat drug trafficking. This includes bolstering border security, intensifying intelligence gathering, and executing targeted operations.

**3. Initiatives and measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of drug abuse.**

The following initiatives and measures have been put in place to minimize the adverse public health and social consequences of drug abuse:

1. the National Drug Control Master Plan 2019/2023, which proposes a-balanced and integrated response to effectively address and counter Mauritius' drug problem. The plan highlights topics relating to research, legislation, institutional frameworks, law enforcement and interdiction, protection of the borders, drug supply reduction, international cooperation, and evaluation;
2. the Mauritius National Strategic Framework for HIV and AIDS 2013-2016, which includes measures to prevent and treat HIV and AIDS among people who use drugs;
3. the Mauritius Dangerous Drug Act 2000, which provides for the control of dangerous drugs and the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts; and
4. the Mauritius HIV and AIDS Act 2006, which provides for the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS.

**4. Lessons learned and best practices on the promotion of human rights when addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem.**

1. The importance of a comprehensive approach focusing on prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation, as well as law enforcement is essential.
2. The importance of evidence-based policymaking.
3. Mauritius has also developed a number of practices when addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem. These best practices include:
4. The use of harm reduction strategies such as needle exchange programs and safe injection sites can help to reduce the harm caused by drug use.
5. The development of treatment and rehabilitation services can help drug users to overcome their addiction and live healthy, productive lives.
6. The promotion of social inclusion is important to reduce the stigma and discrimination that drug users face.
7. The support of civil society organisations is important as they play a vital role to promote human rights in drug control as well as in advocating for the rights of drug users and in providing them with services.

**5. Measures taken to prevent social marginalization, promoting non-stigmatizing attitudes and encouraging the voluntary participation of individuals with drug use disorders in treatment programmes, with informed consent, and where consistent with national legislation, as well as developing and implementing outreach programmes and campaigns, involving drug users in long-term recovery.**

To prevent social marginalization, promote non-stigmatizing attitudes, encourage voluntary participation in treatment programs with informed consent, involve drug users in long-term recovery, and develop and implement outreach programs and campaigns, the National Multi-sectoral committee which oversees the drug response and conducts extensive communication campaigns on drugs and the benefits of harm reduction.

**6. Whether law enforcement officers, respect and protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons, including the right to life, the right to security of person, the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the prohibition of arbitrary arrest and detention.**

The National Human Rights Commission ensures that detainees are treated with dignity and in accordance with international human rights conventions and treaties. The Independent Commission Against Corruption is also tasked with investigating corruption and money laundering cases, which can help prevent the exploitation of vulnerable individuals.

The National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP) 2019-2023 addresses a range of drug-related issues, including illicit drug supply and drug demand reduction, harm reduction, as well as coordination mechanism, implementation framework, monitoring and evaluation, and strategic information based on International Drug Control Conventions.

**7. Alternatives considered by the Government to incarceration, conviction and punishment.**

The Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and NGOs provide services to PWUDs, and identifies areas for improvement, particularly in the psychosocial support services offered for those on Methadone Maintenance Therapy (MMT).

The Probation and After Care Service (PACS) refers convicted drug-using offenders for a social enquiry report (SER) to ascertain their suitability for rehabilitation and social reintegration. The court may also apply provisions of the Probation of Offenders Act 1947 (amended in 2009), whereby the offender could be granted a probation order with attendance center requirement, ordering him to follow pro-social skills training program including a module on 'substance abuse' and drug treatment requirement, whereby the offender will have to follow detoxification in a center. Follow-up is effected by PACS and any non-compliance to treatment is reported to the Referral Court. PACS also carries out awareness sessions on drug use prevention to schools and the community. Provision for appropriate treatment for Drug Users has been made in the Dangerous Drugs Amendment Act 2022.

**8. Developing and disseminating gender sensitive and age-appropriate measures to address the world drug problem**

The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare has established Women Empowerment Centres, Community Centres, and Social Welfare Centres, and runs a Family Welfare Protection Unit and a Safe Neighbourhood Programme, which mobilises women, families, and communities to assume a pro-active role in drug use prevention for their own protection as well as that of their children and families.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS) uses its network of youth clubs to impart training on evidence-informed drug prevention and implement youth programmes on drug use prevention which targets the 14-35-year-old group.

The Government has set up a High level HIV and Drugs Council chaired by the Prime Minister to oversee the general strategic response against drugs and to take policy decisions.

The Government of Mauritius collaborates with various organizations in the context of Community Working Groups led by the National Empowerment Foundation to identify and help people who use drugs and people living with HIV. NGOs are also key partners in the national drug response and operate on different fronts, providing drug use prevention programs in private secondary schools and communities, engaging in drug use disorders treatment.

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