

52nd session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Vienna, 11 - 20 March 2009

**Statement by Ambassador Rüdiger Lüdeking, Head of the German Delegation**

**General Debate at the High Level Segment of the 52<sup>nd</sup> CND**

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*Madam Chairperson,*

In our view, this High Level Segment is a very important meeting. It is to establish a basis for international cooperation in the field of drugs policy for the next 10 years. The draft Political Declaration has been thoroughly discussed during the last few weeks. Following the Political Declarations adopted by the General Assembly in 1990 and 1998, this new Political Declaration should, on the basis of the results of the review process, identify future priorities and areas requiring further action, as well as goals and targets to be set in countering the world drug problem beyond 2009.

I want to take this opportunity to express my country's view on the outcome of this review process.

*Madam Chairperson,*

We think that the review process itself induced the member states and all the other stakeholders in the drugs field, including the international organisations and the NGO's, to evaluate what has been achieved and where the international community failed in the past ten years.

In our view the results of this review are mixed:

On the one hand, we can observe a certain progress in some regards:

There is no doubt, that Member States and the international community as a whole have made great efforts to improve the instruments and tools for an effective drug policy: Today, we know much more about the drug situation than we did ten years ago, we have strengthened international cooperation, and we have developed more and better prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes worldwide.

But on the other hand, we must admit that the goals and targets set out by UNGASS 98 have not been met: Consumption of illicit drugs and psychotropic substances has not been significantly reduced. In many parts of the world, it has even considerably increased. The same applies for the cultivation and supply of illicit drugs which have not decreased globally either in spite of all efforts.

Taking stock leaves us with but one conclusion: more of the same is not enough if we want to continue to pursue the ambitious objectives that we set for ourselves in 1998. We need to seriously consider ways and means to render our policies more effective. We need to add new instruments to our toolbox. In this regard there has been one positive development during the last decade that has proven to be effective: The new harm reduction approach.

"Harm reduction" complements prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, as part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce the demand for drugs. It addresses the adverse consequences of drug abuse.

Let me be very clear: Harm reduction complements these elements. It does not replace them:

- Our first priority must always be to prevent people from taking drugs.
- The second priority is to treat addicted people in order to get them off the drugs.
- But in a third step, when prevention and treatment have failed, we must try to reduce the adverse health and social consequences of drug abuse. In Germany we call this concept "*help for survival*".

This approach includes a wide range of measures such as, *inter alia*, needle and syringe exchange, opioid substitution treatment and medically supervised outreach facilities. It has proven to be effective, namely in the context of the fight against HIV/AIDS and other blood-borne diseases. It is supported and applied by a great number of Member States, International Organisations and NGO's.

To be frank, the Draft Political Declaration does not fully satisfy us. We regret very much that it does not explicitly mention the term "harm reduction". But we think that the essence of this approach is covered by what the Draft Political Declaration calls "*related support services*". We hope that the unnecessarily controversial discussion about the term "harm reduction" will be closed and that we will debate and find a consensus on the substance of this concept, its principles, its limitations and its place in a comprehensive anti-drugs strategy within the framework of the international drug control treaties.

In addition, we would also have welcomed had the Draft Political Declaration mentioned, in the field of Alternative Development, the guiding principles of "proper sequencing" and "non-conditionality", which are an integral element of German and European drugs policy, based on more than 25 years of experience.

*Madam Chairperson,*

We welcome that the Draft Political Declaration confirms some basic principles which had already been proclaimed in the 98- UNGASS-Decisions, such as the integrated and balanced approach, the principle of common and shared responsibility and the respect of human rights.

However, we would have liked to see also some new principles reflected in this Draft Declaration. I think in particular of the principle of system-wide coherence, the principle of proportionality and the principle of evidence based policy in all fields of counter-narcotic policy. In our view, the new Draft Political Declaration could and should have been more future-oriented and more courageous than it is now.

Nevertheless, I am confident that, together - at this High Level Segment - we will establish a solid basis for the international community to face present and future challenges and to develop new instruments and tools for effectively countering the world drug problem tomorrow. My country is ready and committed to work together with all countries represented in this room towards this end.

*Thank you, Madam Chairperson*