

66TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

ITALIAN NATIONAL STATEMENT – VIENNA, MARCH 13, 2023

President, delegates, colleagues,

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, including the strongest possible condemnation of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, but allow me to add few remarks in my national capacity.

Drugs pose a threat to the health of each individual and to the safety of our communities. Italy strongly opposes any form of trafficking of psychoactive substances, as well as the legalization of any of them, since they are all harmful. It is hard to define as “light” a cannabis derivative with a 25% of active ingredient, if not 39% or even 78%. Prevention activity is crucial, and a more adequate information is functional to it: also, prevention is to be paired with an attention to the treatment and recovery of people affected by substance use disorder.

Prevention policies must be aimed especially at adolescents, and uncertainties or ambiguities in the communication cannot be tolerated. In the vast majority of European Nations significative results have been achieved with respect to the reduction of tobacco consumption, thanks to targeted sanctions and massive information campaigns; if similar results have not been achieved yet with respect to drug consumption, it is also because of an excessive, persistent circulation of misleading messages, regarding the alleged harmlessness or lightness of certain substances.

For example, some legislations classify the GHB, the γ -hydroxybutyric acid, as a “light” substance: in case of a supervised administration in a proper dosage, it can have positive effects on patients with sleep disorders, and its use can also help treating alcohol use disorder. The problem is represented by the arbitrary use of this substance without any medical prescription or professional assessment, after purchasing it on the web or on the street: this is the tragic reason why media have labelled the substance as “rape drug”.

The international cooperation aimed at contrasting drug trafficking should be strengthened: indeed, drug trafficking is a phenomenon that moves across State borders and it can be effectively addressed only through international coordination mechanisms. I express my appreciation for the work of the CND and UNODC, with respect to the adoption of resolutions and to the inclusion in the tables of new illicit psychoactive substances, and for the existing cooperation mechanisms in the framework of the European Union, of the EMCDDA and of the REITOX Network, such as the Early Warning System.

Young people are especially exposed to contrasting, misleading messages: the transformation of a risky behavior into banal habit brings with itself the risk of higher levels of consumption in the population and of damages caused by the substance.

As Italy, we grant access to treatment services to everyone in need, without any form of discrimination. We have developed a strong territorial network, based on the close collaboration between public addiction treatment services and therapeutic communities, that in 2021 provided care to more than 120,000 people suffering from addiction.

The reference to rights requires us to look after something even more important than the exact number of milligrams of the substances fixed in the tables of every single State: that is the meaning to ascribe to terms such as “freedom” and “responsibility”.

Italy believes that drug legislations should not drift towards the legalization because we are convinced that freedom consists in putting yourself in the condition of always respecting yourself and your own dignity, always giving meaning to your life. This is the ground for discussion.

Now, please, allow me to make a statement on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of Europe’s Pompidou Group: indeed, since December 2022, Italy took over the honor of the Presidency of the Pompidou Group, that it will hold it until 2025. In occasion of the 18th Ministerial Conference, held in Lisbon, Ministers and other participants have confirmed their commitment for a human right centered approach, to be paired with strategies to address addictions related to the use of communication and information technologies. The Italian Presidency highlighted its priorities as follows:

- deepen the already existing relationship with each of the member States, getting to know the reality of each State and increasing the exchange of experiences, models and good practices;
- make prevention a priority, to be accompanied by attention to the treatment and recovery;
- reduce both the demand and supply, by fighting drug trafficking and organized crime;
- Guarantee the right to health to everyone;
- find a proper balance between freedom and responsibility, at both individual and State level.

I thank you for your attention.