

COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUG (CND) – UNITED NATIONS

68th SESSION - ITALIAN STATEMENT

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Authorities and Delegates,

Italy fully aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union and allow me to add few remarks in our national capacity.

Let me start with a specific case. In August 2021, a key member of an Italian criminal organisation, believed to be one of the most influential facilitators of international drug trafficking, was arrested in Dubai. The investigation that led to his arrest revealed the methods he used:

- The use of money mules;
- Use of hawala channels;
- The creation of legal entities in different jurisdictions to provide non-existent services;
- Use of virtual currencies;
- Investment operations in real estate;
- The purchase of large quantities of gold, up to 40 kilos per month.

It is an interesting illustration - in a single person - of the main aspects that characterise the current phenomenon of drug trafficking. The consolidated overlap between organised crime and economic and financial crime is characterised by the proximity of the most financially powerful mafia groups and certain sectors of the national and international legal financial world, with the aim of laundering and reinvesting money, with real distortions of the normal market dynamics.

The activities of the Italian boss, captured in Dubai, also highlight the role of new technologies, especially digital.

They have made it possible to create parallel markets to those of the "traditional" drug trade: digital markets where supply and demand

meet at retail level, thanks in particular to the dark web, with money moving anonymously through cryptocurrencies.

One of the new and alarming aspects is the fact that the so-called 'over-the-counter' web has numerous companies specialising in import/export, which act as trading platforms for the substances.

All these innovations are having an impact on the methods used to combat drug trafficking, reducing the effectiveness of some traditional investigative techniques. The fact that drug trafficking is not a crisis is reflected in the figures for all the main indicators.

Contrasting the cartels is not enough. A qualitative leap is needed. Any effort is doomed to failure if we do not address the cultural problem of drugs with a whole-of-society approach. More than fifty years ago, the Italian writer Pier Paolo Pasolini - certainly not a prohibitionist - said that he was alarmed by the fact that drugs had gone from being a phenomenon essentially affecting a few elites to becoming a mass phenomenon; he defined this as a "cultural vacuum", understood not as a lack of "erudition" but as a loss of principles and horizons in the face of life's challenges.

The dramatic images coming out of North America - men and women completely unconscious from the ingestion of fentanyl - tell us of something that is no accident, but the consequence of "cultures" and distorted notions of freedom that have been in vogue since the 1960s. In this sense, it is worth considering the possibility of a correlation between the pandemic peaks of this tragedy and local experiences of legalisation.

Finally, I would like to remind you that this is the last year of the Italian Presidency of the Pompidou Group and that Italy will host the Ministerial Conference at the end of 2025. Through working groups and specific projects, we have deepened cooperation in established areas of work.

The fight against drugs - all drugs - must start from the conviction that we cannot remain silent in the face of the "nothingness" that hundreds of thousands of young people escape by taking drugs, and

the denial of the need for hope and meaning that characterises every human life. Italy is in the front line.