

Presentation of the revised statute and the 50th Anniversary by the President of the Pompidou Group's Permanent Correspondents:

(Strasbourg, 10 November 2021)

Dear President, dear Secretary General, dear Ambassadors,

Let me first thank you, Ambassador, and through you the Hungarian Chairmanship, to offer me the possibility to report on the Pompidou Group's 50th Anniversary to the Committee of Ministers. I also express my sincere gratitude for the participation of your Minister, as Chair of the Committee of Ministers, and of the Secretary General, at the **celebration event** which took place two weeks ago, on 28 October at the Pompidou Centre in Paris. I understand that you have already been informed about this event last week by the Secretary General, so I will not enter in too many details about it.

First of all let me reiterate our gratitude to the Pompidou Centre for its hospitality : indeed there could not have been a better place for celebrating the Pompidou Group's 50th Anniversary! Some 140 participants from 46 countries attended this event, most of them physically, and I am grateful to the several Ambassadors present in this room who travelled from Strasbourg to Paris to join us. It has been a day for celebrating 50 years of active work in the field of drug policy, but also an occasion to discuss present challenges and to look into the future.

After the opening session, a first thematic debate led us into a journey in the **history of the Pompidou Group** : we looked back at its evolution through testimonies of its current and former Executive Secretaries, the "Dean" of Permanent Correspondents and former Presidents and Vice-Presidents. The most recent developments, such as the accession of Ukraine and a presentation of the new statute, were also included in the programme. The second thematic session focused on specific issues related to **human rights and drug policy**, through an interactive panel composed by key experts from international organizations and civil society actors. Last but not least, at the **10th European Drug Prevention Prize Ceremony**, three innovative projects from Belgium, Lithuania and Poland received a well-deserved award.

The celebration at the Pompidou Centre has been of course a major highlight of the 50th Anniversary's programme, which included a large number of events throughout 2021, as you can see in the document which is in your file. But this year we have not only celebrated the anniversary of the Pompidou Group, and highlighted its achievements over five decades: we have also laid the ground for its future action, thanks to the decision taken by your Committee on 16 June - the adoption of the Pompidou Group's revised statute.

The process of adopting a revised statute for the Pompidou Group started 3 years ago, with the decision taken, at the end of November 2018, at the Ministerial Conference in Stavanger (Norway). When adopting their final declaration, the Ministers decided to **launch a process of revision of the Group's mandate, functioning and working methods, in order to better reflect the current evolution of drug policy and the challenges to be met at national and international levels.**

At the time, the Resolution that set out the mission and objectives of the Pompidou Group dated back to March 1980, when it was integrated into the institutional framework of the Council of Europe (with 11 participating States). This founding Resolution reflected the approach adopted when the Group was created in 1971 (on the initiative of Georges Pompidou) and had remained unchanged since then, even though the drug phenomenon and the way it is understood and dealt with have evolved considerably - as has the number of Pompidou Group member States: from 7 in 1971 to 41 today.

The decision taken in Stavanger was endorsed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at the end of January 2019, thus allowing the process to be officially launched. We had a clear and ambitious objective: **to have the Committee of Ministers adopt a Resolution including a new Statute for the Pompidou Group on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its creation in 2021.**

What happened afterwards is now part of history. I don't have time to share with you all the details, but I will just recall the time schedule we have followed : two years of in-depth discussions within the Permanent Correspondents (from February 2019 to November 2020) ; wide-ranging consultations held in parallel with our member (and interested non-member) states and with our main international partners, including civil society ; five months (from January to June 2021) of intense diplomatic negotiations within the relevant Rapporteur Group of your Committee (the GR-SOC). And finally the unanimous adoption of the revised statute, on 16 June 2021.

This has been of course a major step, and indeed the main highlight of the celebration of the Pompidou Group's 50th Anniversary. The Portuguese presidency is proud of this achievement, and I want to thank all our member states for their constructive attitude and their spirit of compromise, which made this result possible.

Let me share with you now **the main features of the revised statute** :

- Reaffirming the Group's multidisciplinary approach, which has been its major characteristic since its creation;
- Extending the Group's mandate to include issues related to addictions and addictive behaviours linked to licit (and not only illicit) substances, but also to non-substance addictions (e.g. Internet gaming or gambling);

- Priority focus on the respect and promotion of human rights in the design, adoption and implementation of drug policies;
- Strengthening the identity of the Pompidou Group as an integral part of the Council of Europe by creating (or reinforcing) synergies with other relevant entities of the Organisation;
- Highlighting the added value that the Group offers to its member states;
- Strengthening its co-operation with international partners, including civil society;
- Opening the possibility for the European Union to become a member of the Pompidou Group.

The adoption of the revised statute by the Committee of Ministers had an immediate effect: the official name of the Pompidou Group is now "**Council of Europe International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions**". In the longer term, it opens up new perspectives for the Group and provides it with an ambitious political and legal framework on which to base its development in the years and decades to come.

With its revised status, the Pompidou Group also strengthens its relevance and its attractiveness to enlarge to new member states. A first important step has been taken with the accession of Ukraine, which was officially notified on 31 August 2021. The Pompidou Group will thus have 42 member states as of 1 January 2022, and it is hoped that other countries (either members or non-members of the Council of Europe) will join in the near future. We have a special hope of course that our five former members, which left the Group a decade ago, will rejoin the family as soon as possible.

The Anniversary year is coming close to its end, but we still have an important event in front of us : the **closing event** which will take place in Lisbon on 15 December and will be dedicated to a very topical issue - evolution on cannabis related policies in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

My final remark will be that the Pompidou Group is more than ever committed to firmly anchor its action within the Council of Europe. This is why, when informed on the Organization's **new strategic framework** for the period 2022-2025, we decided to align our own work programme with it. As a consequence we agreed to shorten the following work cycle of the Pompidou Group to three years (from 2023 to 2025) on an exceptional basis, to synchronise it with the period of the next strategic framework of the Council of Europe. I have no doubt that you will welcome and endorse this decision.

I am of course available, together with the Executive Secretary, to reply to any question you may have.

I thank you for your attention.