

Opening statement at the 3rd Conference on the implementation of the national drug strategy of Ukraine

(Kyiv, 24 November 2021)

Let me first of all thank UNODC for organizing, for the 3rd time, a conference on the implementation of the Ukrainian national drug policy. I remember being present physically at the 2nd one, in November 2019, and I regret of course that this time I can only attend on line.

The Pompidou Group has a long standing cooperation with Ukraine, and it has been at the side of the Ukrainian authorities to elaborate and implement the national strategy over almost a decade.

2021 is a very special year, as Ukraine finally decided to join the Pompidou Group, at the moment of its 50th Anniversary. I want to thank all those who were part of this decision (some of them being present today). I am happy to announce that, as of 1 January 2022, Ukraine will become the Pompidou Group's 42nd member state.

An important delegation from Ukraine participated in the **celebration event of the 50th Anniversary**, which took place at the Pompidou Centre in Paris on 28 October. It included the minister of internal affairs (Mr Monastyrskiy), the deputy minister of health (Mr Komarida) and the Chair of the Ukrainian delegation (Mrs Mezentzeva). They were among 140 participants from 46 countries, to celebrate 50 years of active work in the field of drug policy.

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 the Committee of Ministers on 16 June - **the adoption of the Pompidou Group's revised statute**.

This decision has been the culminating point of a process which lasted for almost three years. It gives to the Pompidou an ambitious political and legal framework for its present and future action.

Let me share with you 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 Organization;
- 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, which we will explore when prepare our next work programme 2023-2025, with Ukraine as a member.

With its revised status, the Pompidou Group has strengthened its relevance and its attractiveness to enlarge to new member states. We expect that other countries (either members or non-members of the Council of Europe) will follow the example of Ukraine and join the Group in the near future.

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.

We have of course invited our new member state to participate in this important event, and we look forward to work closely and fruitfully together.

I thank you for your attention.