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UNODC Headquarter, Vienna

Madam Chair, Ambassador Martinho, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

My name is Cristina von Sperling Afridi, Chairperson of Karim Khan Afridi Welfare Foundation from Pakistan.

I am a victim of Drugs. In 2014, I lost my only child Karim, age 19, to the menace of drugs. It was then, to bring some sense to my life that I decided to create this foundation to help the youth to identify and manage emotions. I believe adolescent feelings are the main source leading to vulnerability and falling prey to drugs. KKAWF is committed to breaking the taboo of not admitting that there is a serious drug problem and try to initiate a dialogue. Since then, I have not only been studying deeply this problem, following latest reports and statistics but also speaking at various institutions and organizations promoting discussions to address this issue of utmost importance.

We are associated with Anti-Narcotics Force and Ministry of Narcotics Control, Pakistan but work on our own creating programmes with private and public educational institutions on drug awareness for students and for teachers. We are implementing the EU Unplugged Programme.

With Parents, we are talking not only about drugs, but also the dangers of stress caused by academic performance pressure, which too is one of the main factors causing addiction. On the pretend of attention and learning disorder, medicines are prescribed, starting a lifestyle of addiction. Pakistan is a greatly affected country in South Asia and with its geographic position, every year, a large quantity of opium is illegally brought into the country to produce heroin. But apart from heroin, hashish, cocaine, meth, psychotropic substances and many others are available in the market, which are systematically destroying our society.

Another great concern are the prescription drugs – the consumer culture willing to ‘Pop a pill for what ails you’ and the perception of prescription drugs to be less harmful than illicit drugs. This is a major contributor to the problem.

Unintended overdose involving opioids, pain relievers now outnumber those involving heroin and cocaine.

To aggravate the problem, formulae of club drugs are available on the internet for any curious teenager to start producing on his own.

On 21st April 2016, our recommendations were placed on the official website of UNODC on the occasion of UNGASS session in New York. We stand by these suggestions of creating strong policies for controlling media and entertainment industry for de-glamourization and to discontinue showing scenes of drug use.

According to several researches, TV Shows, videos and movies make people, especially the young believe that drugs are an OKAY thing to do.

We all know the consequences of drug addiction for the individual, the families, societies and the countries in the world. All the dark side of human existence is related with the world of drugs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Whilst greatly appreciating the work of enforcement agencies, I feel that this does not sufficiently address the overall problem.

The world have realized that education is the key, I feel that not enough time and thought is given to awareness and prevention. Most discussions are based on harm reduction/rehabilitation/demand reduction – in other words mainly on the consequences of addiction. Grants for awareness programmes are basically non-existent, at least I can say this for Pakistan. As a representative of civil society, we are doing a field work with bare hands, dependent on the generosity of individuals. However with the youth of Pakistan constituting 66% of the population (135 million below the age of 25), it is obvious that in spite of the best efforts of the Foundation,

tackling this menace will become increasingly difficult. In fact, during the last three years, there been only one international Grant announced specifically for prevention, being the only organization in Pakistan dealing with prevention, we had applied for the programme but unfortunately not only did we not receive it, but also do not know who in Pakistan did.

Our Foundation would continue to do so, but less effective.

We believe that through action and collaboration, and support at international, national, community and individual levels, by focusing on drug awareness, we can reach our common objectives, in compliance with the guiding principles of the ideal of Drug Demand Reduction Declaration – Call for Action – Tackling the Problem – which says.

Demand reduction programmes should cover all the areas of prevention, from discouraging initial use to reducing the negative health and social consequences of drug abuse, they should embrace information, education, public awareness, early intervention, counseling, treatment, rehabilitation, relapse prevention, after care and social reintegration. Early help and access to services should offered to those in need.

Adolescents are a perfect target for drug dealers all over the world and that's why awareness and prevention are the right focus for immediate action.

The greatest of all tools is to empower youth from pre-teens and teenagers against the use of drugs.

Drug addiction among the youth is killing them morally, socially, psychologically and physically and we must not tolerate this multi-billion dollars business taking our children lives, destroying the hope and compromising the future of our countries.

I agree with the representative from Malaysia's suggestion to declare drugs the World's Number 1 enemy and that no mercy should be given to those making business at expense of our childrens lives.

Addiction is a human weakness and with that we should persist in educating and guiding the young to work towards a balance and make the right decisions to healthy and prosperous life.

This is our responsibility.

Thank you.