Statement by the President of the Republic of Guatemala, Jimmy Morales Cabrera, on the occasion of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem

New York
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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this so-called war on drugs, countries such as Guatemala have borne the brunt, by coping with the unfair burden of the loss of human lives.

I can honorably say that Guatemala has fulfilled its international obligations, joining this struggle, despite our very limited resources, and to the detriment of investment in health, education and development.

For this reason, together with Colombia and Mexico we proposed, as an historic opportunity, this Special Session of the United Nations not only to reflect critically on the effectiveness and challenges of global drug policy, but to redirect, improve and deepen international cooperation to address this problem.

We know that the expected results of the current global policy have not been fully achieved, that there are adverse effects and that progress has been limited.

We also know that this policy should be adapted to the new realities that arise, in order to address the challenges in each region and country.

In light of the above, it is worth asking: If our resources are extremely limited and our social needs very great, what should we prioritize?
Mr. President,

Guatemala has fostered and facilitated the open and pluralistic dialogue, taking into account the realities and interests of all countries, seeking agreements in favor of a more effective and humane drug policy.

Therefore, we welcome the progress achieved, of which I wish to highlight three key points:

1) The reaffirmation that the health and welfare of humankind are the objective of the International Drug Control Conventions, which leads us to prioritize a humane approach focusing on public health and not on purely punitive responses;

2) The acknowledgement that drug policies should be consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, placing people, not substances, at the center of these policies;

And 3) Recognizing that international Conventions are sufficiently flexible to allow countries to implement drug policies according to their priorities and needs, and that each State may sovereignly decide the policy that best meets their realities, challenges and specific interests.

One of the most important changes that the current drug policy needs is that we give priority to demand reduction rather than focusing solely on supply reduction. We must make the balance and comprehensiveness of drug policy a reality.

In this regard, we welcome the balance that is beginning to emerge in some developed countries; and at the same time, we believe it is necessary that this approach constitute a priority of the International Community towards developing countries.

I must stress that, in the search for a comprehensive and balanced policy, our country will also start to diversify the international cooperation that we receive with regard to drug policy, towards important areas such as sustainable development, including alternative development,
as well as the care, treatment and rehabilitation of problematic users, and the prevention of consumption in general.

Finally, Mr. President, I am aware that this process is only beginning and I have faith that the outcome document that we have adopted is just a first step that will lead us to a global policy with human beings at its core.

Thank you.