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**Opening remarks for H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa,
President of ECOSOC**

**Thematic discussion of the Commission on Narcotic
Drugs at its 68th session**

30 September 2025

[video-message]

**Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,**

I am pleased to join this year's CND thematic discussions on the implementation of international drug policy commitments, and I thank you for the kind invitation.

The focus of this year - on promoting health - is central to the 2030 Agenda.

At the 2025 High-level Political Forum, SDG 3 on good health and wellbeing was under in-depth review.

That review benefitted greatly from the contributions of the CND on the vital links between drugs and health.

The review was sobering.



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Preventative health gaps left by the pandemic remain unfilled.

Debt is crowding out investment in health and education.

And treatment for substance use disorders has fallen - from 11 percent to 9 percent – leaving millions without care.

The *2025 World Drug Report* adds to this troubling picture.

Drug-related deaths are steadily rising, more people are living with drug use disorders, and major gaps persist in access to treatment and care services, and controlled medicines for palliative care and pain relief.

These findings remind us of the urgency to act - to strengthen prevention, especially for young people; to expand access to treatment and care; and to respond to new and emerging health challenges.

Drugs and health policies must move together, across sectors and with the voices of women, youth and communities at the centre.



**Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,**

Your discussions today can have real impact – transforming lives, restoring communities, and turning vulnerability into resilience.

But to succeed, efforts must be inclusive – engaging all stakeholders, across all sectors, and at all levels.

The Commission's role as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC is vital.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment to advancing international drug policy commitments as part of the 2030 Agenda.

Looking ahead, I encourage CND to channel the outcomes of these thematic discussions into its report to ECOSOC, so they can inform the Council's work and contribute to future follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

At a time when confidence in multilateralism is under strain, this is the space to build bridges, share solutions, and scale up action.



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Let us work together to make drug policy delivers tangible health and development gains – and build a safer, healthier world for current and future generations.

I thank you and look forward to the outcomes of your discussion.