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Press Release:

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African Stakeholders Unite to Tackle Synthetic Drug Trafficking and Strengthen Crime Prevention Across the Continent

The African Union (AU), in partnership with the U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, held a Global Coalition Continental Consultation on October 22-25, 2024, in Antananarivo, Madagascar. The event brought together AU member states, international organizations, and law enforcement stakeholders to address the persistent challenges posed by synthetic drug trafficking in Africa. With a focus on reducing synthetic drug supply, addressing illicit drug trafficking holistically and countering associated transnational organized crime, the consultation explored ways to enhance crime prevention, criminal justice, and rule of law across the continent.

Key discussions centered on data-driven enforcement strategies, policy integration, and cross-border cooperation to combat synthetic drug networks. Participants examined the importance of legal reforms, capacity-building for law enforcement, and alternatives to incarceration to support individuals with substance use disorders. Country-specific insights on drug trends, arrests, and regulatory gaps were shared, highlighting the need for legislative harmonization to prevent traffickers from exploiting legal discrepancies across borders.

In her opening address, **Madagascar's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Rasata Rafaravavitafika**, emphasized the importance of inclusive and adaptive drug policies to tackle the growing challenge of synthetic drug trafficking. She highlighted the need for sustainable cooperation mechanisms that take into account the specific needs of individual countries and communities, particularly focusing on the protection of youth and vulnerable groups.

Adding her voice, **H.E. Amb. Minata Samate Cessouma**, the African Union Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development, underscored the urgency of addressing youth vulnerability in the face of escalating synthetic drug use. She called for policies that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all demographic groups, with a strong focus on prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation initiatives.

Madagascar's Minister of Youth and Sport, Hon. Abdoulah Marson Moustapha, further stressed the vital role of Africa's youth as key partners in the fight against drug trafficking. "Our young people are not just victims; they are also our greatest asset," he stated. The Minister highlighted the importance of investing in youth education, health,

and well-being to build a resilient generation capable of leading Africa toward a brighter future.

The consultation also recommended establishing forensic laboratories, training enforcement personnel, expanding K9 programs, and utilizing international notice systems (via INTERPOL, AFRIPOL, UNODC and the World Customs Organization) for enhanced intelligence sharing. Public awareness campaigns were encouraged to educate communities on the dangers of synthetic drugs.

For more information

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