



**Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse
and Illicit trafficking in Drugs**

*Version 4 March 2015
P-PG (2015) 3*

**Statement by the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe
on the occasion of the Special segment on the preparations for the
UNGA Special Session on the World Drug Problem
to be held in Vienna on 9-12 March 2015, 58th CND session**

1. At its 16th Ministerial Conference last November the Pompidou Group reaffirmed its support for the UNGA Special Session on the World Drug Problem and committed its support by facilitating debate about the preparatory process, developing concrete proposals and by an active participation in the process leading up to UNGASS.
2. The Pompidou Group recalls that the main intention of the United Nation's legal framework on drugs is the safeguarding of the health and welfare of humankind and reiterates the need to take appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children and young people against the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as defined in the relevant treaties; to prevent the use of children and young people in the illicit production of and trafficking in such substances.

3. The member States of the Pompidou Group have expressed their concerns as follows:

- despite increased efforts as expressed in GA res 67/193 the world drug problem continues to constitute a serious threat to public health and safety and the well-being of humanity, in particular children and young people and their families, and to national security and sovereignty
- the availability and use of licit and illicit drugs continues to be high with increased drug related social harm and deaths;
- the ever increasing number of new psychoactive substances in parallel with increasing prevalence rates;
- emerging challenges from new communication and information technologies, as well as new modes of distribution, significantly affecting demand and supply reduction measures in drug policy;
- the financial and economic crisis, both globally and in Europe, have already brought about and may exacerbate consequences related to the health of the individual and of the population as a whole, as well as social cohesion;
- the risk that discriminatory attitudes towards people who use drugs which can undermine risk and harm reduction measures, drug treatment, social re-integration and the potential for recovery;
- while the determination of specific sanctions applicable to drug-related offences remains at the prerogative of States, the death penalty is globally still widely applied as punishment against drug related offences, contrary to the idea of treatment and rehabilitation and the spirit of human rights;

- the right to health is not everywhere ensured by providing appropriate treatment to drug users, and availability to and access to essential controlled medicines.

4. In meeting the challenges arising from these concerns the member States underlined the importance of recalling the obligations of States under the United Nations and the Council of Europe Conventions to protect fundamental rights and freedoms, in particular the right to life and human dignity, the right to protection of health, the prohibition of any type of discrimination as well as the right of children to be protected from the use of narcotic drugs and psychoactive substances. In this context all states are called upon to ensure that drug policies are in full conformity with the principles of human rights.

5. In view of the current economic and financial crisis situations, the Pompidou Group urges Governments to guarantee broad coverage, accessibility and quality of essential services for all in need and avoiding unnecessary obstacles to access to essential medicines.

6. Cost benefit analysis is of ever growing importance when making policy choices, ever more so in times of budgetary constraints. Understanding the costs and effects of different policies, not only in terms of their immediate impact but also in view of indirect effects and costs, is necessary for making the right choices and to understand the return on investment.

7. At the same time cohesion between policies on licit and illicit drugs, as well as addictive behaviours, must be seen as a fundamental determinant in ensuring health and wellbeing. Hence the Pompidou Group encourages Governments to

maintain a policy of cohesion between all sectors related to drug policy by avoiding measures that adversely affect other policy areas or cancel each other out, hereunder ensuring access to and availability of controlled medicines around the world. In order to reach their full potential of effectiveness, coherent policies need to appropriately address gender dimensions. Furthermore, the Pompidou encourages those States which retain and continue to impose the death penalty for drug-related offences to consider abolishing the death penalty for such offences.

8. Addressing that changing patterns and context of drug use, production and supply will be among the key challenges for the near future.

9. New types of substances, poly-drug use, changing consumption patterns, changing perceptions on the role of psychoactive substances in relation to life style and performance enhancement, coupled with other social developments, require a re-thinking of responses to these developments. This means considering ways in which drugs policy can be adjusted or further developed to effectively meet the challenges emerging from new developments, keeping in mind the need for coherence across policies.

10. In the field of supply reduction the Pompidou Group will continue to expand its role in facilitating international cooperation on effective precursor control and prevention of precursor diversion. This will continue to constitute an important dimension of the Pompidou Group's on-going work to increase the effectiveness of international efforts to prevent trafficking of illicit drugs through enhanced cooperation between different sectors of law enforcement, including customs and border control agencies, as well as other relevant sectors. The existing cooperation

with UNODC in the field of precursor control constitutes an important contribution to knowledge transfer necessary in this area.

11. New technologies have sparked an evolution of developments that significantly impact on all areas of drug policy responses in terms of risks and opportunities. On the side of risks, recent developments in information and communication technologies have enabled the emergence of a new global black market for drugs sales which is rapidly growing. The internet has reduced the risks associated with buying drugs and have created new distribution ways and payment systems. These present new challenges for law enforcement and customs

12. On the other hand, the internet provides opportunities for prevention, treatment and the reduction of risks associated with drug use. A constructive debate among policy makers, professionals, and the public on internet-based drug prevention and treatment is needed to explore the full potential of this tool.

13. Being an enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe the Pompidou Group intends to further pursue its efforts to build bridges between Europe and other world regions. In this way we demonstrate our ability to provide added value and be complementary to international efforts to address the problems arising from illicit drug use and to curb illicit drug trafficking through cooperation and concerted action.

14. In the pursuit of its commitment to support UNGA Special Session on the World Drug Problem, the Pompidou Group will continue to conduct its work to provide a source of innovation and inspiration, facilitate a forum for open debate, and link policy, research and practice. In doing so we are committed to further

developing links with civil society and promoting active cooperation between governmental and non-governmental sectors.

15. Finally the Pompidou Group welcomes the suggestion to organise High Level Round Tables during the UNGASS 2016 in parallel with the general debate. The Pompidou Group intends to play an active role in the development and preparation of these Round Tables, and proposes a Round Table on the topic of 'Human Rights in Drug Policy'.

16. We strongly support the proposal that reference is made to the points raised during each of the High-Level Workshops in any document to be prepared by the CND and adopted as outcome of the UNGASS 2016.

* * *