UNAIDS welcomes the stronger focus on a people centred health and rights approach to the world drug problem, that is emerging globally from the ongoing debates in the context of the UNGASS. This is consistent with the overarching purpose of drug control to ensure the health, well-being and security of individuals, while respecting their agency and human rights at all times.

UNAIDS sincerely hopes this will be reflected in the Outcome Document.

People who use drugs, their partners, families and communities are dependent on the global consensus to restore their dignity and bring them out of the shadows and into accessing the necessary services.

The impact of the current drug control approach means that HIV is still a huge problem among people who use and inject drugs.

Key principles are the implementation at scale of evidence-based harm reduction interventions AND a more conducive environment.

Harm reduction interventions, and especially a combination of needle exchange programmes and opioid substitution therapy, bring the best results and are cost-effective.

Within the UN and among many Member States there is convergence that we have to move away from a punitive and marginalising approach to a public health and rights approach as we have described in our Position Paper (available in English and Russian on our website and the UNGASS website).

UNAIDS will continue to promote the evidence base: a more substantial report on HIV, health, rights and people who use drugs will be published ahead of the UNGASS.

We will also together with our UN colleagues, civil society, Member States and other partners continue the dialogue and give support on how to move beyond rhetoric into concrete action.

We cannot just turn around and close our eyes for people’s suffering. Inaction is no option. And it will cost much more.

The UNGASS will be a unique opportunity to fundamentally change the perspective, which will bring us closer to reaching the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Target of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030, while leaving nobody behind.

We have an excellent opportunity NOW and during the High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS in June this year to be inclusive, to ensure social justice, health for all and access to services for all in need.

This is a challenge for all of us, but it can and needs to be done.

Let’s seize this opportunity together.
Our five key messages are:

1. Recognition that the main purpose of drug control is to ensure the health, well-being and security of individuals, while respecting their agency and human rights at all times.
2. Ensure accountability for the delivery of health services for people who use drugs by including public health and human rights pillars in the framework of the UNGASS outcome document.
3. Commit to fully implement harm reduction and HIV services.
4. Commit to treating people who use drugs with support and care rather than punishment → UNAIDS believes this objective can only be achieved by implementing alternatives to criminalization, such as decriminalization, and stopping incarceration of people for consumption and possession of drugs for personal use.
5. Ensure integration of HIV services with other health and social protection services for people who use drugs.

*http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/JC2803_drugs_en.pdf*