

Statement by The Netherlands on the occasion of the CND thematic discussions on UNGASS implementation

4th Intersessional meeting

Vienna, 10-11 October 2016

Operational recommendations on Demand reduction and related measures, including prevention and treatment, as well as other health-related issues

- Thank you Mr Facilitator,
- The Netherlands associates itself with the statement made by the EU delegation on behalf of the European Union and its member states.
- As stated many times before, the Dutch drug policy is based on a balanced approach: both health related and judicial aspects are equally important to us.
- We consider demand reduction as a broad public health concept that includes prevention, early detection, providing objective information on risks, treatment and harm reduction. Monitoring and evaluation are very important aspects of the Dutch drug policy, we apply this principle to our policies on a yearly basis
- Since time today is limited, I will focus on three examples from our practices that The Netherlands believe are essential for a successful demand reduction policy and that help us to live up to the commitments made at UNGASS:
 - *First, as an important part of our prevention efforts, we focus on informing our youth. We do this in numerous ways.*

- Within this multisectoral approach, peer-led interventions have proven to be most effective. A good Dutch example is the Unity project, which uses trained young adult volunteers to inform peers about health issues related to drug use in nightlife settings.
- Another example is the use of innovative ways in getting across information to young people. A recent example is the launch of a “Red Alert” app for smart phones and other mobile devices. The app provides reliable and up to date information on the health risks of drugs which are used in nightlife, such as ecstasy and cocaine. The app issues warnings when drugs are on sale that appear to be much more dangerous than usual.
- *Second, we try to invest in new approaches to improve the treatment of people who use drugs:*
 - The use of drugs is depenalized in the Netherlands, since we know that penalization of use will prevent drug users to access professional help when needed.
 - The programme “Scoring Results” has translated various proven effective treatment approaches into guidance documents, as for instance the “Practice-based recommendations for GHB detoxification”, the advisory report “Elderly and addiction” and the quick scan “Scoring results around recovery”.

- *Thirdly, the UNGASS outcome document clearly called for relevant interventions that prevent the transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use.*
- *The Netherlands has a long tradition of offering comprehensive harm reduction **services**, including syringe exchange, rapid testing for HIV, support to substitution therapy, and hepatitis C counselling. Based on this national experience, knowledge and its longstanding expertise, the Netherlands is also one of the main and few donor funders of harm reduction projects worldwide*
- Two excellent examples are ‘Bridging the Gaps’, which was one of the first programs to focus on investing in the **health and rights** of key populations, and the ‘Community Action on Harm Reduction’ project.
- The project has achieved significant success in generating behavioural changes in people who inject drugs reducing the risks of HIV. A key result has been a **reduction in the use of used needles/syringes**.
- I thank you.