

Thank you Mr. President.

Distinguished Delegates,

The relationship between drug control and development is, by the essential nature of both issues, complex and multidimensional. On the one hand, the elements that shape and influence human development in our communities strongly determine how the drug phenomenon occurs in our societies. On the other, some aspects of the drug phenomenon, but mainly those policies traditionally developed to confront it, have a strong effect on sustainable human development.

Yet drug control agencies and development institutions and communities have tended to operate in isolation from each other. Policies emanating from the International Drug Control System, have rarely taken development issues into account, with the exception of limited alternative development (AD) programs.

Nor have many development programs recognized drug related issues or the impact of drug policies (as well as other illicit economies) as elements to be accounted for, even in territories or countries in which they represent major factors affecting social, cultural, political and economic dynamics, yielding to law enforcement agencies in order to take care of the problem.

The enormous scale of the illicit economy of drugs (estimated between \$449bn and \$674bn a year¹), which represents up to 5 times more than the global aid budget, leaves no aspect of development untouched and cannot be ignored; especially if we consider the fact that, in many cases, the borders between licit and illicit are quite blurred: illicit economies generate job development and economic growth, food security or access to land and markets, determine financial sector trends, and influence public goods and service delivery, including security, and political decision making².

¹ UNODC 2011.

² Gutierrez, E., 'Drugs and Illicit Practices: Assessing their impact on development and governance', Christian AID, London, 2015.

Furthermore, some specific development policies, or their absence, can increase vulnerability to problems related to illicit drug production, trafficking and problem drug use. Illicit markets and economies become a survival option for many of those individuals and communities left aside by exclusive development policies and without many formal and legal options to obtain security and to be economically and socially included.

In these contexts, involvement in the drug trade cannot be simplified to a need/greed equation. The influence of drug economies and actors on development, livelihoods and governance has to be fully understood in order to provide realistic responses to development problems. Not doing so, by removing these blind spots over the complexity of drug markets, "would be an act of gross negligence"³ because it could undermine development planning and investments and possibly exacerbate the drugs problem⁴.

Drug control policies are anchored in international proposals that has survived for more than 50 years without major modifications. Its legal framework, its interpretation and transposition in national policies, as well as its everyday implementation by drug control institutions, have traditionally been imprinted by a strong approach on prohibition and abstinence, chasing an ideal world free of drugs.

Therefore, social or institutional perceptions promoting care and social inclusion of those who have problems using drugs, or of those linked to their production or traffic, are not yet dominant in most parts of the world. The matter is still purely conceived as a personal choice and not as a problem rooted in profound social, economic and health-related disparities that need to be addressed from a sense of our common responsibility. As a result, drug policies have been marked by fear of crime, moral deviation, violence and disease, and have resulted in the exclusion of those individuals and communities linked to drugs, without consideration about the costs of such policies for our societies and our development.

³ Gutierrez, E., 'Drugs and Illicit Practices: Assessing their impact on development and governance', Christian AID, London, 2015.

⁴ William A. Byrd and David Mansfield, 'Afghanistan's opium economy: an agricultural, livelihoods and governance perspective', World Bank, 2014.

As a result, 55 years of implementation of policies emanating from the IDCS have left an indelible footprint on sustainable human development, imposing high burdens on economies, the environment, democratic governance and, most importantly, on our social fabric.

On the one hand, it has provoked the creation of an enormous criminal black market that has fuelled corruption, violence, and instability and threatened basic human rights, democratic governance, legal economies, citizen security, public health and the environment.

On the other hand, and jumping from abuse to lack of capacity, the implementation of drug policies has generated more harm on human development than the one they were expected to reduce, leaving a trail of human rights abuses, including death, violence, discrimination and marginalization of people linked to drug markets or drug use, mass imprisonment, restriction of basic liberties, exacerbation of poverty, negation of access to basic public goods and services, as well as militarization of public policy, deterioration of criminal justice and prison systems, unequal application of justice, punishment to users, and degradation of the environment, among others.

Impact of drug policy on development⁵

Evidence shows that repressive law enforcement approaches and the eradication of illicit crops have had harmful impacts on the health and human rights of people living in poverty, including poor farmers and socially and economically disadvantaged people living in areas where drugs are produced, trafficked or sold. They have destroyed the livelihoods of poor farmers and others who depend on cultivating and selling drugs to survive.

Eradication campaigns have affected food security, caused damage to the environment, and forcibly displaced populations dependent on illicit crop cultivation as well as those who are not.

Problematic drug use, including high-risk drug use such as injection and drug dependence is a public health as well as a development issue: it can

⁵ From "Addressing the Development Dimensions of Drug Policy", UNDP, 2015.

affect productivity and increase the risk of serious health problems as well as death. There are effective ways to address the harmful health and social consequences of drug use. A substantial body of evidence has shown that harm reduction interventions have proved effective in preventing HIV and viral hepatitis and preventing and reversing the effects of overdose. However, criminal laws, punitive policies and repressive policing practices limit and sometimes exclude altogether people who use drugs from access to these services, thus putting them at risk of serious disease and in some cases, premature death.

Evidence also shows that drug control laws with disproportionately heavy punishments have fuelled mass incarceration, often in violation of universally accepted standards of fairness and freedom from torture and ill treatment. Those imprisoned on drug-related charges make up a substantial proportion of people in prison worldwide. Prison in itself poses a threat to health, with prison populations having worse health outcomes than the general population. Harm reduction services are rarely provided, and health services and conditions are overall extremely poor.

Women often become involved in the drug trade because gender discrimination limits their opportunities for education and employment. While they are usually employed at the lowest levels, such as transporting or selling small quantities of drugs, they often suffer the same harsh consequences, including severe criminal penalties, as those with greater involvement in the drug trade. Moreover, women who use drugs often have limited access to effective health and drug treatment services that take into account their specific needs and circumstances. Harm reduction and drug treatment programmes, developed to serve an overwhelmingly male clientele, rarely include gender specific or -sensitive services, and stigma and discrimination by family, service providers and law enforcement create additional barriers to treatment and care.

Furthermore, the implementation of drug control policies has distracted key public institutional and budgetary resources from other development oriented policies. Something that many developing and middle income countries in production and transit countries cannot afford, taking into account the huge challenges for sustainable development that the new 2030 Agenda poses for their public sector, economy and society.

These negative impacts have not been distributed evenly among or within countries, consolidating two major imbalances regarding the bearing of the costs of drug policies:

The first of these imbalances has to do with the uneven distribution of negative impacts of the implementation of the International Drug Control System within our societies, which has served to increase social divisions and economic inequities. Drug control laws, policies, strategies, practices, interpretations and their collateral consequences have impacted the poor and vulnerable disproportionately, many of them additionally victimized while living in spaces where criminal networks already impose their laws and interest and where the Drug War is being fought.

Most people linked to drugs as producers or sellers, mainly the weakest links of its chain, do not profit significantly from their activities: poor farmers who depend on cultivating coca and opium to survive; poor small scale couriers, sellers and people who use drugs; people who live in conflict zones. For poor people and communities, including those internally displaced, victims of land grabs, deportees, ex-prisoners or for those whose livelihoods have been deteriorated by economic and development policies, the participation in illegal activities is a form of social legitimation and offers an alternative survival economy.

Additionally, drug control laws, policies and related enforcement practices, centered on coercion and harassment, coupled with the lack of investment in quality and affordable treatment, harm reduction, social inclusion and other health services, have also deteriorated the health of people who use drugs, fuelled HIV and resulted in mass incarceration for low-level drug crimes, including use. Moreover, due to the lack of treatment and hopes of recovery, poor people who suffer from an addiction are more at risk of losing their property, being criminalized, not finding a job, or being victims of violence and discrimination. This consumption may lead, on the one hand, to a considerable deterioration of living conditions. On the other hand, the processes of social marginalization can be a determining element for problem drug use.

It is not a surprise, then, that when we take a look at the communities and groups most affected by drug policies, they overlap with the same groups

and communities most excluded from economic, social and human development dynamics (rural and urban poor, women, indigenous people, children, youth and others).

Besides, costs have not been distributed evenly among different countries and regions. Some national or subnational realities present very different levels of vulnerability and/or resilience to different risks associated with the negatives consequences of drug policy, linked mainly to production and transit. Social, economic, political and governance factors and conflicts might contribute to the development and stagnation of drug-related problems, organized crime, violence and social exclusion.

On the one hand, and regarding developed countries with situations mainly associated with problem drug use, the international legal framework and institutional architecture has allowed for the implementation of a combination of harm reduction, decriminalization and social inclusion policies to tackle some of the most important "unintended consequences" of the IDCS for their societies and citizens; also reinforced by their greater resilience in order to solve these associated negative consequences.

On the other hand, the costs on development have been disproportionately greater for countries most vulnerable to the risks associated both with drug production and transit and with the effects of the implementation of prohibitionist policies. As an example, only in one Latin American country, , the estimated number of drug-war related deaths per year during the 2006/2012 period (10,000 per year)⁶ almost doubles the number of drug-related deaths in all 28 countries of the EU⁷ (6100 reported for 2013), without counting the disappeared (around 26,000 people for the same period).

Moreover, these efforts have been led, in many cases, by weak public structures, national and local, overwhelmed by development related obligations and without the capacity to significantly reduce drugs supply or demand.

⁶ Human Rights Watch, Informe Mundial 2014.

⁷ EMCDDA, 'Mortality among drug users in Europe: new and old challenges for public health', Lisbon, February 2015.

And they had to implement them, in many cases, within local, national and regional contexts tremendously vulnerable to the harms associated with illicit markets and to the effects of repressive policies: poverty, both rural and urban, vulnerability and inequality; weak governance and lack of State presence, including in ungoverned territorial spaces; low accountability for the most powerful and limited access to justice; lack of access to basic public services and low levels of social protection; food insecurity and no access to natural resources or land tenure; lack of decent jobs and high informality within the economy; high levels of violence and insecurity; class, race, ethnicity, religious, gender and sexual orientation discriminatory cultures; and regressive tax systems and limited fiscal space, among others.

In this sense, it is also paradigmatic that the region in the world most strongly affected by negative impacts of the War on Drugs is Latin America, also the region with highest rates of economic and social inequality. Drug policies have had a dramatic impact on many fragile rural and urban communities in the region and have generated a heavy toll for poor communities, women and youth, indigenous or afro communities, deteriorating their life conditions and increasing their dependence from illicit economies.

Towards a paradigm shift based on sustainable and inclusive human development with the 2030 Agenda as a reference.

The concept of human development represents a landmark in the way development is understood by the international community. It recognizes that the true wealth of nations are their people, and that the main objective of development must point to the creation of conditions to allow people to experience long, healthy and creative lives.

This concept has inspired and is embedded in the new global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an ambitious, blueprint for a better world, with broad, universal and transformative goals. The 2030 Agenda has received, during the September 2015 high-level meeting of the General Assembly, universal acceptance from all member States of the UN and commitment to fully implement its 17 goals and 169 targets.

And, as we saw, there are many contradictions between the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the effects of drug control policies, taking into account their negative impact on the capacity of many countries and communities to reach these goals. Nevertheless, negative effects of drug policies impact 13 out of 17 specific SDGs, affecting, in many regions and countries, nearly every aspect of development, including poverty reduction, food security, human rights, health and well-being, education, social inclusion, gender equality, employment, environmental issues, human security, access to justice, inclusive political processes, governance or the rule of law, among others.

In order to resolve these policy incoherencies, **the 2030 Agenda, already accepted by all UN member States, needs to become a fundamental reference for the development and implementation of a new breed of drug policy**, especially in a moment where there are profound divides over the need and scope of a IDRC reform.

This approach feeds directly on the main pillars of the UN (peace, security, development and human rights) and the main objective of the IDCR, often forgotten, of improving health and well-being of humankind. It is also grounded on the basic principles of policy coherence and "do no harm", and on the accumulated experience and lessons learned by UNDP after 50 years in the implementation of human development.

We need to engage in a profound assessment and monitoring of the impact of drug control policies on human development aspects. It is important to identify and estimate the factors which contribute to increase negative impacts and risks to human development and, subsequently, discuss and define the ways in which the elimination of those impacts and the generation of resilience to a broad group of evolving risks could be strengthened. The SDG framework could serve as a powerful reference to start evaluating not only the potential impact on sustainable development of planned policies, but also the past and present impact on development of existing policies. It would additionally represent a magnificent opportunity for the engagement of many of the development actors, organizations and community in the search for new and effective solutions.

So far, improvements in development results are not being considered over drug supply and demand reduction objectives, generating huge blind spots and perverse incentives to increase, at any cost, the numbers of people arrested, prosecuted and jailed, as well as the amount of illicit drugs seized. As drug control affects a wide range of health, human rights and development outcomes and contributes to a wide range of multilateral objectives, a growing number of calls⁸ to start considering the inclusion of human development metrics of success, to be able to solve address complex drug-related development dilemmas, spill-overs and trade-offs. Something already pointed out by the ECOSOC already in 1999⁹

All of these become crucial for drawing the lines that define and limit public policy intervention. Paradoxically, not much research has been developed in challenging the direct cause-effect correlations between drugs and other phenomena like crime or violence, which still drive most of the institutional and social representation of drugs and drug use. Development practice and experience on researching and addressing complex problems needs to be taken into account in order to define a new generation of effective development-based drug policy strategies and interventions.

Finally, the need to approach the 2030 Agenda within a framework of policy coherence is on the basis of the demand for a long needed and requested system-wide comprehensive coherence of the UN regarding drug policy. This coordination should also be reflected in the programmatic tools and frameworks of the different agencies in their cooperation with member States, like the UN Common Country Assessments, the UN Development

⁸ "The success of alternative development programs should not only be measured by illicit crop reduction estimates but also by using human development indicators"-Chairs' Summary of the "International Seminar workshop on the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development" ICAD2, Bangkok, 2015.

⁹ In resolution 199/30 the ECOSOC called for: *"...a significant increase in cooperation between the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, in view of the special role of the latter body as a coordinator for development activities within the United Nations system, and to that effect recommends that:*

(a) Drug-related indicators be jointly developed by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the United Nations Development Programme for inclusion in the human development report of the United Nations Development Programme."

Assistance Frameworks and the UN Country Programs, where the "delivering as One UN" should be materialized.

In the end, this new approach based on sustainable and inclusive human development is grounded on the principle that **drug policy cannot represent a factor that negatively affects communities or countries' sustainable development. On the contrary, it should become an element to facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive development for all, putting people first and leaving no one behind.**