

64th Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Plenary intervention on behalf of the IFRC

Chair, distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Commission today on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent.

People who use drugs continue to be among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and it's dramatic that in the world:

- Only 1 out of 8 who need drug treatment, receive it.
- People in prison settings, minorities, immigrants and displaced people face further barriers to treatment and multiple discriminations due to stigma.

Their situation has further exacerbated due to the current pandemic, which risk to become the perfect excuse to avoid the treatment for people who use drugs.

For a very long time, we have been calling for a more humane approach to address the issue—and not on punishment of people who use drugs, but based on support, access to care and treatment. This call is guided by a strong sense of humanity and well-documented evidence.

RCRC, led by our Partnership on Substance Abuse, developed the Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy, back in 2005 and re-launched in 2020. These initiatives enable different stakeholders to promote and implement a humanitarian response to drug use. It lays out the health principles and best practices in drug policy responses, promoting a person-centered approach.

In order to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), we need to ensure that no one is left behind. People who use drugs are some of the first to be left behind. Evidence-based approaches must be at the heart of balanced solutions to drug demand and supply. This is more important than ever, as illicit drug challenges become increasingly complex, and the COVID-19 crisis and economic downturn threaten to worsen their impacts, on the poor, marginalized and vulnerable most of all¹.

IFRC is ready to continue working together to protect the lives of those in need. We must ensure full access to services and human dignity to people who use drugs, that are shunned and excluded from the society and ultimately moving them out of harm's way.

Thank you.

Massimo Barra

¹ https://wdr.unodc.org/uploads/wdr2020/documents/WDR20_Booklet_5.pdf