

9 March 2022

English only

Commission on Narcotic Drugs**Sixty-fifth session**

Vienna, 14–18 March 2022

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Inter-agency cooperation and coordination of efforts in addressing and countering the world drug problem**Inaugural Meeting of the Interagency Technical Working Group on Prevention of Drug Use and Treatment and Care of Drug Use Disorders****

1. This conference room paper describes the proceedings of the Inaugural Meeting of the Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG) on Prevention of Drug Use and Treatment and Care of Drug Use Disorders, which was jointly organized by UNODC and WHO on 22 February 2022. The official minutes of the meeting are being developed and will be published online in due course. The conference room paper is made available to the Commission for its information at its sixty-fifth session.

I. Background to the Interagency Technical Working Group

2. The world drug problem continues to present challenges to the health, well-being and safety of humanity, as the non-medical use of psychoactive drugs is associated with significant health risks and may hamper efforts for achievement of developmental goals worldwide.

3. This situation has been recognized by the international community, with health target 3.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda calling for strengthening prevention and treatment of substance abuse. The UNGASS 2016 outcome document highlights the need to strengthen the public health response to the world drug problem, and to enhance international cooperation in the development of a comprehensive, evidence-based, and sustainable policy and programme responses, including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration as well as minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of drug use.

4. Yet, the progress with the development and implementation of effective and ethical drug prevention and treatment in line with principles of Universal Health Coverage continues to be uneven, and the treatment coverage for drug use disorders continues to be unacceptably low in many jurisdictions, particularly populations at higher-risk of drug related harm, such as women, youth, people in contact with the criminal justice system and other populations in vulnerable circumstances, and,

* E/CN.7/2022/1.

** This document has not been edited.



people with drug use disorders still experience high levels of stigma and discrimination.

5. No inter-agency mechanism exists to promote specifically the strengthening of the drug prevention and treatment response globally and the Member States of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs have encouraged “the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to continue and enhance its collaboration, as appropriate, with the World Health Organization, other relevant United Nations entities and relevant international and regional entities and organizations, ...”.¹

6. In view of the above, WHO and UNODC have launched the Interagency Technical Working Group to increase the effectiveness and impact of inter-agency collaboration on prevention and treatment of drug use and drug use disorders, aiming at accelerating the implementation of the relevant UNGASS 2016 recommendations and the achievement of SDG health target 3.5.

II. Description of the proceedings of the Inaugural Meeting

A. Preparation and participating organizations

7. The Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG) on Prevention of Drug Use and Treatment and Care of Drug Use Disorders has been conceptualized and developed by the UNODC Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Section, including through its Liaison Officer in Geneva, and the WHO Alcohol, Drugs and Addictive Behaviours Unit. UNODC and WHO approached jointly 15 intergovernmental organizations at the regional and global level to illustrate the concept and invite the organizations to become part of the ITWG.

8. The following organization participated in the Inaugural Meeting and agreed to be part of the ITWG (in alphabetical order by acronym): AU (African Union Commission), CICAD/OAS (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States), CP (Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Programme), EMCDDA (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction), ILO (International Labour Organization), IOM (International Organization for Migration), OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - observer), Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe, UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), UN-Habitat (United Nations Human Settlement Programme), UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), and UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund).

B. Discussion

9. The overall goal, the specific objectives and the structure of the Interagency Working Group (ITWG) were presented, briefly discussed and agreed.

10. The goal of the Interagency Working Group is a substantial increase in inter-agency coordination and collaboration in the development, implementation, quality assurance and evaluation of policies and programmes aimed at the universal coverage of effective and ethical services and interventions for the prevention of drug use and the treatment, care and rehabilitation of drug use disorders.

11. The following four specific objectives were identified for initial action: global advocacy for increased investment in prevention and treatment of drug use and drug use disorders; reducing stigma and eliminating discrimination in the access and

¹ OP18, Resolution 64/3 Promoting scientific evidence-based, quality, affordable and comprehensive drug prevention, treatment, sustained recovery and related support services, E/2021/28, E/CN.7/2021/10.

provision of health and social services for people who use drugs and people with drug use disorders; documenting and disseminating good practices of multisectoral collaboration with special focus on the collaboration of public health, drug control, social welfare, and other systems; and, normative guidance and, upon request, technical support in development and implementation of drug prevention and treatment strategies and interventions based on the best available evidence and international standards.

12. The ITWG is co-led by UNODC and WHO as equal partners, in line with their mandates within the United Nations system to address prevention of drug use and treatment and care of drug use disorders, the UNODC-WHO Memorandum of Understanding of 2017, as well as with their core roles and strategic priorities. The ITWG is open to United Nations entities and other intergovernmental organizations. It is foreseen that, in its activities, the Interagency Technical Working Group will engage a wide variety of stakeholders as appropriate, including national institutions and organizations, civil society organizations, academia and other non-State actors. It was agreed that the ITWG will meet quarterly via videocall, with a view to meeting at least once a year in person.

13. Participants expressed appreciation at the launch of the ITWG and discussed ideas and priorities to be taken into account in the work of the ITWG, including the following: the relationship of the ITWG to other inter-agency forums and the possibility for participants in the ITWG to harmonize their approach on drug prevention and treatment to raise its visibility also in other forums; the need to address the entire continuum of drug prevention, treatment and care, including preventing the negative health and social consequences of the non-medical use of drugs (referred to as “harm reduction” by some Member States); the need to have a special focus on specific age groups (e.g., children) and/or populations in particularly vulnerable circumstances (e.g., displaced populations, including refugees); and, the need to share information and data (particularly about the situation with regard to drugs, drug use disorders, health and social consequences and responses) for advocacy purposes.

14. In preparation for the next meeting, foreseen for May 2022, participants agreed to share information about ongoing and planned initiatives with a view to utilize the discussion to identify opportunities for concrete inter-agency action.
