

Dear Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, and Esteemed Colleagues,

In our statement as **Turkish Green Crescent Society (TGCS)**, we would like to underline the urgent need to address the **increasing risks of synthetic opioids and non-medical prescription drug use** regarding public health and safety; hence, the complex scientific, legal, and regulatory landscapes for these substances.

When dealing with issues of public health and safety, there exists a crucial need for a comprehensive approach towards addressing the surge in synthetic opioids and non-medical prescription drug use. The increased possibility of serious health consequences necessitates a **coordinated effort especially involving civil society in converting scientific knowledge into pragmatic community-based programs and policies**, thanks to civil society's proximity to the field.

When it comes to science, we observe that there is an ever-changing nature of **synthetic opioids that requires ongoing research to understand their complexities**. Civil society must therefore play a major role in ensuring that scientific findings are directed into policy actions rather than misrepresenting them as something else, as seen in some jurisdictions with CND's 2020 vote on WHO scheduling recommendations on cannabis and cannabis-related substances of scientific and medical use of cannabis.

In stressing the importance of approaching issues holistically and collaboratively, it should be noted that CND's 2020 vote on WHO scheduling recommendations on cannabis and cannabis-related substances of scientific and medical use of cannabis has in fact opened **room for misinformation**. This has also led to **false proclamations that cannabis is not harmful to human health**, which further highlights why drug-related choices must always be examined carefully and communicated with a balanced strategy.

It would not be wrong to state that it is quite challenging to adapt frameworks to address the evolving landscape of drug misuse on the legal front. **Ensuring access for legitimate medical purposes while limiting illicit activities necessitates a fine balance that needs to be tailored very carefully.** Civil society's advocacy role is necessary here to ensure policies prioritize public health and community well-being, and when it comes to tackling any misinformation resulting from misinterpretation of legal decisions.

The problem is exacerbated by regulatory challenges in scheduling substances, which equally requires a well-thought-out approach. **The involvement of civil society is vital when it comes to regulatory challenges in scheduling substances, as well, since misleading information could easily change the way members of the public perceive the risks or benefits associated with drugs.**

As Turkish Green Crescent Society, **our work extends to prevention, counseling, recovery, rehabilitation, and advocacy, involving extensive studies as well as community-based interventions.** We constantly relate with vulnerable communities based on evidence-informed methods and monitoring and evaluation efforts of our programs and policies. This way, **we get to directly deal with drug addiction issues in Türkiye by addressing its complex mechanism,** thereby ensuring that especially children and youth be at the heart of our efforts.

On a final note, the **TGCS calls for total engagement within a coordinated framework to address synthetic opioids and nonmedical prescription drug use.** To confront any myths, direct evidence-informed policies and protect the lives of all human beings in different parts of the world, the involvement of civil society is very crucial.

Thank you!