UNODC-WHO INFORMAL SCIENTIFIC NETWORK

ENHANCING THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENTISTS AND POLICYMAKERS ON EVIDENCE-BASED RESPONSES TO SUBSTANCE USE AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS
The Informal Scientific Network (ISN), created in 2014, is organized and supported by UNODC and WHO. The network provides a space for the academic world to be in dialogue with international policymakers on the most urgent and crucial issues with regard to the science of drug use prevention, treatment and care of drug use disorders, as well as comorbid health conditions. It discusses strategies to link science, policy, and clinical practice, and to eliminate stigma, discrimination and marginalization of people who use psychoactive drugs and people with substance use disorders.

In 2015, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) approved resolution 58/7 “Strengthening cooperation with the scientific community, including academia, and promoting scientific research in drug demand and supply reduction policies in order to find effective solutions to various aspects of the world drug problem”. The continuous efforts of ISN were recognized in the 2016 CND resolution 59/3 “Promoting informal networking within the scientific community and the sharing of scientific evidence-based findings that may inform policies and practices to address the world drug problem”. In the same year, ISN met in New York during the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs 2016 (UNGASS) and prepared a statement for the attention of the General Assembly.

The network, currently comprised of more than 30 leading scientists (in their majority nominated by Member States), is informal in nature. Every year ISN develops a consensus statement that is delivered at the United Nations CND session to enhance the exchange between science and policy. Some of these annual statements of
ISN to CND are published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. These consensus statements have covered diverse topics such as comorbidities, the opioid overdose crisis, prevention and treatment of substance use disorders in times of COVID-19, and the interaction between criminal justice and health systems in treatment and care of people with drug use disorders. Several ISN articles have been published in World Psychiatry, the official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), reaching more than 33,000 psychiatrists in 121 countries.

ISN members have participated in various expert groups and have also contributed to a number of UNODC publications, including Treatment of Stimulant Use Disorders: Current Practices and Promising Perspectives (2019), the Universal Treatment Training Curriculum, and Booklet 5 of the World Drug Report 2020 on the topic of socioeconomic inequalities and substance use disorders. In 2021, Booklet 5 of the UNODC World Drug Report COVID-19 and Drugs: Impact and Outlook also benefited from the input of ISN, whose members shared relevant and emerging evidence from different regions of the world.

The achievements and long-term impact of ISN, in line with the UNODC-WHO International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders and the International Standards for the Prevention of Drug Use, are all the more crucial in the follow-up to the United Nations Special Session on World Drug Problem 2016 (UNGASS), and to progress Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 5, 8, 10, 16.

**ISN Quick Facts**

- Launched in 2014

- Platform for the academic world to be in dialogue with international policymakers on how to address the world drug problem

- In its function supported by several CND resolutions

- More than 30 leading scientists from around the globe are members of this network
**Articles published by ISN include the following:**

Prevention, Treatment and Care of Substance Use Disorders in Times of COVID-19, World Psychiatry, Volume 21, Issue 2, pages 323-324, June 2021


Addressing the opioid crisis globally, World Psychiatry, Volume 18, Issue 2, pages 231-232, June 2019


For the latest list of ISN articles please go here: