

**SUMMARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “PREVENTING AND REVERTING SOCIAL HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES OF ILLICIT DRUG MARKETS: BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED”.**

Mexico City, 17-18 September 2015

The International Conference gathered decision-makers and experts involved in the negotiations towards the Special Session on Drugs of the United Nations General Assembly on the world drug problem (UNGASS 2016).

It provided for a fruitful exchange between representatives from international organizations, civil society, regional organizations and national governments on trends, emerging challenges, common understandings, alternative law enforcement policies and harmful social consequences related to the illicit drug markets. The following are the key results and conclusions from the discussion:

- In spite of significant national, regional and global efforts, and regardless of the considerable financial and human resources invested, the world drug problem remains as a global challenge with multiple causes, and which generates high costs in terms of public health, security, economic development, environment and social cohesion.
- Special attention should be placed on adopting a comprehensive approach that focuses on improving the quality of life of individuals. States should implement strategies that not only address reducing drug supply and demand, but which also consider measures aimed at dealing with the negative social consequences of illicit drug markets, including alternative law enforcement measures for drug-related crimes of a minor nature.
- The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda reaffirms the pillars of the United Nations: human rights, security and development. UNGASS 2016 provides the opportunity to focus the international drug control strategy on these same pillars, providing greater system-wide coherence throughout the United Nations.
- Promoting a sense of common responsibility among both governments and society is essential in tackling the structural causes of drug production, trafficking and consumption, contributing to countering violence and social harmful consequences.

- Respect for human rights must remain a priority of drug policies. In light of the vulnerability of the weakest links of the drug phenomenon, States must guarantee respect for the rights of their peoples, regardless of cultural, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic or other status.
- While continuing to decisively combat drug-related crime, the criminalization, stigmatization and marginalization of those most vulnerable must be avoided. Efforts must be made to rebuild and strengthen the social fabric and a sense of community cohesion through a preventive approach.
- Current challenges to prison systems worldwide include a constant increase in population, high levels of overcrowding, unacceptable conditions for prisoners, unavailability of basic services and high rates of transmission of infectious diseases among inmates, including HIV. All of these reflect the inability to protect the dignity and the human rights of those deprived of their liberty. We must therefore reflect on the use of alternatives to incarceration for those convicted for drug-related offences of a minor nature.
- Drug courts have proven to be a useful alternative measure to conviction or punishment in some countries. However, they represent one of many options that States may consider in accordance with their different realities.
- For some of the participants in the Conference, traditional drug policies have not provided satisfactory results in terms of the goals set out by the international community in 2009. Their implementation has further resulted in negative harmful consequences for the development of many communities, individuals and countries, especially those in which the production and trafficking of illicit drugs is concentrated.
- In some cases, policies focusing on prohibition, repression and abstinence have led to high costs for the human development of communities. Violence, the weakening of the social fabric, a limitation of opportunities for development, damages to health and to the environment, exclusion, and victimization are some of the issues that have targeted the most vulnerable populations. Coordination between drug control agencies and those addressing development issues has not always taken place.
- Balanced and comprehensive policies are required. These should focus equally on countering the demand of illicit drugs and combatting their production and trafficking, placing individuals before the substances themselves.
- The use of the death penalty for drug-related crimes was considered incompatible with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The principle of proportionality in taking into account the nature of offences should be prioritized, as set out in the international drug control conventions.

- Guaranteeing availability and access to controlled substances for medical purposes to those who need them is essential in ensuring the right to the enjoyment of the right to health.
- Responses to the world drug problem must be further enriched by taking into account input provided by all relevant entities of the UN System, including the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization, the International Narcotics Control Board, among others, with a view to ensuring full coherence and synergies in all efforts undertaken.
- Based on the principle of common and shared responsibility, UNGASS 2016 represents a historic opportunity to review the effectiveness of the global drug control policy and to discuss comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing the structural causes of the illicit production, trafficking and consumption of drugs.