

# **UN System Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking**

## **Talking Points on International Drug Policy and UNGASS 2016**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- All our efforts to respond to drug abuse and tackle drug trafficking and production must be within the framework of the three international drug conventions, in full compliance with human rights standards and norms;
- The UN advocates a re-balancing of the international policy on drugs, to increase the focus on public health, prevention, treatment and care, economic, social and cultural measures;
- An integrated response to the drug problem should consider alternatives to criminalization of drug use and incarceration of people who use drugs including those with drug use disorders and focus criminal justice efforts on those involved in supply of drugs, for example trafficking and diversion.;
- The most vulnerable in the chain of production and trafficking must benefit from development opportunities that include the creation and strengthening of effective alternative livelihoods, access to opportunities and other social welfare services;
- The essential services for effective public health-oriented responses to drugs and drug-related crime should provide a recovery-oriented continuum of care, and be accessible and affordable to people with drug use disorders;
- The 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem provides a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas and lessons on what has and has not worked in addressing the world drug problem.

### **INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK**

1. The UN response to the world drug and crime problem is through the promotion and implementation of the three international drugs conventions, the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption, as informed by the foundational human rights standards and norms;
2. Countering the drug problem in full compliance with human rights standards and norms requires an emphasis on the underlying spirit of the existing drug conventions, which is about health protection;
3. Implementation of the drug conventions has been uneven and imbalanced. Human rights must be respected as the problems related to illicit drugs are addressed;
4. A better approach to implementing the conventions could be to balance supply and demand reduction strategies, giving public health, prevention and treatment of drug use disorders, and access to controlled medicines for medical purposes more attention, in line with human rights standards.

## **RECONFIGURING OUR RESPONSE**

5. Only an integrated development, security, public safety, policing, governance, public health, and human rights centered approach can effectively address the challenges posed by the world drug problem;
6. There is a need to differentiate between criminal and public health issues, and the promotion and protection of public health must be at the forefront of efforts to tackle the multifaceted nature of the threat;
7. The public in consumer countries needs to be aware of and sensitized to the violence and insecurity that demand for drugs is fuelling in producer and transit countries;
8. At the same time, we need to strengthen arms regulation, cross-border law enforcement and judicial cooperation and capacity-building to target violent “wholesale” traffickers and producers;
9. Where new trafficking routes are established it is likely that drug use and drug dependence will follow, along with other public health and social consequences such as HIV infection associated with drug injecting and drug abuse;
10. The emergence and rapid proliferation of new psychoactive substances present new challenges to public health and implementation of drug control measures.

## **BALANCED APPROACH**

11. Policies that strike the right balance between reduction of drug supply and demand, and incorporate evidence-based policies are needed;
12. The right balance means that access to controlled medicines for the relief of pain and suffering should be ensured in all cases while preventing their diversion and abuse;
13. A public health response to drug use and drug use disorders includes implementation of interventions to reduce drug-related risks of transmission of HIV and other infections;
14. Health care systems need capacity to care for people with drug use disorders and others affected or harmed.

## **THE ROAD AHEAD**

15. In March 2014, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs will conduct a high-level review of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem. This will be followed, in 2016, by a very important special session convened by the UN General Assembly on this issue (UNGASS 2016);
16. Member States could use these opportunities to exchange ideas and pursue an open and comprehensive debate.