

Side Event at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Forging synergies for sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions:

The Vienna-based Commissions cooperating with others to advance

SDGs 3, 16 and the 2030 Agenda

11 July 2024 1:15 p.m.-2:30 p.m. NY Time

Ms. Julia Eberl, Vice-Chair of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD63)

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking the Chairpersons of Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) for their kind invitation to participate in this important side event.

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this discussion and to explore new intersections between drug control, crime prevention, criminal justice and the work of the Commission for Social Development.

Crime prevention and criminal justice are key pillars for achieving sustainable development and is closely linked to social development.

The Commission for Social Development is well-aware of how poverty, inequality, exclusion, deprivation and marginalization are circumstances that can push people into crimes and drugs. However, the negative effects of drugs and crimes also worsen poverty and drive exclusion and marginalization. We therefore need to work together to break these vicious circles.

Let me give you two examples in relation to two large, but often marginalized population groups, namely youth and older persons.

Guaranteeing access to justice by older persons is indispensable to combat social and economic marginalization. While access to justice is generally recognized in national laws and policies, often they are not necessarily specific to older persons' needs and situations. Several challenges facing older persons in accessing justice and remedy include physical access, reasonable accommodation, affordability, excessive delays and backlogs in judicial processes, as well as the impact of digitalization, cultural norms and ageism.

Despite limited age-disaggregated data, evidence shows young adults are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and often processed as adults, leading to longer sentences despite their developmental vulnerability. Few jurisdictions extend juvenile protections to young adults, contrary to UN recommendations. Youth, especially from marginalized groups, are often seen as threats, fostering mutual mistrust with law enforcement. Aggressive policing exacerbates this, diverting resources from addressing the socio-economic roots of crime and raising human rights concerns. Policy measures to improve police-community relations focus on better training and community policing, yet youth are underrepresented in consultations. Preventing youth contact

with the justice system is crucial, as early contact increases recidivism risk and negatively impacts their future prospects. Most young offenders do not reoffend, but system contact can lead to abuse and exposure to negative influences, proving counterproductive for rehabilitation. Given this, we need to recognize young people as assets in building just societies and ensure that youth, especially from marginalized subgroups most frequently in contact with the law, are adequately represented in participatory mechanisms at the local and national levels.

This is why it is so important to invest in people by building socially cohesive societies that leave no one behind. This requires, among several things, universal access to effective social protection and healthcare, along with quality education and life-long learning opportunities. In relation to this, a decent job is often the antidote to vulnerability and destructive behaviour.

The 63rd session of the Commission, taking place in February next year, will be focusing on “Strengthening solidarity, social inclusion and social cohesion to accelerate the delivery of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. It will also discuss issues in relation to social resilience.

I am looking forward to these discussions and would be pleased to report back to you on the outcomes at a future occasion.

Thank you for your attention!