



IOGT INTERNATIONAL NARCOTIC DRUGS POLICY

Prevention, Rehabilitation, Child Rights

IOGT International's vision is a life for all human beings free to live up to their fullest potential, and free from harm caused by alcohol and other drugs. It is a world of peace, democracy and justice where free and healthy citizens actively contribute in all levels of society.

INTRODUCTION

This Narcotic Drugs Policy is evidence-based and rooted in the first hand experiences and know-how that IOGT International and its members have acquired from working with all aspects of illicit drugs-related harm.

The IOGT International Narcotic Drugs Policy outlines how IOGT International

- Views basic principles and definitions concerning the issue of illicit drugs,
- Describes the harm caused by illicit drugs,
- Addresses the consequences of illegal markets spreading illicit drugs and the actors profiting from them, and finally
- Presents what IOGT International proposes as solutions.

PURPOSE OF THIS NARCOTIC DRUGS POLICY

The purpose of this document is to inform about IOGT International's position and to empower IOGT International Member Organisations to engage in illicit drug policy debate.

TO THE POINT - FIVE BASIC PRINCIPLES WE FOLLOW

1. Narcotic drugs are illegal for good reason and they should remain illegal.
2. The objective is to prevent and reduce the use of illicit drugs by prevention and tackling demand and supply.
3. The level of negative social, economic and health consequences, including loss of productivity, disease and accidents, as well as political and security threats correspond to the level of illicit drug use in any given society.
4. Drug addiction is neither only a health problem nor is it exclusively a criminal justice problem.
5. Every human being addicted to illicit drugs is entitled to a dignified life. Every illicit drug addict should be treated with respect by society and the health care system. Treatment and rehabilitation measures should always be based on law and should always be in accordance with human dignity.

BASIC DEFINITIONS - THREE CRUCIAL TERMS

Narcotic drugs are mind-altering drugs with biological origin listed in the UN Drug Convention of 1961. Some of these drugs have medical usage, some not.

Psychotropic drugs are mind-altering drugs with mainly synthetic origin listed in the UN Drug Convention 1971. Some of these drugs have medical usage, some not.

New psychoactive substances (NPS) are mind-altering drugs of synthetic origin that are not controlled by international drug conventions and seldom by national law. They mimic the effects of "traditional" illicit drugs, and pose a great threat to public health. It is a great challenge for the nations of the world to find methods to list these drugs as illicit drugs in a speedy manner, in order to protect public health.

The main focus of the UN Drug Conventions is to prohibit non-medical use of both narcotic drugs and psychotropic drugs. Practically all nations of the world have ratified the UN Drug Conventions. It should also be know that nations have the right to classify more drugs than listed in the UN Drug Conventions as prohibited drugs. The conventions constitute only the minimum level.

All drugs that are listed this way in international conventions or in national law should be labeled as illicit drugs.

FOUR TYPES OF HARM

The consumption of any illicit drug in a non-medical setting can harm health and social life. Furthermore, an entire black market exists around the production, distribution and consumption of such products, which forms the bedrock of finance for many organized crime groups. The pervasive presence of so-called "legal highs" is also a challenge for policy makers worldwide due to the difficulty of regulators to keep track of chemical developments of new psychoactive substances.

IOGT International's special concern is for the wellbeing and development of children and young people. Therefore illicit drugs are to be addressed as a major obstacle and threat.

1. HARM TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING

Illicit drugs harm humans physically and psychologically, leading to dependence, organ diseases, depression and other mental disorders. Even the most common illicit drug, cannabis, can carry a detrimental effect on the development of the brain, especially when used during adolescence.

2. SOCIAL HARM

Illicit drug use causes problems to the users themselves. And it causes harm to the family, friends, and colleagues around the users as well as to society at large. The dimension of harms to others caused by illicit drug use demands to consider that health and social harm overlap and often heighten one another.

Illicit drugs can change a person's character and interfere with their ability to be an active member in the community and in society. Continuous use of illicit drugs hinders the individual's ability to partake in family life, build and maintain friendships, fulfil work obligations and participate in the social fabric of society. In the long run, this leads to social isolation.

While the user often has to cope with major personal difficulties, these personal struggles also affect family, friends, colleagues and employers, as well as the wider community, who depend on the individual to fulfil their social and legal obligations as members of the community.

Illicit drugs exacerbate and perpetuate poverty, fuelling criminality, corruption and violence and thus draining communities' resilience and the precious resources of society at large.

Social harm caused by illicit drugs consists thus of a collective dimension and an individual one, a short-term dimension and a long-term one. All four dimensions interplay and cause the magnitude of illicit drugs' social harm.

3. HARM TO ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND PROSPERITY

The social harm caused by illicit drugs, their harm to the individual's health and well being, and to public and global health, all create a burden on the economy of any society.

Illicit drugs drain the financial resources of the society as well as the individual. This includes the health of the individual user as well as those who are nearby. Furthermore, property damage, crime, violence and absenteeism at work causing productivity losses are all aspects of harm to economic sustainability and prosperity.

Considering especially impacts such as a low quality of life, depression or suffering, it is a reason to intensify prevention and early care in order to reduce the economic costs.

4. ILLICIT DRUGS – A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Illicit drugs are a Human Rights issue. They are especially a Child Rights and Indigenous People's rights issue. Illicit drugs expose children to unhealthy environments, neglect and abuse, higher risks for early onset of use of alcohol and other drugs and violate their fundamental right to grow up safely and free from alcohol and other drugs.

Illicit drugs fuel terrorism, organised crime, violence and human trafficking. The production of illicit drugs often goes hand-in-hand with conflicts and civil wars. Illicit drugs also jeopardize the sustainability of communities and entire societies.

MERCHANTS OF POVERTY, WAR AND DISEASE

Addressing illegal drug markets and actors profiting from illicit drugs

The actors within the illegal drug market affect society in complex ways. Actors profiting from illicit drugs engage in dirty business. The production and export of illicit drugs is one of the world's biggest (illegal) industries. There is a clear link between international organised crime and the trade in illicit drugs.

The illicit drugs industry prolongs civil wars and conflicts and works to destabilise fragile governments. Illicit drugs are usually produced in lawless, chaotic areas remote from government control. War and conflicts often create areas where illicit drugs can be produced. Money from the illicit drugs industry is often invested in weapons, trafficking, money laundering and corruption. Societies are therefore increasingly dominated by criminality, corruption and violence.

FIVE COMPONENTS FOR A DRUG-FREE WORLD

1. LEGISLATIVE / POLITICAL ASPECT

Law enforcement plays an integral role in illicit drug use prevention by protecting public safety, reducing the availability of illicit drugs and discouraging illicit drug use in the population.

The harms caused by use of illicit drugs are public health, social justice, criminal justice and economic issues all at once.

Therefore illicit drugs harm should be politically addressed in a comprehensive way, in line with the UN Conventions.

The use of imprisonment for minor illicit drug-related offenses should be reduced and proportionate to the offense.

It is crucial to find effective and dignified alternatives to incarceration. Alternative sanctions that foster abstinence and a life free from illicit drugs should obtain political priority.

Political leadership should ensure that the criminal justice system is a powerful engine of rehabilitation and social re-integration, instead of being an obstacle to rehabilitation and social re-integration. Alternative sanctions should empower people to become drug-free, crime-free and active members of society.

2. PRESENT LEGAL SYSTEM

The present system of worldwide illicit drug control is based on three international conventions:

- The 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol,
- The 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and
- The 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

As of June 2014, 189 states were Parties to these UN Conventions.

Article 33 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child states the obligation for states “to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances”.

3. PREVENTION IS ABOUT THE HEALTHY AND SAFE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND BUILDING A GOOD SOCIETY

The primary objective of IOGT International's illicit drug prevention is to help people, particularly but not exclusively children and young people, to avoid the use of illicit drugs, or, if they have started already, to pave ways into rehabilitation, social re-integration and a life free from illicit drugs.

The general aim of IOGT International's illicit drug prevention, however, is much broader: it is the healthy and safe development of children and youth to live up to their full potential and to be able to become active and contributing members of their community and society. Effective drug prevention contributes significantly to the positive engagement of children, youth and adults with their families, schools, workplace and community.

While prevention measures undertaken by civil society, social services and law enforcement agencies do cost taxpayer money and their effects are sometimes difficult to “prove” in the short-term, focusing prevention on children and young people saves costs in the long-term. For example, in the case of alcohol the likelihood of developing an addiction is fourfold when a person starts using it before the age of 15.

IOGT International considers it a basic Human Right that children and young people grow up free from alcohol and other drugs and thus achieve their greatest potential. Therefore IOGT International advocates for more prevention-focused policy, which promotes the creation of more alcohol and other drug free environments for young people.

This means that the use of illicit drugs should not merely be considered from a legal perspective, but as well in light of public health and wellbeing.

4. TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION

Treatment and rehabilitation offer the best way for human beings who are affected by illicit drug-related problems to minimize their risk of further consequences and give them a fair chance at returning to a dignified life within society.

Community-based rehabilitation and fellowships provide important opportunities for mutual help. However, treatment systems must provide a wide range of effective services to assist people who use illicit drugs in their efforts to recover.

Low threshold services are needed to start interventions. Treatment and rehabilitation services should be easily available to illicit drug users and they should empower people to become drug-free, crime-free and active members of society.

5. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION – THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Tackling the world's illicit drug problem requires strong international collaboration. The current international illicit drug control treaties establish an international framework to combat illicit drug-related harm by reducing both supply and demand.

However, more can be done to reduce any unintended consequences of the current regulatory regime and to ensure access to vital medical treatment and medications.

IOGT International also believes that further international collaboration is needed to address the problems arising from the criminal illicit drug markets, e.g. combating money laundering, corruption and international organized crime.

BACKGROUND OF EVIDENCE

- 1) 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended by the 1972 Protocol
 - 2) 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances
 - 3) 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances
- The illicit drug control conventions sit within a broader framework of UN treaties and declarations including, inter alia:
- 4) The Charter of the United Nations
 - 5) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
 - 6) The Constitution of World Health Organization
 - 7) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - 8) The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
 - 9) The Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - 10) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
 - 11) The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
 - 12) The Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS
 - 13) The Protection of Children from Illicit Drugs – A Minimum Human Rights Standard. A Child-Centered vs. a User-Centered Drug Policy, Dahlgren & Stere
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