

IOGT International Written Statement

Commission on Narcotic Drugs 2018

12.03.18

Dear Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor and privilege to address you by way of this written statement.

In 2016, the United Nations Special Session on Drugs welcomed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Target 3.5 of Sustainable Development Goal 3 sets out a commitment by governments to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse.

In the UNGASS outcome document "Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem" governments recognized, as part of a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach to addressing and countering the world drug problem, that appropriate emphasis should be placed on individuals, families, communities and society as a whole, with a view to promoting and protecting the health, safety and well-being of all humanity and that the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility that should be addressed in a multilateral setting through effective and increased international cooperation and demands an integrated, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing, balanced, scientific evidence-based and comprehensive approach.

In the follow-up of UNGASS and in the lead up to 2019 and eventually 2030, the commitment to a comprehensive and integrated to addressing all aspects of the world drug problem is imperative.

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 availability of drugs in any given society. Clearly, drug use is neither exclusively a public health problem nor is it simply a criminal justice problem. Illicit drugs adversely affect at least 12 areas of the Sustainable Development agenda. Therefore, all affected sectors need to play a role in addressing the world drug problem. Neither does legalizing drugs solve it, nor is it solved by merely punishing drug users.

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Therefore, IOGT International advocates the following solutions for a constructive way forward:

1) Make use of the full potential of the conventions

The current international drug control treaties establish an international framework to tackle drug-related harm by reducing both supply and demand. Obviously, more can and must be done to address the world drug problem and to reduce any unintended consequences of the current regulatory regime.

The conventions themselves provide ample space and hold considerable potential. The approach adopted by the Conventions is health-centered. For example, the Conventions repeatedly call for social cohesion and the reintegration of drug users, and do not treat drug users and people with drug use disorders as criminals to be marginalized. Another example is that one of the primary aims of the Conventions is to guarantee the availability of essential drugs for medical interventions, as "indispensable" tools for the treatment of a variety of medical conditions, particularly pain and many psychiatric and neurological conditions, while preventing use that is not for medical or scientific purposes.

2) Public health oriented, population level measures

Clearly, drug use is not only a health issue that affects the individual user; it is also a public health issue. The overall positive health benefits of population-based approaches far exceed those that are available only from clinical interventions on the individual level.

Therefore governments should employ an evidence-based approach that highlights public health-oriented policies serving both to define and to understand structural causes of drug use within a society and helping to determine interventions that can prevent and reduce drug-related harm at population as well as individual level.

3) In the sustainable development era, pivot to prevention and health promotion

Preventing problems from occurring or expanding represents by far the best and humane approach to reducing drug-related harm – especially in the era of sustainable development.

A pivot to evidence-based prevention can benefit governments with regard to cost-effectiveness as well as sustainability of interventions and outcomes. It also helps to empower people and communities and promotes Human Rights and contributes significantly to positive engagement of children, youth and adults with their families, schools, workplace and community.

Therefore, governments should adopt and scale-up evidence-based drug prevention.

4) Enable treatment and rehabilitation for all, to leave no one behind

The health consequences of drug use continue to be a matter of concern, as the vast majority of drug users continue to have no access to treatment. Access to treatment and support are essential public health cornerstones. Evidence-based treatment and rehabilitation services are in fact part of a pivot to prevention, as such interventions not only benefit the affected user but the people, like children or spouses, around them.

Therefore, governments need to provide more and better low-threshold services. Treatment and rehabilitation services should be easily available to all who need them and should empower people to become drug-free, crime-free and active members of society. In addition, governments should seek to integrate community responses with the primary healthcare system. Community-based rehabilitation through self-help groups, therapeutic communities, fellowships and, family clubs provide important opportunities for mutual help.

5) Foster a Human Rights-based approach

Governments should employ evidence-based, comprehensive and integrated drug control policies that are rooted in human rights.

For instance, governments should adopt a strategic approach on the basis of CRC articles 3 and 33, to give primary consideration of the Best Interest of the child in the response to the world drug problem.

Governments should also heed The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action do provide for a Human Rights-based approach to drug policy with regard to women and girls.

6) Put sustainable development at the heart of the response

Many risk factors and circumstances that render people more vulnerable to illicit drugs can be prevented. Putting a sustainable development perspective at the heart means

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to work with deprived and marginalized communities and identify solutions that integrate measures to prevent as well as to reduce harm. For example, governments should encourage alternative development. Alternative Development can work, particularly when initiatives are integrated into broader agendas and driven by a long-term vision, sustained with funding and political support.

Additionally, development perspectives need greater prominence in the debate about the world drug problem. Discussions should no longer be dominated by Western experts, focused on Western solutions to Western problems.

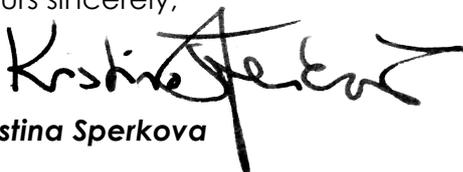
7) Stimulate international collaboration

Countries need to cooperate more closely within the established international framework offered by the UN Conventions to address the demand and supply of illicit drugs more efficiently together.

IOGT International encourages governments to enhance and scale-up international collaboration in the fields of judicial cooperation, tackling money laundering, border control, international organized crime, targeting corruption as well as alternative development.

We look forward to debating these issues in more detail and remain at your disposal for continued dialogue.

Yours sincerely,



Kristina Sperkova

International President, IOGT International

United Nations, Vienna, March 12, 2018