

Taking stock of the implementation of all commitments made to jointly address and counter the world drug problem

14.03.19

Dear Madame Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,
On behalf of the members of IOGT International I thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

Our analysis of progress during the last ten years shows **considerable achievements and successes** as well as **serious failures and severe shortcomings** in the response to the world drug problem. With regard to the progress made we would like to **highlight three of the seven achievements** that we can clearly identify:

1. **Drug use has remained strikingly low and relatively stable.** Nearly 95% of the world's population lives drug-free which is an important achievement worth our attention.
2. Proven solutions for drug policy in the era of the SDGs are at hand. The decade since 2009, has **engendered a stronger scientific evidence – base for interventions in drug demand reduction** leading to reductions in drug-related harm to people, families, communities and societies at large.
3. **Clear global consensus exists for comprehensive action tackling the world drug problem as Human Rights and public health issue.** This is a positive shift in line with the UN Drug Conventions that strengthens countries in their efforts to move from dealing with drug use exclusively as a criminal justice issue, to increasing involvement of the health and social services.

Understanding the progress made over the last ten years is an important part of paving the way forward in the global response to the World Drug Problem. It shows that **not all is bad.**

At the same time, it's not all good either. By no means is the global community where we collectively set out to be in 2009.

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1. Human rights protections remain insufficient.
2. Political will, leadership and especially investment in comprehensive action remains lacking in many places.
3. A fundamentally flawed discourse excludes evidence-based, cost-effective, population-level measures and supports counterproductive measures such as legalization of drugs. In relation to that, another concerning trend that is obviously on the rise is a “War for drugs”.

We are witnessing a global, well-funded propaganda campaign to change peoples’ perception of narcotic drugs making narcotic drugs just as accepted worldwide, just as widely used, just as integrated in the culture as alcohol is today in Western societies.

But experiences from many decades with alcohol and tobacco control show that **there is no good reason to legalize other harmful substances that have much lower prevalence, availability and public acceptance.** We cannot ignore these lessons hoping – without any proof – that this time it will turn out for the better.

We commend the WHO and UNODC for making the development of comprehensive, integrated, health-based approaches to drug policies a priority and wish for all actors to follow their lead. **A pivot to evidence-based prevention including treatment is most cost-effective and sustainable.** It also helps to empower people and communities, promotes Human Rights and contributes significantly to positive engagement of children, youth and adults with their families, schools, workplaces and communities.

I thank you for your attention!

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