

IDPC recommendations on the Joint Ministerial Statement

1st Intersessional Meeting, 25th September 2013

In preparation for the High Level Segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna in March 2014, and in particular the negotiation of the Joint Ministerial Statement, the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) has drafted a set of recommendations to promote the drafting of a cohesive statement that reflects the changing priorities and realities of drug control around the world.

IDPC recommends that the Joint Ministerial Statement follows the following principles:

- The inter-sessional meetings should not be used to finalize text, but rather to negotiate positions and debate issues: negotiations on the draft Statement should follow the “single undertaking” principle: *nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.*
- The preamble and introduction to the statement should clearly acknowledge that the objectives in the 2009 Political Declaration to eliminate or significantly reduce the scale of drug markets are no nearer achievement, and that greater attention should therefore be placed on reducing the harmful consequences of these markets on health, crime, security and development.
- The preamble should also include paragraphs that describe how drug markets and use negatively impact on these areas of government and UN concern – public health, social and economic development, human security, and human rights.
- The preamble should also have a clear description of concern around the proliferation of new psychoactive substances, and the related challenges to traditional supply and demand reduction strategies.
- The tone of the whole document should be supportive of the search for more effective strategies, policies and programmes to achieve better results, rather than simply calling for better co-ordination and implementation of existing strategies.
- There should be a specific paragraph welcoming the move away from criminalisation and harsh punishment, and supporting the development of effective alternatives to imprisonment for those convicted of non-violent drug offences, and the application of human rights and proportionality principles in sentencing.
- The public health paragraphs should explicitly recognise that the global target of reducing new HIV infections related to injecting drug use by 50 per cent by 2015 will not be met. In response, strengthened commitments are required to scale up proven harm reduction and HIV prevention strategies for people who inject drugs.
- A specific paragraph should call for the dramatic scale-up of access to essential medicines for the relief of pain and treatment of drug dependence, including an evaluation of the role of INCB in overcoming existing barriers.
- Implementation guidelines for alternative development should clearly reflect a development-first and rights-based approach to the illicit cultivation of drug-linked crops, rather than implementing forced eradication programmes.

- Any references to the preparations for the 2016 UNGASS should emphasise the need for a broad and inclusive debate amongst member states and civil society on the future structure and direction of drug control policies. This debate should engage UN agencies from the development, health, human rights and security sectors – and not just UNODC.

As this inter-sessional meeting will also focus on the Demand Reduction section, IDPC additionally proposes the following key points:

Achievements:

- Evidence and human rights based methods of drug prevention, drug dependence treatment, and harm reduction programmes, where comprehensively implemented according to best practice, have led to reductions in drug related crime, drug dependence, overdose deaths, and HIV and hepatitis infections.

Challenges:

- There are too many areas of the world where resource, policy and capacity constraints mean that few of these evidence based programmes have been made available.
- There is a need to end programmes implemented in the name of drug treatment or drug control, but which clearly breach evidence or human rights standards – particularly compulsory drug detention centres.
- The punishment and incarceration of people who use drugs has failed as a demand reduction tool.

Priorities:

- There is a need to focus efforts and resources for evidence-based and appropriate drug dependence treatment and health and social care for those who voluntarily seek it out and are most in need of it. The UNODC has indicated that approximately 10% of all people who use drugs develop dependency that is problematic. It is this 10% that should be the priority for policy and programmes rather than continue with demand reduction strategies that fail to differentiate between different patterns of drug use.
- There is an urgent need to reform the national legislation in many jurisdictions to remove criminal sanctions for drug use and possession or cultivation for personal use, utilising the full flexibility permissible under the UN drug control treaties.

IDPC calls on Member States to introduce and promote these concepts in the upcoming negotiations.

The International Drug Policy Consortium is a global network of non-government organisations and professional networks that specialise in issues related to illegal drug production and use. The Consortium aims to promote objective and open debate on the effectiveness, direction and content of drug policies at national and international level, and supports evidence-based policies that are effective in reducing drug-related harm. It produces briefing papers, disseminates the reports of its member organisations, and offers expert consultancy services to policy makers and officials around the world.

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