



WEST AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE



Communiqué

“Mano River Region Joint Communiqué on drug policy reform.”

26 October 2017 in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire

We, representatives of government ministries and agencies, law enforcement agencies, civil society as well as drug policy experts who participated in the Multisectoral Consultation on Drug Policy Reform in the Mano River Region which was held in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire from 25-26 October 2017 which had participants from all four countries from the Mano River Region namely, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone; and three additional countries from the ECOWAS region namely Benin, Ghana and Senegal; and a representative from the ECOWAS Commission (as observer) hereby make the following declaration with respect to drug policy reform in the Mano River Region;

Recalling the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan to Address Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organised Crime and Drug Abuse (2016 – 2020), and calling upon West Africa Member States to take the measures necessary to fully implement the actions set out therein, with the view to attaining, in timely manner their goals and targets.

Reaffirming the West Africa Common Position towards the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS 2016) calling for human rights and public health oriented drug policies with emphasis on harm reduction and acknowledging the commitment of West African countries to address the drug problem as stated in the outcome document of the UNGASS 2016;

Recognising the impact of illicit drug trafficking, production and consumption on democracy, governance, peace and security and development in West Africa;

Understanding the urgent need to foster discussions among key government stakeholders including policy makers, law enforcement and criminal justice actors, civil society to strategise on a common approach to tackle the drug problem in the region;

Mindful of the current drug policy regime and framework that has fostered abuses of human rights of drug users, burdened the criminal justice system, deteriorated public health, proliferated violence, led to the spread of diseases notably HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis and taken away from effective treatment and rehabilitation for people who use drugs;

Acknowledging the threat of drug use to public health and social development in West Africa and the fact that no visible reform is taking place in the Mano River Union countries;

Appreciating the encouraging but modest progressive stance taken by the governments of Benin, Ghana and Senegal towards drug policy reform.

Recognising the critical need to gather evidence on the extent of the drug menace in the Mano River Region for informed policy recommendations;

Noting that Guinea has commenced drug policy reform in this direction;

Recalling that the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility that requires effective and increased international cooperation;

We hereby **recommend** the following towards:

Drugs and Health

- Tackle problematic use of drugs from public health perspective and not only as a national security and safety issues;
- Allocate more resources towards public health to facilitate treatment, interventions and facilities for problematic drug users;
- Integrate harm reduction in national drug policies to complement demand and supply reduction;
- Institute harm and risk reduction programmes and facilitate access to health care in prisons;
- Support and create an enabling environment for the private sector and CSOs to get involved in treatment, rehabilitation and recovery services;

Drugs and Crime

- Shift law enforcement resources from small scale nonviolent problematic users and rather concentrate law enforcement interventions and resources more on cultivation, production, trafficking and criminal networks;
- Equip adequately the law enforcement agencies in border regions, port of entries and exits to respond effectively to drug trafficking within the region;
- Strengthen the law enforcement agencies' technical capacities to adequately respond to the drug menace in the Mano River Union countries while protecting the human rights of drug users;
- Ensure balance and proportionality in both drug demand and supply policies and direct the punitive criminal sanction component of the policies to drug traffickers and suppliers;
- Ensure strict law enforcement for drug traffickers and particularly those who target youths and minors;
- Promote collaboration within the region in order to increase the frequency of the identification and arrest of major drug barons and cartels;

Drugs and Alternative Development

Within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030),

- Promote alternative livelihoods programmes for individuals, families and communities whose vulnerabilities makes them susceptible to engaging in illicit drug production;
- Explore the possibilities of research into the scientific, medical, pharmaceutical and industrial uses of cannabis.

Policy and Legal Reforms

- Allocate adequate resources for institutions to undertake research and support evidence based drug policies;
- Promote public health and human rights perspective that is guided a drug policy in addition to criminal justice approach;
- Harmonize drug legislation within the West African sub region to deny drug traffickers a safe haven in West Africa;
- Promote and operationalise alternative measures to incarceration or non-custodial sentencing mechanisms for minor non-violent drug related offence in accordance to the international drug conventions.

Education on harms related to drug use

- Promote evidence based programmes in formal and informal sectors on drug education, rehabilitation and treatment centres in the Mano River Region;
- Enhance Information, Education and Communication /Behavioural Change (IEC/BCC) actions among the region to reduce drug consumption prevalence;

Essential Medicines for Palliative Care and Pain Relief

- Ensure the provision of opiates and other essential uncontrolled medicine for palliative care and pain relief as enshrined in WHO protocols;
- Provide access and support for opiates and other essential and controlled medicines for palliative and pain relief as enshrined in the WHO protocols;

Evidence-based Research

- Conduct evidence-based research to contribute to knowledge generation in the Mano River Region and activism on the impact of illicit drug trafficking on governance, democracy and development in West Africa in order to drive policy reforms at the national level.

Multi-stakeholder and Cross-border Collaboration

- Strengthen collaboration between civil society and public agencies of the Mano River Region in the effort to address the risks associated with illicit drug trafficking, consumption and production within the Mano River Region; and
- Support cross-border cooperation in the region towards prevention, treatment and recovery;

- Ensure that CSOs in drug policy advocacy and service delivery integrate and collaborate closely with CSOs in the broader health sector such as HIV/AIDS.

ECOWAS, Development Partners and Mano River Union

- Propose support from ECOWAS and other development partners to Mano River Union countries to harmonize drug policies based on the Guinean model;

On behalf of the 2017 Multisectoral Consultation delegates

This communique is done in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire this day 26th October 2017.

Signed:

S/N	Signee	Designation	Institution/Organisation	Country
1	Krouma Mamadou	Secrétaire Général du Comité Interministériel de Lutte Anti-Drogue (CILAD)	Minister of Interior	Cote d'Ivoire
2	Coumoue Daniella	Ministère de la Sante et de l'Hygiène Publique	Programme National de Lutte contre le Tabagisme, l'Alcoolisme, la Toxicomanie et les autres Addictions	Cote d'Ivoire
3	Deli Sylvain	Ministère de la Sante et de l'Hygiène Publique	Programme National de Lutte contre le Tabagisme, l'Alcoolisme, la Toxicomanie et les autres Addictions	Cote d'Ivoire
4	Renaud Boulet	Médecins du monde	Médecins du monde	Cote d'Ivoire
5	Tall Lacina	President	Conseil des Organisations pour la lutte contre la Drogue en Côte d'Ivoire	Cote d'Ivoire
6	Fofana Inza	Project Coordinator	UNODC Cote d'Ivoire	Cote d'Ivoire
7	Bamba Sindou	Focal Point	West Africa Drug Policy Network – Cote d'Ivoire Chapter	Cote d'Ivoire
8	Nicolas VAKO	IDPC National Focal Point	UNICO	Cote d'Ivoire
9	Tall Aguibou	Coordinateur National du Comité Interministériel de lutte contre la Drogue	Ministry of Interior	Guinea

S/N	Signee	Designation	Institution/Organisation	Country
10	Camara Farimba	Directeur Général de l'office Central Anti-Drogue (OCAD)	Ministry of Interior	Guinea
11	Lanciné Magassouba			Guinea
12	Dr Mamady Mory Keita	Psychiatre	Ministère de la Santé	Guinea
13	Alpha Diallo	Focal Point	West Africa Drug Policy Network – Guinea Chapter	Guinea
14	Esther Grant	Division of Rehabilitation at the Ministry of Health	Ministry of Health	Liberia
15	Marvis G. Hubbard	Chief of Women and Children	Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency	Liberia
16	Charlyn Davis Worzie MIA	National Gender Specialist	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Liberia
17	Sam T. Artis	Counties Service Center Coordinator	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Liberia
18	Marilyn Myers	Administrative Assistant Minister's Projects	Ministry of Health	Liberia
19	Mr. Robert B Kutu Akoi	Chief of Prevention	Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency	Liberia
20	Julius Togba	Focal Point	West Africa Drug Policy Network – Liberia Chapter	Liberia
21	Morie Lengor	Director of Crime Services/ Chairman of transnational organised crime	Ministry of Interior	Sierra Leone
22	Daniel Yapo Sesay	Head of Sierra Leone National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)	Ministry of Interior	Sierra Leone
23	Mr. Sitta Kamara		The Ministry of Health and Sanitation	Sierra Leone
24	Alhaji Dr. Momodu Sesay	Executive Secretary	Sierra Leonean National HIV/AIDS Secretary	Sierra Leone
25	Prince Bull Luseni	Focal Point	West Africa Drug Policy Network – Sierra Leone Chapter	Sierra Leone

S/N	Signee	Designation	Institution/Organisation	Country
26	Orou Saka	Secrétaire Permanent	CILAS	Benin
27	Bouraïma Taïrou Nouréni	Directeur	OCERTID	Benin
28	Charles Assogba	Focal Point Benin	Social Watch	Benin
29	Idrissa Ba	WACD Commissioner	West Africa Commission on Drugs (WACD)	Senegal
30	Pr Alioune Badara Diop	Directeur du Laboratoire Institutions, Gouvernance Démocratique et Politiques Publiques	Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar	Senegal
31	Aida Sylla	Chef de la Division Santé Mentale	Ministère de la Santé et de l'Action Sociale	Senegal
32	Yaw Akraasi Sarpong	Former- NACOB Secretary	West Africa Drug Policy Network – Ghana Chapter	Ghana
33	Araba Essilfua Arhin	Researcher		Ghana
34	Chizoba U. Chine	Law enforcement and Cooperation	ECOWAS	Nigeria
35	Atuahene S. Kyeremeh	Director of Research monitoring and Evaluation	Ghana AIDS Commission	Ghana
36	Timothy Debrah	WADPN - Ghana	WADPN	Ghana