

Civil Society Statement 66 Regular Session of CICAD

I am talking to you in representation of Mexico United Against Crime (MUCD), and on behalf of the Centro de Estudios de Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad -Dejusticia, Intercambios Asociación Civil, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) -a global network of more than 180 organizations, that work promoting drug policies based on human rights, human security, social inclusion, development and public health-.

This time, we would like to make some considerations on two main topics before this Commission. On the one hand, the participation of civil society and the CICAD regular session agenda. On the other, some backwards steps in relation to the UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document that are taking place at national and hemispheric level.

First and foremost, the organizations express their concern about the participation of civil society in this sixty-sixth regular session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission - CICAD. The initiation of civil society dialogues began at the 54th Session of the CICAD / OAS held in Bogotá, Colombia in 2013. This practice continued at subsequent CICAD meetings. Although they were not formally part of CICAD's Sessions or binding on the Commission, the dialogues served as a mechanism to learn from the experiences, actions and research of civil society, as well as to encourage feedback and exchange of ideas. Since that year, the organizations I represent have actively participated in these mechanisms and have closely followed the work of the Commission.

As of the 63th Session, the format of these dialogues has changed and the panel has been included in the official program of the Commission. The panel is intended to foster and strengthen the relationship between the commissioners and civil society, as well as the corresponding discussions and subsequent actions undertaken within the framework of CICAD. Unfortunately, since it is not an institutionalized practice that operates under non-formal rules, the organization and selection on participants depend entirely on the presidency in turn, which could limit the diversity of voices and experiences participating in this important forum. As civil society organizations, we reiterate our openness and willingness to participate constructively in these processes and other mechanisms of the Commission. Also, we make a respectful call to take into account and to include the diversity of civil society voices on these hemispheric and multilateral fora.

In the same vein, it is necessary to recognize that drug policy – at the global and hemispherical level - is passing through a turning point. Nevertheless, we are concerned that

the agenda for this regular session does not project some relevant events that have taken place on this matter recently. At the global level, the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, adopted last March in the CND, maintains –in general terms- the goals of the 2009 Action Plan. Nevertheless, besides the UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document, other two documents that aims to transform the approach on drug policy matters, were adopted during the last year.

The first one is the “United Nations system Common Position supporting the implementation of the international drug control policy through effective inter-agency collaboration” - Common Position-, adopted in November 2018 by the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) –the main instrument for coordination between 31 UN agencies. The document aims to “support the development and implementation of policies that put people, health and human rights at the center.” In addition, it points out the need for policies in this area to be “truly balanced, comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based, human rights-based... within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. For this reason, it emphasizes obligations on human rights, development, harm reduction and even recommends to decriminalize drug possession for personal use.

The CEB established the 'task force', led by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in order to ensure the implementation of the Common Position. The task force is responsible for translating the common position into practice by guiding approaches throughout the UN system and intensifying efforts to carry out joint activities between agencies and raise awareness about the multifaceted nature of drug policy.

Second, in March 2019, the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy, developed by the United Nations Development Program, the World Health Organization, The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the International Centre on Human Rights and Drug Policy (HRDP) and a coalition of UN member states, scholars and civil society, were released.

In line with the 2030 Agenda, the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and the HIV, Health and Development Strategy 2016-2021, the Guidelines provide a comprehensive set of international legal standards to put human dignity and sustainable development at the center of the Member States' responses to drug economies considered illegal, from development to criminal justice and public health.

Both, the Common Position and the Guidelines, are critical opportunities to promote broader coherence within the United Nations system, and represent an effort to integrate international human rights commitments into national, regional and global policies and programs. In this sense, the discussion and incorporation of those documents in the national and hemispheric level represent a challenge that would be essential to face in this forum.

In this context, it results particularly worrying that some policies in the region are going in the opposite direction, pointing to criminalization, stigmatization, excessive punitivism against people who use drugs, the lack of treatment services, the persistence of compulsory and forced treatments, the forced eradication of crops considered illegal, the massive and selective imprisonment of the most vulnerable people and the militarization of public security.

The region, within the CICAD framework, has formulated proposals and recommendations that aim to generate more effective public policies, such as the Scenarios report and the Plan of Action 2016-2020. We are also convinced that the implementation of the operational recommendations of the UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document, the most recent consensus, that comprehensively addresses the interconnections between the 2030 Agenda and drug policy. Undoubtedly, the coordinated efforts of the region and the Commission will continue to be key to sustaining these purposes.

In this sense, the active, critical, constructive, independent, open and sustained participation of civil society - from its diversity of experiences and positions - is fundamental. We reiterate the openness and willingness of the organizations I represent today, to continue participating constructively in these processes and other mechanisms of the Commission.

Thank you.