

Declaration of Dakar on Harm Reduction among People Who Inject Drugs in West Africa

Preamble

The improvements recorded in the HIV control may conceal the weaknesses suffered by the vulnerable and marginalized populations: sex workers (SWs), men who have sex with men (MSM), prisoners, and People Who Inject Drugs (PWD). Among those members of the key populations, People Who Inject Drugs remain more invisible and less known in Africa.

Out of the forty-nine (49) Sub Sahara African countries, only sixteen (16) of them have data on injecting drug use. Meanwhile, out of 2.3 million People Who Inject Drugs who are identified in this part of the continent, 564,000 of them are living with HIV¹.

The Regional Programme of Harm Reduction about HIV, Tuberculosis and other Co-Morbidities, and Human Right Promotion for People Who Inject Drugs (PARECO) which is implemented by ANCS (Alliance Nationale des Communautés pour la Santé) in five (5) West African countries (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, and Senegal) including the Republic of Guinea and Mali, in collaboration with the implementing partners, and funded by the Global Fund, aims at improving access to Harm Reduction services and human right promotion for People Who Inject Drugs in West Africa.

This objective requires:

- The improvement and availability of strategic information;
- Strengthening health community actors and PWDs on Harm Reduction;
- Improvement of the social and legal environment;
- Development and implementation of three innovative models of Harm Reduction (Outreach; Engagement with the security forces, and with those in prisons).

¹UNODC, World Drug Report 2018

Declaration of Engagement

As the participants of the high-level consultation meeting organized by WACD/ANCS (West Africa Commission on Drugs/ Alliance Nationale des Communautés pour la Santé), on the 11th of September, 2018 in Dakar (Senegal),

- **We are concerned** about the extent of drug trafficking and drug use in the continent and are meeting with Ministers, Members of Parliament, civil society organizations, professionals in the judiciary, people who inject drugs medical doctors, substance use disorder specialists, criminologists, and academics;
- **Acknowledging** suppression as necessary but not sufficient to drug trafficking, because of the damaging and multidimensional consequences of drugs;
- **We reaffirm** our commitment to reaching the 90-90-90 objectives by 2020 and eliminating AIDS in 2030, by scaling up the efforts made by PARECO member African countries for the creation of an environment suitable for harm reduction;
- **We reiterate** our commitment to integrating and promoting harm reduction in national and regional strategies on AIDS, TB, hepatitis, by adopting a public health and human right based approach;
- **We consider** respect of human dignity as a key factor of stopping the HIV/AIDS dissemination among key populations in general, and people who inject drugs in particular;
- **We commend** the significant progress made the past decades in the responses to HIV, hepatitis, and tuberculosis related to injecting drug use;
- **We praise** the growing attention of the stakeholders of the HIV response who are playing a key role with innovative Harm Reduction approaches;
- **We welcome** the appeal by President **Olusegun OBASANJO**, Chairman of the West African Commission on Drugs to reform laws and policies on drugs;

We are:

- a. Supporting the health policies in Africa stated in the Plan of action of the African Union about the control of drugs and United Nations Recommendations on treatment of drug addiction, including:
 - The Declaration of the UN General Assembly Special Session on the reduction of drug demand (1998);
 - The UN Information Paper on HIV/AIDS prevention related to drug use (2000);
 - The 2002 UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.
 - The UNAIDS Policy Document of 2005 on scaling up HIV prevention ("Preventing HIV transmission by people who inject drugs by establishing and integrated and effective comprehensive system")
 - The Outcome Document of the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on the world issue of drugs.

- b. Pressing** Governments to adopt a public health and human right based approach and to own the harm reduction strategy;
- c. Encouraging** Governments to establish legislations and policies that decriminalise drug use and make controlled substances accessible for medical and scientific research purpose and for their decentralization and practices;
- d. Encouraging** Governments to reallocate the resources on drug control to programmes that prioritise protecting the health and right of community of people who inject drugs, particularly on implementation of harm reduction strategies;
- e. Appealing** for taking a harm reduction approach to address the drug issue and lifting legal barriers to an effective implementation of the harm reduction strategy and to the development of policies and legislations suitable for scaling-up harm reduction programmes in the continent;
- f. Inviting** Governments and other stakeholders to adopt a harm reduction approach to the drug issue and develop strategies to create a social environment without stigma and discrimination towards people who inject drugs.

Dakar, on September 11th, 2018