

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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FORMER PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT OF TIMOR-LESTE,  
NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE **JOSÉ RAMOS-HORTA**, AND FORMER  
PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND **HELEN CLARK**, JOIN THE  
GLOBAL COMMISSION ON DRUG POLICY



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**FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**

*(Geneva, 8 November 2017)*

Further expanding its breadth and diversity, the Global Commission on Drug Policy is honored and delighted to welcome two distinguished new members, **Helen Clark**, former Prime Minister of New Zealand (1999-2008) and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2009-2017) and Nobel Peace Prize recipient **José Ramos-Horta**, former Prime Minister and President of Timor-Leste (2006-2007, 2007-2012).

Under Helen Clark's leadership, UNDP was one of the most active UN entities in the preparatory process of the UN General Assembly Special Session on drugs held in 2016, providing delegates with evidence on complex and often intertwined development issues in which drug policy plays an essential, though often neglected, role.

Helen Clark said, "I believe that drug policy needs to evolve from a substance-based to a people-centered approach. Harm reduction, prevention, and evidence-based treatment have shown their effectiveness around the world. I have witnessed this from New Zealand to Belarus. Now is the time to address the policy barriers to better outcomes. This is what I plan to work on with my fellow Global Commissioners."

José Ramos-Horta has always advocated strongly for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations in society, actively working to promote human rights, conflict resolution through mediation, democracy, and the rule of law. He was a co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996, before serving as Prime Minister and President of Timor-Leste. He returned to government in 2017 as Minister of State and Counsellor for National Security.

"As a citizen of an island state and during my work as UN Special Representative in Guinea-Bissau, I have seen the ravages caused by the mismanagement and poor control of drugs, as well as by criminal organizations, and the terrible costs of attempting to resolve the situation through violent, prohibition-based repression," he said. "I welcome the opportunity to lend my support to the work of the Global Commission in proposing more humane alternatives for drug control policies around the world."

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former President of Brazil and Founding Chair of the Global Commission on Drug Policy, said "I remember the beginning of the Global Commission and the initial group of Latin American and European leaders publicly breaking the taboo on the failed war on drugs. I cannot understate my gratitude and satisfaction to see Helen Clark and José Ramos-Horta join us from the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting how all regions of the world have leaders willing to move towards drug policy reform."

Ruth Dreifuss, Chair of the Global Commission and former President of Switzerland, said: "Our Commission is a union of goodwill, with former leaders who bring their energy, knowledge and wide-ranging experience to open the debate on drug prohibition and its negative impact. I could not be more thrilled to count Helen Clark and José Ramos-Horta as Commissioners, and know for a fact that their voices will be heard loud and clear in international and regional arenas where we advocate for better drug policies."

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The Global Commission on Drug Policy now comprises 25 members, including former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and 12 former Heads of State or Government from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Greece, Malawi, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland and Timor-Leste.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors**

The Global Commission on Drug Policy was established in 2011 by political leaders, cultural figures, and globally influential personalities from the financial and business sectors. The Commission currently comprises 25 members, including 12 former Heads of States or Government and a former Secretary General of the United Nations. Its mission is to promote evidence-based drug policy reforms at international, national and regional levels. These reforms must also address issues of public health, social integration and security, with strict regard for human rights.

The Global Commission on Drug Policy has issued six flagship reports, beginning in 2011 with [\*War on Drugs\*](#), which details the extent of the failure and damage of five decades of prohibition and punitive measures. In 2014, [\*Taking Control: Pathways to Drug Policies that Work\*](#) emphasized public health approaches, alternatives to incarceration, and decriminalization, as well as calling for the legal regulation of psychoactive substances. Three other reports by the Global Commission on Drug Policy are more technical in nature and highlight how prohibitive drug control negatively impacts public health issues: HIV/AIDS ([\*How the Criminalization of Drug Use Fuels the Global Pandemic\*](#), 2012), Hepatitis C ([\*The Hidden Hepatitis C Epidemic\*](#), 2013) and how the current international drug control system creates barriers for access to essential medicines for pain and palliative care in countries around the world where they are desperately needed ([\*The Global Crisis of Avoidable Pain\*](#), 2015).

The Global Commission's most recent report, published in 2016 ([\*Advancing Drug Policy Reform: a new approach to decriminalization\*](#)), examines in more depth the benefits of decriminalization and calls for an end to all civil and criminal penalties for drug consumption and possession for personal use.

In October 2017, the Global Commission released a [\*Position Paper on the Opioid Crisis in North America\*](#), in which members of the Global Commission share their views and recommendations on how to mitigate the unprecedented overdose epidemic in the US and Canada.

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