



Public statement by the Global Commission on Drug Policy on UNGASS 2016

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The Global Commission on Drug Policy is profoundly disappointed with the adopted outcome document agreed at the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on "the world drug problem". The document does not acknowledge the comprehensive failure of the current drug control regime to reduce drug supply and demand.

Nor does the outcome document account for the damaging effects of outdated policies on violence and corruption as well as on population health, human rights and wellbeing. By reaffirming that the three international conventions are the "cornerstone of global drug policy", the document sustains an unacceptable and outdated legal status quo.

UNGASS has not seriously addressed the critical flaws of international drug policy. It does not call for an end to the criminalization and incarceration of drug users. It does not urge states to abolish capital punishment for drug-related offences. It does not call on the World Health Organization (WHO) to revisit the scheduling system of drugs. It does not advocate for harm reduction and treatment strategies that have demonstrated effectiveness. Finally it does not offer proposals to regulate drugs and put governments – rather than criminals – in control.

Equally important, the outcome document fails to recognize the considerable support for change demonstrated by many governments and civil society groups during UNGASS. It also excludes any mention of the many positive drug policy reforms already underway around the world. In fact many federal, state and city governments are adopting progressive legislation and testing new approaches.

In order to achieve meaningful reforms to global drug policy the UN and member states must address the contradiction between the restrictions imposed by the international narcotics conventions and the necessity of governments and societies to regulate drugs. Several countries and some U.S. states are exploring regulation in a more humane and evidence-based manner. These approaches should be encouraged despite the restrictive language of the UN drug conventions.

It is vital that the tensions between the letter of the conventions and ongoing initiatives on the ground are resolved. There will be another international opportunity to do so in 2019 when the UN Plan of Action that calls for a "drug free world" will be reviewed. The Global Commission urges governments and civil societies to continue moving forward and adopting drug policy reforms that are tailored to people's needs and rights. We encourage and support them in their efforts to fundamentally realign drug policy so that health, citizen safety and human rights are paramount.