



**GLOBAL
COMMISSION ON
DRUG POLICY**

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STATEMENT

For immediate release

Time for a bold debate on the modernization of the drug control normative framework



(Geneva, 2 March 2020)

The 63rd UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) starts today following a strong statement from the President of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB, the UN monitoring body of the implementation of the conventions), during the presentation of its 2019 report three days ago: “we do have some very fundamental issues around the conventions, that State Parties will need to start looking at. We have to recognize that the conventions were drawn up almost 60 years ago [...] and I think it is an appropriate time to look at whether those are still fit for purpose, or whether we need new alternative instruments, and alternative approaches to deal with these problems.”

Notwithstanding the failure of the current prohibition paradigm - enshrined in the three drug conventions - in achieving any of its objectives of eliminating drug production, supply or demand, governments still implement the outdated drug control regime. This is not only ineffective, but aggravates public health epidemics, over-incarceration and prison overcrowding, grave human rights violations reaching state-condoned extrajudicial killings, violence, and negative impacts on economic growth and social cohesion.

Worse than implementing these conventions which are not fit-for-purpose, no states are willing to question them or interrogate their ineffectiveness or their responsibility in the current failures of drug control and in what is called, in a convenient language, the ‘unintended consequences’ of the regime.

We have decried for years this refusal to examine the evidence and embark on a review of this international normative framework which, just like national laws, **needs to be subject to constant reviews, amendments or termination to adapt to the advancement of knowledge, the needs of people and the evolution of societies.**

We, the members of the Global Commission on Drug Policy, warmly welcome this pragmatic - not dogmatic - call by the INCB President to the UN Member States to start an evidence-based discussion on the conventions. The Global Commission on Drug Policy has been calling since 2011 for the reform, the merger and the amendment of the three drug conventions, if only to modernize a harmful and unrealistic scheduling system and base its future alternative on science. We nevertheless caution against ideological debates or reforms of the current regime that will be based on political needs rather than effectiveness in controlling drugs and respecting human life.

The regime, established sixty years ago, resulted in the prioritization of cultural, commercial and political interests of the powers that were negotiating it, thus leaving outside of its scope addictive and harmful drugs because they were commercially and socially important in the West: alcohol and tobacco. Similarly, the regime was built to allow pharmaceutical companies to access precursors and plants, while decimating traditional medicine based on these same plants. A reform of the conventions must be based on best knowledge from life sciences, sound public health research, basic economic analysis and, crucially, in conformity with human rights standards.

The willingness to work for a better and more balanced regime is an obligation to policymakers and those who design, adopt and implement public policies that affect the lives of millions of

people. As stated by the INCB President, the international community and those in office “owe it to the people of the world to ensure that what [states] agree upon in an international setting is actually effective in dealing with the problem we are all very concerned about.” We could not agree more with this statement, and commend the INCB President for his courageous stance in front of an outdated drug control environment.

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About the Global Commission on Drug Policy

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 26 members, including 14 former Heads of States or Government and four Nobel Prize laureates. 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.
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