



GLOBAL
COMMISSION ON
DRUG POLICY


MEDIA RELEASE

Launch of a groundbreaking report presented online by former Heads of State and Nobel Peace Prize laureates

ENFORCEMENT OF DRUG LAWS REFOCUSING ON ORGANIZED CRIME ELITES

 Thursday 7 May 2020

 9:00 EDT - 12:00 UTC - 15:00 CEST

 This event will happen online <https://youtu.be/g3RpfxlAh3U> and the Commission will respond to questions during the broadcast

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 EST/06:00 CEST, THURSDAY 7TH MAY 2020

Thursday, 7th May 2020 (Geneva, Switzerland)--The Global Commission on Drug Policy today launched its new report, *Enforcement of drug laws: refocusing on organized crime elites* which outlines how years of repressive policies targeted at nonviolent drug offenders has resulted in mass incarceration and produced countless adverse impacts on public health, the rule of law, and social cohesion, whilst at the same time reinforcing criminal elites.

Commissioners presented conclusions during a live event on YouTube..

The report argues that the top layers of criminal organizations must be disempowered and calls for the replacement of the current policy of targeting non-violent drug offenders and resorting to mass incarceration.

Drug control policies over the years have resulted in violence between law enforcement and criminal groups with civilians as casualties; in the loss of the social fabric and mistrust of populations towards public institutions; and the grip of criminal groups on impoverished communities. Repression still gauges success in terms of arrests and seizures – but those who benefit from the illegal drug proceeds access sophisticated banking and judicial services.

"The most dangerous and most protected individuals often escape while ordinary people who happen to use illegal substances see their lives destroyed by repressive and outdated drug policies," said **Juan Manuel Santos**, former President of Colombia and a Global Commissioner. *"To fight organized crime, governments must follow the money."*

Law enforcement must focus on the most dangerous and protected actors and primary drivers of the corruption, violence, and chaos around illegal drug markets.

"Transnational organized crime launders billions of dollars, meddles with elections and the judiciary, and corrupts public institutions. It has become a major barrier to prosperity and social cohesion, especially in fragile countries", said **Olusegun Obasanjo**, former President of Nigeria and a Global Commissioner.

The control of psychoactive substances in a rational and efficient way must be centered on health and human rights, including for people who choose to live on the margins of society. Drug regulation can seriously disrupt criminal organizations and cut their most lucrative sources of income. The Commission's report includes key recommendations on how to achieve this.

Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and a Global Commissioner, highlights that *"we used to see international conventions as the gold standard for what Member States of the UN should be doing. That isn't the case with international drug conventions. It's time for them to be rewritten so that they focus on drugs as a health and social issue and not a criminal one."*

The Report contains research on the prerequisites for a successful transition towards drug regulation and provides cutting-edge recommendations on how to ensure that international criminal organizations are effectively disempowered by the transition towards a legally regulated drug market under the control of governments.

"When aiming to disempower organized crime by creating legally regulated markets, the broader questions of justice, development and social and economic inclusion need to be at the core of the transition," said **José Ramos-Horta**, Former Prime Minister and President of Timor-Leste, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and a Global Commissioner.

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Frederic Ballenegger
Communications Officer
media@globalcommissionondrugs.org
+41 79 418 80 14

MEMBERS OF THE GLOBAL COMMISSION PRESENTING THE NEW REPORT

Louise Arbour, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Canada)
Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, and former Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme
Ruth Dreifuss, former President of Switzerland and Chair of the Global Commission on Drug Policy
Anand Grover, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health (India)
Juan Manuel Santos, former President of Colombia, Nobel Peace Prize laureate

OTHER QUOTES BY MEMBERS OF THE GLOBAL COMMISSION ON DRUG POLICY

"Responsible people – that means, State – have to take control of the drug market. We cannot leave it in criminal hands. Governments are rolling out harm reduction and healthcare access programmes to counter the very impacts of their own repression! Drug regulation is a matter of consistency."

Ruth Dreifuss, former President of Switzerland, President of the Global Commission on Drug Policy

"The direst impact of prohibition is the illegal market itself, combined with the revenues and power over territories it provides to transnational organized crime. This can only be addressed through the legal regulation of drugs."

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former President of Brazil

"Criminality thrives on opportunity, and prohibition of drugs in the face of ever-rising global demand has created an opportunity unprecedented in its scale. Transnational organized crime groups involved in the drugs trade are involved in arms trafficking, contraband, counterfeiting and people trafficking, and domestic control and exploitation of sex work, robbery and the sale of stolen goods, kidnapping, extortion, and the victimization of migrants. The potential for displacement into other forms of criminality should be seen in this existing context."

Kgalema Motlanthe, former President of South Africa

"Who should assume the control of psychoactive substances that bear serious risks for health – the state, or organized crime? We are convinced, at the Global Commission on Drug Policy, that the only responsible answer is to regulate the market, to establish regulations adapted to the dangerousness of each drug, and to monitor and enforce these regulations. This is already the case for food, for legal psychoactive substances (tobacco and alcohol), for chemicals, for medications, for isotopes and many other products or behaviors that comprise a risk of harm."

Mohamed ElBaradei, Director Emeritus of the International Atomic Energy Agency



ABOUT THE GLOBAL COMMISSION ON DRUG POLICY

The **Global Commission on Drug Policy** is an independent body comprising 26 members, including 14 former heads of state or government and four Nobel Prize laureates. Its purpose is to bring to the international level an informed, evidence-based discussion about humane and effective ways to reduce the harms caused by drugs and drug control policies to people and societies.

The Global Commission on Drug Policy has issued **10 reports** since its creation in 2011. These respectively detail the extent of the failure and damage of five decades of prohibition and punitive measures, reveal the impact of repressive policies on health epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, the inequitable access to essential pain medication, biased perceptions surrounding drugs, the need to prioritize public health approaches, decriminalization of drug use and proportional sentencing, the responsible legal regulation of psychoactive substances and, ultimately, the need to refocus on organized crime elite when enforcing drug laws.

The Commission has also published **3 position papers**, on the opioid-fueled overdose crisis in North America, on drug policy and the Sustainable Development Agenda, and on drug policy and deprivation of liberty.

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