MEDIA RELEASE

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Helen Clark appointed Chair
of the Global Commission on Drug Policy
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Geneva, 26 August 2020 (Global Commission on Drug Policy) – The 26 Members of the Global Commission on Drug Policy have appointed the Right Honorable Helen Clark of New Zealand as Chair, effective today. Helen Clark succeeds the former President of the Swiss Confederation, Ruth Dreifuss, who has served as Chair since 2016.

Since its establishment in 2011, the Global Commission has advocated for evidence-informed drug policy. It challenges the prohibitionist approach which has held sway internationally for decades, and which has had many perverse effects, including human rights abuses and mass incarceration.

Ruth Dreifuss’s name is associated with the ‘four pillars’ drug policy implemented in Switzerland since the 1990s, which is globally regarded as a blueprint for progressive drug policy. During her tenure as Chair of the Commission, Ruth Dreifuss broadened the global footprint of the organization: the membership was enlarged, a regional commission in West Africa was consolidated, and a Secretariat was established in Geneva, the global center for international peace.

Helen Clark joined the Commission in 2017. She is a former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former Administrator of UNDP. Under her leadership, UNDP was able to make an important contribution to the debate and dialogue on drug policy reform, including to the discussion at the UN General Assembly Special Session on drugs in 2016.

“The Global Commission was prepared to open up discussion on drug policy reform when that was still largely a taboo subject”, Helen Clark said. “That taboo is now well and truly broken. Societies are increasingly not only discussing reform, but are also enacting it. The energy, commitment, and enthusiasm of Global Commissioners, including the two previous Chairs, Ruth Dreifuss and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and that of the Secretariat has contributed to that positive trend. I look forward to continuing this work.”

Ruth Dreifuss said: “With Helen at the helm, the Global Commission will continue leading the crucial debate on drug policy at the global level. The Commission is in the good hands of an experienced and committed leader. I myself will continue to be an active member of the Commission and to promote drug policy reform, together with all Global Commissioners.”

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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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