

Declaration of World Forum Against Drugs

Stockholm Sweden, 2008

Drug abuse is a global problem. Drug abuse is any use of illicit/psychotropic drugs (as defined in the UN Conventions) that is not medically approved or the inappropriate use of licit drugs. Millions of people are directly harmed by drug abuse. This includes: drug users and addicts, the parents, relatives, friends or employers of drug users and the victims of drug-related crimes.

The UN Conventions are the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961; the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971; and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

Various actions are taken internationally to counteract the social, economic, health, spiritual and crime problems caused by drug abuse. Even though the world is against drug abuse, some organizations and local governments actively advocate the legalization of drugs and promote policies such as “harm reduction” that accept drug use and do not help drug users to become free from drug abuse. This undermines the international efforts to limit the supply of and demand for drugs. “Harm reduction” is too often another word for drug legalization or other inappropriate relaxation efforts, a policy approach that violates the UN Conventions.

There can be no other goal than a drug-free world. Such a goal is neither utopian nor impossible. Too often, we seem to act according to what we think is possible, rather than what is necessary or desirable.

To achieve a drug-free world we declare

- 1.** We support the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates in Article 33 that children have the right to be protected from drug abuse. All people, governments, and organizations should commit themselves to preventing drug abuse among young people. For example, we can do this by ensuring that schools are drug-free.
- 2.** We all have the right to be free from drug abuse. Drug abuse and drug trafficking violate the human rights of the most vulnerable individuals – those whose free will has been compromised by addiction. Drug dependence is a modern form of slavery that robs drug users of their free will, condemns them to crippled lives and often premature deaths, creates massive social burdens and spreads drug-using behavior. All people have the right to
- 3.** expect their governments to protect them and their families from drug abuse and to have a life free of drug abuse.
- 3.** A balanced policy of drug abuse prevention, education, treatment, law enforcement, research, and supply reduction provides the most effective platform to reduce drug abuse and its associated harms.
- 4.** We support and are guided by the 1961, 1971 and 1988 UN drug conventions and the resolution resulting from the 1998 UNGASS-meeting. The UN Conventions provide a good platform for international cooperation in fighting drug abuse.
- 5.** We urge all people to work with their governments to strengthen, support, and encourage the UN drug control system that includes the Office of Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Economic and Social Council, the World Health Organization, and other bodies, in order to reduce the global demand for and supply of illicit drugs.
- 6.** The work of the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) are positive and essential in international drug demand and supply reduction.
- 7.** We support the INCB statement in its 1993 report that drug demand reduction activities are crucially important in international drug policy and we call on governments to consider demand reduction as one of their first priorities in the fight against drug abuse.
- 8.** We support the INCB statement that ‘harm reduction’ programmes are not substitutes for demand reduction programmes and should not be carried out at the expense of other important activities to reduce the demand for illicit drugs, such as drug prevention activities.
- 9.** All forms of differentiation between so-called “soft” and so-called “hard” drugs must cease. Extensive research confirms that the use of cannabis is detrimental to health, causes crime, and is addictive. Cannabis, and certain other drugs regarded in some countries as “soft”, should be viewed in the same way as other types of illicit/psychotropic drugs when it comes to control policy, rehabilitation and preventive measures.

10. Commercial outlets for illicit/psychotropic drugs, including coffee shops, and other open drug markets or drug scenes in Europe, must be closed immediately.
11. The so-called “medical” projects for distribution of heroin to drug addicts as a means of “harm reduction” are nothing but an attempt to legalize drugs through the “back door.” This must be prevented by authorising the United Nations to withdraw all import licenses for heroin intended for use by drug addicts.
12. We oppose so-called “shooting galleries” or injection rooms, where drug abusers can administer drugs. This practice violates the UN Conventions. It provides for the congregation of addicts, facilitates illicit drug trafficking, and promotes drug abuse. The so-called “medical trial” of injecting rooms is yet another example of trying to legalize drugs covertly. As an alternative, we call on governments to provide appropriate evidence-based treatment for drug abusers.
13. We denounce so-called “medical marijuana” policies where marijuana is used as a “medicine”, contrary to the Conventions, without such use first being approved by the competent regulatory authority of a nation and its usefulness recognized by the medical community.
14. We oppose all forms of legalization of illicit/psychotropic drugs because such policies do not withstand critical evaluation, tend to run contrary to general experience and violate the Conventions. The term “legalization” can have any one of the following meanings:

Total Legalization: All illicit drugs such as heroin, cocaine and marijuana would be legal and treated as commercial products. No government regulation would be required to oversee production, marketing, or distribution.

Regulated Legalization: The production and distribution of drugs would be government regulated, with limits on the amount that can be purchased and the age of purchasers. There would be no criminal or civil sanction for possessing, manufacturing, or distributing drugs unless these actions violated the regulatory system. Drug sales could be taxed.

Decriminalization: Decriminalization eliminates criminal sanctions for drug use and provides civil sanctions for the possession of drugs.
15. All drug abuse treatment should have the goal of making drug users drug-free. Treatment aimed at helping drug users to become drug-free should be expanded and readily available. Programs that keep addicts on drugs unnecessarily violate the human rights of addicts.
16. We condemn “drug zones” in cities where the drug laws are not enforced on small amounts of drugs for personal use.
17. We urge that governments and charities provide resources for drug abuse treatment for drug users, drug addicts, and their families.
18. We urge that governments and charities provide resources to make schools drug-free and that school administrators work with parents to make schools drug-free.
19. We urge that governments, charities, and businesses provide resources to make workplaces drug-free and that business management work with labor and unions to make workplaces drug-free.
20. We urge that governments provide resources to reduce drug-related crime, including drugged driving. We also urge that the criminal justice system use criminal sanctions, when appropriate, to deter drug use and alternatives to incarceration such as drug treatment courts, when appropriate, to deter and treat drug abuse.
21. We support an increase in advocacy work to increase funding and policy and legislation changes that support drug demand reduction and interdiction efforts.
22. We support the launch of a global network of organizations which are united behind the UN conventions.
23. We support the organization of regular, global drug-free world conferences in the future.
24. It is important to state that drug abuse greatly harms the developing countries. Drug abuse and drug trafficking destroy local cultures and hinder political and economic development. Drug abuse and drug trafficking impact most heavily on some of the poorest countries. The developed countries must reduce the demand for drugs and assist the developing countries in the fight against drug abuse and drug trafficking.

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