

## **Fifty-eighth Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

9<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

United Nations Convention, Vienna, Austria

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Report



Conference hall

Mr. Nuno Jorge, President of OFAP has attending the fifty-eight Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna on 9<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015. Given that next year would be the UNGASS 2016, the CND of this year focus on the preparation for the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem.

The opening session of this special segment, the UN General Assembly President Sam Kahamba Kutesa made his remarks. It said that the special session represents a global threat that demands a coordinated response between countries. And to combat with the current drug problem, issues must be incorporated into any approach such that:

The steps you must take to reach our goals include the following:

- 1) Ensure access to controlled medicines for people across the world.
- 2) We need to make use of all tools at our disposal, including those contained in conventions on drugs and those concerning corruption to combat organised crime.
- 3) Need to promote alternative livelihoods for people.
- 4) Have a balanced approach that takes into account different regional realities to combat drugs.

The importance of UNGASS was raised by the speech of the INCB President.

“UNGASS is an opportunity to rethink what we have done over the past 50 years. The world has changed. But have the objectives of the treaties – protect health and welfare of mankind – really changed? The discussion is ongoing and encouraging. But there is little that divides us in fundamental issues.”

He also mentioned that we have to focus on Health and welfare of human as the key objective of the three drug conventions. And Governments should take every measures for the prevention of drug abuse and treatment, rehab, social integration of people involved. However, the implementation and budget have not always met the needs.

The special session then starts with general debate on the Supply reduction and related measures, responses to drugs-related crime, countering money-laundering and promoting judicial cooperation (“Drugs and Crime”).

In the statement by China, the Permanent Mission of China in Vienna expressed that they believes the UNGASS will continue to actively carry out the framework. China will also continue to support CND in strengthening the communication. The most important part is that UNGASS is a milestone in drug policy development, China believes that in the preparatory discussions, multi-dimensional issues and challenges from various perspectives will be covered such that when dealing with the drug problems, they can pay more attention to the strengthening of international law enforcement and judicial bodies, as well as the health and human rights objectives.

China also said that they will remain to be open and inclusive and Civil Society and NGOs are welcome as a part of the process.

In the afternoon, demand reduction and related measures, including prevention and treatment, as well as health-related issues, and ensuring the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion (“Drugs and Health”) is also discussed.

### **Identifying the key issues for the UNGASS 2016 Debate**

Organized by the Global Commission on Drug Policy and the Governments of Switzerland, Guatemala and the Netherlands.

Mr. P. Van Wulfften Palthe starts mentioning that the first priority is to consider the public health approach to drugs, then access to medication, the third priority comes to rethink the criminalization of drug use.

Mr. Ruth Dreifuss mentioned that the ideal goal is set, but he comments on how to achieve the result. He said we need to analyze what 50 years of international drug control has brought, in terms of positives and negatives, then discuss what was achieved and what needs to be achieved. UNGASS is the chance for us to bring the whole thing up.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo also added that drugs are never just in transit, they are consumed, leading to drug addiction and crimes. There is evidence of drug money influencing or trying to influence the political situation. Thus, the issue of drugs is just the same as the issues of health and development. Drugs affect governments and economic development. There are far way to go to penalized the big leaders who control the drug flow and avoid justice.

Mr. Cesar Gaviria said that drugs is of high priority in Latin America today. In Colombia, we cannot look for the best policy, but for the least harmful policy that can help the situation, and there is never a perfect policy. The objectives of the conventions, a drug free world, is a utopia. It is unrealistic, untrue, and unachievable. Humanity has lived through millenniums using drugs, and we need regulations. We cannot say everything is fine, because that is not true.

Mr. Peter Dunne commented that the conventions are over 50 years old, and we are questioning whether they are still relevant. Further, we should put in a sense of perspective. The major drug problem that faces most countries in the world is alcohol. We need to broaden the definition of harm minimization beyond just the user, but also the family, the community, and the society generally.

On the second day, the affected groups are mentioned in the conference, in order to tackle the main drug issues, alternative development are also brought up in the discussion; regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented, balanced drug control policy and adding socioeconomic issues were addressed.

### **Drugs and the death penalty: Prioritising human rights, health and harm reduction over punitive approaches to drug policy**

Side event organized by the International Drug Policy Consortium, Harm Reduction International and Reprieve.

Mr. David Bewley-Taylor, Director of the Global Drug Policy Observatory at Swansea University chaired the section. He said that capital punishment is a source of tension with UN. In 2012, Ban Ki Moon welcomed a resolution calling for a moratorium on capital punishment while more than 40 members states opposed the resolution. From that time, UNODC continues to fund programmes in countries that carry out the death penalty for drug offences.



Member States

Mr. Damon Barret, Director of the International Centre on Human Rights and Drug Policy is the first one to give comment. Nowadays, there are still 33 countries that have death penalty for drugs. High application states include China, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and Iran, which executed 600-700 people for drug offences two years ago.

Mr. Dan Dolan, Death Penalty Team, Reprieve urged European countries to make drug control funding conditional on human rights standards and push UNODC to operationalize its own human rights guidance.

Mr. Fionnuala Murphy, Campaigns and Advocacy Manager at Harm Reduction International stated that current, the strategies on human rights abuses have little influence on drug supply or those who profit the most from the drug trade. HRI is calling on governments to redirect the fund to harm reduction services such as needle and syringe exchange and opioid substitution therapy. HRI is also asking support from CND delegates.

Mr. Luiz Guilherme Mendes de Paiva, representative of the Ministry of Justice in Brazil state that they will continue to support Harm Reduction International, and they have already abandon the death penalty in 1876, as well as working to build regional consensus on the death penalty across Latin America and the Caribbean.

On day 3, the cross-cutting issues were started, such as Drugs and Human Rights, Youth, Women, Children and Communities. New challenges such as threats and realities in preventing are also addressed, together with the World Drug Problem in compliance with relevant international law, including the three drug control conventions; strengthening the principle of common and shared responsibility and international cooperation that are planning to be lead up to 2019.

UNODC has drawn several conclusion:

- Drug use disorders and their health complications such as HIV, HCV and overdoses are public health issues that can be prevented by health assistance and institutions.
- There is a strong need for alternatives to prison for drug offences, preventing the overcrowded situation in some Prisons.
- UNODC still encountered concerns on coerced treatment, detention without due process in compulsory detention and rehab centres.
- We must give prominence to rights of women who use drugs, they are the victims of violence by the police and must be protected. Treatment must be gender responsive.
- We need a stronger focus on the protection of children's rights.

### **Informal NGO dialogue with the UNODC Executive Director**



This time, the director of the UNODC is not able to present. The deputy director of the UNODC took the chance to answer the questions from members of VNGOC.

Slum Child Foundation, Kenya raised a question on what is UNODC doing to ensure NGOs working in prevention in terms of proving manuals about the health impacts of taking drugs? In one case, children believed that



marijuana cured ebola.

Answered by the UNODC Deputy that they have no higher calling than to facilitate interaction and communication around the world. The drug control issue different by countries but based in some common ground like: health-based approach and human rights.

### **Provisional agendas for subsequent special segments to be held by the CND in preparation for the UNGASS and organisation of intersessional work of the CND**



CSTF meeting

CSTF is a joint initiative between VNGOC and NYNGOC. It has 31 members representing the wide array of CSOs working on drugs. The aim of it is to gather inputs from all arrays of CSOs, from producers, consumers, community groups, NGOs working on prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, access to essential medicines.

The outcome will be presented in UNGASS next April. Some items has to be raised and justified to accommodate the current drug situation in the world.

### **Meeting of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs**

The usual procedures and correspondence were adopted. The members criteria is discussed and would like to be confirmed before the annual general meeting.

Comments arise on the importance of the dialogue between officials and civil society. It would be useless to just turn in any suggestions if the official does not care our voice. Council of Women suggested that they had an impression that governments had prepared answers to civil society concerns and that they were really listening. Esbjorn explained that it is not easy to create a forum of civil society engagement with member states. He also takes this topic seriously, but he is now adopting the idea of addressing to regional representatives.



Mr. Esbjorn Hornberg, Acting Chair, VNGOC, Chair, CSTF, concurrently, Vice President of OFAP

Mirella from UNODC updated that she can add more than various side events, such as workshops in different region, like last year for anti-corruption, and the result will present in the November conference on corruption. UNODC is helping CSTF and VNGOC on that road map.