

Nonpaper: UNGASS on Drugs

Background

In 2012, the UN General Assembly decided to hold a Special Session on drugs (UNGASS) in 2016:

to review the progress in the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, including an assessment of the achievements and challenges in countering the world drug problem, within the framework of the three international drug control conventions and other relevant United Nations instruments.

In preparation for the April 19-21, 2016 UNGASS, the international community conducted wide-ranging, substantive and inclusive discussions at the 58th Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) meeting in March 2015, the General Assembly High-Level debate in May 2015 and at numerous events organized by regional organizations, member states, academia and civil society. The discussions have analyzed all aspects of the world drug problem, including its linkages to public health, human rights, development, crime and social stability. In addition to the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), other UN entities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) have contributed actively, underscoring the multidisciplinary nature of the challenge.

In March, CND members recommended that the UNGASS approve a short, substantive, concise and action-oriented outcome document comprising a set of operational recommendations. We believe the second half of 2015 should be used to develop the content of the outcome document using the substantive input produced in the debates of the past several months targeting those challenges not sufficiently addressed in the Political Declaration such as new psychoactive substances (NPS) and drug-related transnational organized crime. As a starting point, it is essential that Member States use the UNGASS to reaffirm support for the three UN drug-control conventions. At the same time, the UNGASS should promote evidence-based drug-policy reforms. The United States favors a statement that identifies six top priorities and articulates a set of operational recommendations linked to each priority.

PRIORITIES AND OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNGASS

A short preamble to any outcome document should:

1. Reaffirm commitments to the three UN drug-control conventions.
2. Emphasize the need to implement drug-control policy consistent with the core UN mandates of peace, security, human rights and development.
3. Call for continued implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Action Plan in order to reach the 2019 targets while also highlighting the need to cooperate to face expanded challenges.

Operational Recommendations:

Public Health and Drug Policy

Objective: Elevate the role of public health in national drug policies.

Member states should allocate adequate resources to public health responses and adopt evidence-based interventions which make use of the advances in medical and behavioral science.

1. Declare that people who use drugs should receive support, treatment and protection, rather than be punished.
2. Recognize substance use disorders as a medical condition that can be prevented, treated and from which one can recover.
3. Highlight the need to invest in comprehensive evidence-based demand reduction initiatives, including education, screening, behavioral and medication-assisted treatment, scientific research for effective treatment as well as overdose prevention programs with recovery as a goal.
4. Call for member states to adopt and implement the global substance abuse treatment standards and credentialing of treatment professionals established by the International Society for Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals in 2015.
5. Recommit to investing in comprehensive prevention and early intervention efforts, as specified in the Guiding Principles for Demand Reduction.
6. Reemphasize the need for developing state-of-the-art data collection systems that provide current comprehensive drug use and epidemiology and related data to inform decision-making.

7. Reaffirm the need to address the issues of injecting drug use and sharing of needles, syringes and other infected equipment, as a significant route for the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other blood-borne diseases.

Criminal Justice

Objective: Criminal justice policies should be designed and implemented with the aim of improving the health and safety of individuals while preventing and reducing violence and other harmful consequences to communities.

Accordingly, law enforcement institutions should coordinate with public health and social services agencies. Criminal justice tools should adhere to the principle of proportionality and include a full spectrum of responses including imprisonment as well as alternatives to incarceration.

1. Recognize that justice systems derive legitimacy from their ability to enforce laws efficiently, fairly and effectively.
2. Acknowledge that the challenges of drugs and crime in the community are cross-cutting, different in every country, and that there is no single approach or set of policies that will solve the problem in all circumstances.
3. Invite Member States to consider reviewing their drug sentencing policies and practices to facilitate collaboration between justice and public health authorities in the development and implementation of initiatives that utilize alternative measures to conviction for drug-related offenses of a minor nature;
4. Encourage the consideration of alternatives to incarceration and other criminal-justice reform for drug-related offenses with a view to deterring crime, achieving the rehabilitation and reintegration into society of drug users, advancing the well-being of individuals and communities and reducing overcrowding in prisons.
5. Further encourage the launching of pilot programs, research initiatives, and exchange of information on best practices in order to accelerate criminal justice reforms under the framework of the drug conventions.

Transnational Organized Crime and Violence Prevention

Objective: Strengthen states' capacity in countering transnational criminal organizations, reduce impunity and improve the bonds between citizens and the state.

1. Redouble efforts to cooperate against criminal enterprises trafficking in narcotics, chemical precursors and money laundering in the framework of the three UN Drug conventions and the 2009 declaration.

2. Build on the lessons learned and seek to increase efforts to promote judicial cooperation, enhance mutual legal assistance, target trafficking at sea and counter money laundering.
3. Improve the effectiveness of border control by building on efforts to develop information sharing.
4. Encourage UNODC to work with member states to develop a plan to strengthen central authorities and promote international cooperation in targeting transnational drug organizations and reduce drug-related corruption.
5. Develop opportunities to showcase and promote community policing and a culture of lawfulness to reduce crime and violence while drawing on member states experience in addressing drug-related organizations, particularly gangs.

Drugs and Alternative Development

Objectives: Continue to seek the elimination of illicit cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis plants, through a comprehensive approach that stresses the special importance of alternative development and implements lessons learned to ensure effective and sustainable programs.

1. Support a continuing international effort to develop and share best practices on alternative development that build on the “Guiding Principles of Alternative Development” adopted in 2012.
2. Promote increased coordination among UN agencies, including UNDP, on alternative development programs that target drug control.

Access to Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances

Objective: Improve the availability of narcotic drugs and other controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, particularly for the relief of pain and suffering, in accordance with the UN conventions.

1. Recognize the continuing indispensability of narcotic drugs, including opiates, for medical and scientific purposes as outlined in the conventions.
2. Invites the INCB, in cooperation with governments to develop country assessments and programs to implement regulatory measures to ensure the sufficient availability of such drugs for medical or scientific purposes, within the appropriate control mechanisms outlined in the Conventions.
3. Seek to prevent diversion and abuse of controlled substances in accordance with the UN drug control conventions.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and Chemical Control

Objective: Increase cooperation directed at the rapid proliferation of NPS on the drug market while continuing efforts to address diversion of chemicals used in drug production

1. Call for accelerated efforts under the UN drug conventions to review NPS for potential control.
2. Encourage member states to support research and development of scientific evidence for the assessment of abuse liability, dependence potential and associated individual and public health harms from NPS.
3. Endorse and expand support for developing early warning networks, increase voluntary controls and share information through the International Narcotics Control Board, UNODC and WHO.
4. Urge Member States to strengthen domestic control measures, including national legislation and regulation, to prevent the production, importation, and distribution of NPS.
5. Expand demand reduction efforts to reduce access and prevent use of NPS at the community-level.
6. Promote chemical control initiatives to prevent diversion to illicit production or NPS through international cooperation on investigations, information sharing and pre-export notification, partnership with industry, and disposal efforts.

