

**Nigerian CSOs Declarations at the end Second National Symposium on Drugs and Drug Policy in Abuja, Nigeria, 28---29 October 2015**

**Second National Symposium on  
DRUGS AND DRUG POLICY IN NIGERIA  
Abuja, Nigeria, 28---29 October 2015**

**DECLARATION**

We, representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs), academics and drug policy experts, who participated in the second National Symposium on “Drugs and Drug Policy in Nigeria”, which held in Abuja, from 28---29 October 2015, and was organized by the Centre for Research and Information on Substance Abuse (CRISA) with support from the European Union (EU) through the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) implemented project “Response to drugs and related organized crime in Nigeria”, hereby make the following declaration with respect to drug policy in Nigeria:

*Whereas* drug policy in Nigeria follows mainly a prohibitive approach dominated by interdiction;

*Whereas* this approach has not significantly reduced the availability and consumption of drugs in spite of the funds committed to law enforcement responses; and

*Whereas* this approach has instead fostered abuses of the human rights of drug users, burdened the criminal justice system, and taken priority away from effective treatment and rehabilitation for drug dependent persons;

1. We entreat the government to reform existing legislations on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances to accentuate the public health aspects of drug control in order to balance drug law enforcement responses with those of drug demand reduction.
2. We acknowledge that trafficking in narcotic drugs is a major problem that threatens security, social welfare, economic development and political stability in Nigeria. We therefore call on the government and international drug control partners to empower law enforcement agencies through training and adequate provision of equipment and facilities needed to counter drug trafficking in the country.
3. We exhort law enforcement agencies to focus their responses on high and mid--level traffickers to ensure the safety and security of all Nigerians and, guided

by concern for human rights, discourage the arrest, detention and incarceration of drug users.

4. We urge the government to provide effective and accessible drug treatment and rehabilitation services throughout the country as a step towards containing the public health problems associated with drug use and to enhance the rights and dignity of persons of drug users.
5. We call on the government to ensure the availability of essential drugs such as pain medications and drugs needed for the treatment of drug dependence, including methadone and naloxone.
6. We affirm that counseling and treatment should be utilized voluntarily by those who need them and the practice of coercing people with drug problems into counseling and treatment should not be tolerated.
7. Recognizing the fact that reliable information on drug problems in Nigeria is lacking, we call on the government and donors to provide funding for research and information dissemination on drug problems in order to provide evidence for the development of effective policy and interventions on drug and alcohol problems.
8. In view of the different mandates existing between law enforcement agencies who seek to enforce the law on drug offences and CSOs and health practitioners who seek to treat drug dependence, we encourage law enforcement agencies to collaborate with CSOs to ensure cooperation and to smoothen working relationships.
9. Cognizant of the fact that the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) cannot effectively combine the functions of drug supply control with those of drug demand reduction, we urge the government to seek a more effective way of coordinating drug demand reduction activities in the country guided by global best practices.
10. We call on all stakeholders working in the drug field in Nigeria to recognize the limits as well as the negative consequences associated with over-emphasis on prohibition in our drug policy, and to affirm the need for a balanced approach to drug control which prioritizes effective drug prevention and treatment responses as well as harm reduction.
11. We urge all stakeholders to scale up evidence-based comprehensive HIV services among people who inject drugs and who live in prisons and increase focus on other most at-risk but often neglected populations.

Signed:

Professor Isidore S. Obot  
Director, CRISA & Symposium Chair Abuja,  
29 October 2015

Disclaimer: The views contained in this declaration are those of Nigerian civil society representatives and academics. Representatives of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) did not participate in the discussion leading to the declaration.