

Panel discussion on the impact of the world drug problem on the enjoyment of human rights

Concept note (as of 14 September 2015)

- Date and venue:** **28 September 2015, 3 - 6 p.m.**, Palais des Nations, [Room XX](#), Geneva
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)
- Objectives:** The panel is expected to discuss a range of impacts that the world drug problem has on the enjoyment of human rights. The panel discussion aims:
- To shed light on the ways the world drug problem adversely affect various civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, in particular the needs of affected persons and those in vulnerable situations;
 - To explore recommendations on respect, protection and promotion of human rights in the context of the world drug problem; and
 - To deepen the understanding of the relations between the current drug control regime and human rights violations, including trends, patterns and challenges.
- The panel discussion will offer a forum to enhance understanding of the issue of human rights in the context of the world drug problem, and the global response to it. The panel discussion will offer an opportunity to share experiences and good practices in the way countries have addressed the adverse effects of the world drug problem while fully respecting their obligations and commitments regarding civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
- Chair:** **H.E. Mr. Joachim Ruecker**, President of the Human Rights Council
- Opening statement:** **Ms. Flavia Pansieri**, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Moderator:** **Ms. Ruth Dreifuss**, former President of the Swiss Confederation, and member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy
- Panellists:** *The impact of the world drug problem on the realization of civil and political rights, in particular on people in vulnerable situations*
- **H.E. Mr. Yesid Reyes**, Minister of Justice of Colombia
- A civil society perspective on the impact of the world drug problem in the enjoyment of civil and political rights, including the right to life*
- **Ms. Ann Fordham**, Executive Director, International Drug Policy Consortium
- Economic, social and cultural rights and the world drug problem: causes and consequences, including in particular on people in vulnerable situations*
- **Mr. Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou**, Deputy Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Professor at the Graduate Institute in Geneva, and Commissioner on the West African Commission on Drugs
- The impact of the world drug problem on the enjoyment of the right to health*
- **Dr. Shekhar Saxena**, Director, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, World Health Organization
- Human rights and drug policies: best practices from UNODC's perspective*
- **Mr. Aldo Lale-Demoz**, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

With the participation of:

- **H.E. Mr. Arthayudh Srisamoot**, Ambassador of Thailand to the United Nations Office in Vienna and Chairperson of the 58th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Outcome: **The panel and the OHCHR study (document A/HRC/30/65) as the contribution of the Human Rights Council, will provide informed, fact-based and expert knowledge and recommendations to the discussions that will take place at the special session of General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016.** The panel offers a milestone opportunity to mainstream human rights into the global response to the world drug problem, and to underline the importance of human rights norms when interpreting the international legal framework of the drug conventions, which have placed the health and welfare of mankind at the centre of the world drug regime.

Mandate: In its resolution 28/28 entitled "Contribution of the Human Rights Council to the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem of 2016", the Human Rights Council decided to convene at its 30th session in September 2015 a panel discussion on the impact of the world drug problem on the enjoyment of human rights, informed by the findings of report, A/HRC/30/65, prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Council further requested OHCHR to prepare a summary report on the panel discussion, and invited the High Commissioner to submit to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), through the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016. The Council also invited the General Assembly and the CND to take into account the Council's contribution during the special session and its preparatory process, in accordance with relevant rules of procedure and established practices.

Format: The panel will be interactive. After the opening statements, the moderator will introduce the topic and define the scope of the discussion. The panellists will then be given five to seven minutes each to make their initial statements, guided by the moderator.

The ensuing interactive discussion, chaired by the President of the Human Rights Council, will comprise two rounds of interventions (45 minutes per round) by States and observers with comments and questions from the floor (two minutes per intervention), followed by 15 minutes for comments and replies by panellists. The interventions of States and observers may include questions to panellists and the sharing of experiences in order to stimulate a constructive debate. The debate will be followed by responses from the panellists (three minutes each) and short concluding remarks by the moderator.

Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

Background: The world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility that should be addressed in a multilateral setting through effective and increased international cooperation. The world drug problem constitutes a challenge to safety, national security, the health and well-being of the population, socioeconomic and political stability and sustainable development, especially because of the illicit activities of criminal organizations connected to it. The global and the national responses to the world drug problem require a truly balanced approach that considers the individual and his or her well-being at the core of any action taken. In many settings in the world, the prohibitionist approach to drugs is breaching most of the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as on Civil and Political Rights, and other international human rights treaties.

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stated in 2009, "Individuals

who use drugs do not forfeit their human rights. Too often, drug users suffer discrimination, are forced to accept treatment, marginalised and often harmed by approaches which over-emphasise criminalisation and punishment while under-emphasising harm reduction and respect for human rights.”¹

Civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights are challenged not only by the world drug problem, but also by the current global drug policy regime. The general population and particular groups have seen many of their human rights adversely affected in the framework of the current global drug policy. Responses that are focused solely on law enforcement have led to harmful social consequences.

Background documents:

- [Human Rights Council resolution 28/28](#) " Contribution of the Human Rights Council to the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem of 2016"
- [OHCHR report A/HRC/30/65](#) "Study on the impact of the world drug problem on the enjoyment of human rights"

¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. High Commissioner calls for focus on human rights and harm reduction in international drug policy Geneva. United Nations: 2009.