

Key recommendations from the Civil Society Forum on Drugs on the 2019 Ministerial Segment

November 2018

UN member states are embarked in a series of CND intersessional meetings in Vienna to take stock of progress made since the adoption of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on drugs, and to delineate the way forward for the post-2019 global drug policy. Within this framework, the European Union (EU) and its member states have a key role to play in promoting drug policies aligned with human rights and the outcomes of the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs. It is in this context that the Civil Society Forum on Drugs (CSFD) offers the following key recommendations to the EU and its member states.

1. In 2009, member states had committed to eliminate or significantly reduce illicit drug demand and supply by 2019. The civil society report 'Taking Stock: A decade of drug policy'¹ collates the latest data on the global scale of the illicit drug market, including from the UNODC, and shows that the global illicit cultivation, production, trafficking and use have in fact increased over the past ten years. Furthermore, many of the law enforcement-led policies focusing on eradicating the illicit drug market have had severe negative consequences on health, human rights, security and development. The UNGASS Outcome Document, in this regard, constitutes a significant achievement in the recognition of the need to **re-focus drug policies** on protecting health, promoting gender equality, focusing on children and youth, offering a wide range of drug services in the community and in prison, improving access to controlled medicines, ensuring proportionate penalties, and promoting socio-economic development in affected areas, among key other issues.
2. Seeking to achieve the 'elimination' targets included in article 36 of the 2009 Political Declaration has been counterproductive – these **targets** should therefore not be renewed post-2019. New targets should instead focus on the implementation of the UNGASS Outcome Document, as well as on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²
3. Although the **participation of civil society** has greatly improved over the past ten years, civil society is facing important push back from several UN member states as was seen at the October 2018 CND intersessional meeting. As a champion of meaningful civil society engagement on drug policy, we call on the EU and its member states to continue to promote and protect NGO participation in global drug policy debates, in particular in the 2019 Ministerial Segment, but also post-2019. This should be reflected in the outline being produced by the CND Chair.

¹ Available here: http://fileserv.idpc.net/library/Shadow_Report_FINAL_ENGLISH.pdf

² For more information, see the previous contribution of the CSFD, proposing new targets and indicators for the post-2019 global drug policy, in line with the seven UNGASS chapters and the Sustainable Development Goals: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/2rku0pwyinjck0x/2018-01%20CSFD%20recommendations%20on%202019%20evaluation%20and%20indicators.pdf?dl=0>

4. The **participation of other relevant UN agencies** not based in Vienna, including the WHO, UNDP, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UN Women and others is critical to ensure that drug policies are not developed and implemented in contradiction to the broad priorities of the UN of protecting human rights, development and peace and security. It is concerning that the presence of the OHCHR in Vienna was being questioned by some member states in the October 2018 CND Intersessional. We call on the EU and its member states to continue to promote and protect the meaningful participation of these UN agencies in global drug policy debates.
5. The CSFD welcomes the high level of interest from the European Commission in the review of the **Annual Report Questionnaire** (ARQ) and the identification of more useful indicators to evaluate progress made in drug policy. We hope that the EU will ensure that this process strongly aligns with UNGASS implementation, the achievement of the SDGs and meaningful civil society participation, including at the next expert meeting on the ARQ review in the course of 2019.
6. The current political landscape is significantly different from that in 2016, political changes in various Latin American countries which had led the progressive voice during the UNGASS process (e.g. Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, etc.), in the USA and in Asia (with a renewed war on drugs in countries like the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Cambodia and others). In the meanwhile, the more conservative voice led by Russia, China, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and others is stronger than ever. In this context, we urge the EU – as well as individual EU member states – to continue to be **as vocal as possible** in the areas of human rights, health, NGO participation and other key aspects which are at the heart of the EU positions on drugs. A strong, leading voice from the EU – in the current political context – is critical in ensuring that we do not revert back on UNGASS commitments. We also urge the EU and its member states to create stronger ties with other progressive voices in UN debates (e.g. Norway, Mexico, Uruguay, Canada).
7. The Ministerial Segment will be a key opportunity for UN member states to highlight the critical need to shift the focus of global drug policy away from overly repressive approaches to drug control, towards a more balanced approach and UNGASS implementation. We therefore urge EU member states to **send high-level representatives** to the event.
8. Finally, as the Africa Group will hold the **chairmanship of the CND** from January 2019, with Asia being vice chair of the Commission, we urge the EU to initiate a dialogue with possible candidate countries to promote the EU drug policy approach more broadly. With regards to the Africa Group, we recommend that the EU reaches out to the West Africa Commission on Drugs – a group of former heads of state from across the West African region – who would be able to play a key role in opening up the debate with government officials from the region.