

Statement for the 52nd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Dear President,

Distinguished members of the Commission on Narcotics and delegates of the Member States, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First we would like to thank the Commission and the delegates of the Member States who are present at this meeting for their wise decision to work in partnership with Civil Society and listen to the voices of people affected by drug use around the world. As a non-governmental organization, the International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) intends to work with you to find a way to overcome the impasse caused by the failure of the goals that were set in the 1998 UNGASS Political Declaration on the World Drug Problem. As part of the endeavor to review the past ten years of this policy, we present the following observations:

- Millions of people who use drugs are persecuted every day all around the world. To see people who use drugs as evil or harmful and needing to be removed from society or their families is a perverted way of thinking. We can no longer allow this childish moralizing to feed the prejudice and stigma that surround us. We can no longer allow this blind intolerance to transform us into criminals.
- Consider as well what drug prohibition does to our young people. When a young person uses an illegal substance, even for the first time, he or she is no longer considered "our most precious asset", as defined in the first paragraph of the CND Political Declaration 2009, and becomes an enemy who should be persecuted, repressed or imprisoned. The prohibition of drugs is used to weaken and oppress youth.
- Criminalization pushes people who use drugs away from health services, from fear of discrimination or a fear that they will be reported to the police. It also legitimizes poor treatment that people who use drugs receive from health care professionals. The criminalization of people who use drugs also hinders the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and other health conditions, as many new infections occur among people who inject drugs. Current drug policy of prohibition is not sound public health policy including for the prevention of HIV and viral hepatitis.
- In countries around the world, abusive law enforcement practices, conducted under the banner of the 'war on drugs', can lead to significant breaches of human rights including torture and murder. Many other people who use drugs experience human rights infringements due to coerced treatment and the refusal of access to essential medications such as opioid substitution therapies. It is no longer acceptable for drug enforcement approaches to conflict with the fundamental human rights set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights.

We call on Governments around the world to recognise that current approach to international drug policy when assessed against any objective measure. We call on you to recognize the substantial contribution of harm reduction approaches in preventing HIV and viral hepatitis and supporting people to live fuller and more empowered lives. We offer ourselves as partners in the search for a new strategy and we call on our parties present at the CND meeting to set aside dogma and build a new international drugs policy based on harm reduction and a respect for human rights.