

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

I, Judy Chang, am making this intervention on behalf of Intercambios Asociacion Civil, and the International Network of People who use Drugs

I would like to thank the Chair, the Facilitator and the CND for this opportunity.

The 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem is focused on the implementation of the three pillars of drug control. These are demand reduction, supply reduction, and countering money laundering and promoting judicial cooperation to enhance international cooperation. A notable and glaring omission is the fourth pillar of harm reduction. Harm reduction is an evidence-based, comprehensive package of services that prevents HIV and Hep C infections amongst people who use drugs, and reduces social harms. Its exclusion from a global drug strategy is a staggering failure.

What is commonly referred to as a world drug problem is in fact a drug policy problem, driving human rights violations against people who use drugs.

As an organization concerned with the harms caused by the world's current approach to drugs, we ask

- How are extrajudicial killings part of an integrated and balanced strategy?
- How is the detention of people who use drugs in compulsory drug detention centres, where rights to due process, to health, to be free from torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment are denied, part of an integrated and balanced strategy?
- How is the death penalty for drug offences, which runs counter to international law, part of an integrated and balanced strategy to drugs?
- How is the systemic violence and abuse of communities part of an integrated and balanced strategy?
- How is the denial of evidence-based treatment through banning opiate substitution therapy part of an integrated and balanced strategy?

Approaches to drugs and drug use cannot omit human rights concerns, nor harm reduction measures. The preamble to the drug control conventions commits to protecting the health and welfare of mankind; the purview of which evidently does not extend to people who use drugs. We believe that an integrated and balanced approach must protect the lives of people who use drugs, and conform with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all people.

Given the shortcomings of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action in protecting health and human rights, the UNGASS Outcome Document must supersede the 2009 Political Declaration, until 2019, when the Political Declaration should come up for review. We must move out of the narrow, limited three pillar approach, and instead nation states should focus on implementing the seven thematic chapters of the UNGASS Outcome Document, particularly the operational recommendations under Chapter 4), and use it as the foundational document for review in 2019. For the future, we believe that decriminalization of drug use is the necessary first step towards protecting the human rights of youth, children, women and communities.

People who use drugs are neither criminals nor victims of a hijacked brain or a disease. We must be recognized as full citizens, deserving of access to the spectrum of human rights, and fully capable of engaging meaningfully in the issues that affect our lives. People who use drugs are not the problem, but part of the solution. Framing people who use drugs as 'sick' people in need of rescue, prevents communities from participating as equal partners, who have much to contribute in the response to drugs and drug use.