

**Commission on Narcotic Drugs**  
**60<sup>th</sup> Session**  
**13 to 17 March 2016, Vienna**



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

I am pleased to make this intervention on behalf of UNDP.

In September 2015, UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which encompasses 17 sustainable development goals or SDGs. In so doing, they committed to ‘leaving no one behind’. In the outcome document of the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on drugs, Member States acknowledged that efforts to achieve the SDGs were “complementary and mutually reinforcing” to efforts to address the so called “world drug problem.” Guided by its 2014-2017 strategic plan, whose goals include the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion, UNDP can play an important role in shaping drug policies that incorporate and support these goals.

Illicit drug markets and efforts to address them implicate and cut across almost every one of the 17 goals, especially poverty eradication, health and well-being, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, making cities and settlements safe, biodiversity, peaceful and inclusive societies and inclusive and accountable institutions

Efforts to tackle drug cultivation and production have had harsh effects on the health and human rights of people living in poverty, including poor farmers, indigenous persons and others living in areas where drugs are produced, trafficked or sold. The enforcement of opium, coca and cannabis bans and crop eradication efforts have eliminated the principle source of income for thousands of families and displaced populations dependent on drug crops as well as those who are not. Displacement exacerbates the poverty and insecurity of poor farmers, with disproportionate impacts on rural, indigenous and ethnic minority persons.

Addressing the root causes that sustain the cultivation of illicit crops is critical to achieving SDG 1 on poverty eradication, SDG 2 on ending hunger and SDG 8 on sustained economic growth. This can be done through long-term investments in sustainable livelihood strategies and strengthening core human rights, including access to ownership and local control over land, developing sustainable markets and infrastructure for crops or products to replace drug crops and ensuring the meaningful involvement of farmers in development strategies.

The nexus between drug control and development often has strong implications on gender equality.

Poor and otherwise marginalized women often become involved in the drug trade because gender discrimination limits their opportunities for education and employment. While usually employed at the lowest levels, such as transporting or selling small quantities of drugs, they often suffer the same harsh consequences, including severe criminal penalties, as those with greater involvement in the drug trade. In many countries, women from racial minorities, including indigenous women, represent the fastest-growing segment of the prison population.

Women's health and economic circumstances are often under-represented in programs to provide alternative livelihoods in rural communities dependent on illicit crops. Alternative livelihoods programs that foster the cultivation of alternative crops usually target landowning farmers, mainly men who are traditional titleholders and often the primary beneficiaries of agricultural extension services, training, credit and tools. These programs further inscribe gender inequality, as women are barred by law or practice from holding title to land in many crop-cultivating areas.

Addressing the disproportionate impact of drug control efforts on women would constitute an important contribution to achieving SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 10 on inequalities within and between countries.

These are but two examples. In June 2015, UNDP released a discussion paper elaborating further on these and other development dimensions of drug policy.<sup>1</sup> A second paper, released in April 2016, described innovative alternatives to current drug policies that can be used to meet the SDGs.<sup>2</sup>

As we face these challenges, we see key opportunities to achieve more development-sensitive and rights-based drug policy.

For more than two decades, UN Member States have affirmed their commitment to ensure that drug control efforts be conducted in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with full respect for all human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals. UN Member States and entities have also recognized the Sustainable

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP, 2015, "Addressing the Development Dimensions of Drug Policy," <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/HIV-AIDS/Discussion-Paper--Addressing-the-Development-Dimensions-of-Drug-Policy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> UNDP, 2016, "Reflections on Drug Policy and its Impact on Human Development: Innovative Approaches," <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hiv-aids/reflections-on-drug-policy-and-its-impact-on-human-development--.html>

Development Goals, grounded in human rights, as a framework for the implementation of drug control efforts.

Despite these commitments, there is little clear, comprehensive assessment of what it means to apply human rights to drug control policy. As a result, UN Member States, UN entities and civil society often struggle to meaningfully incorporate human rights into national policymaking or to systematically engage human rights issues in international fora.

The elaboration of international guidelines on human rights and drug control would help provide guidance on how to systematically integrate a human rights framework into international drug control. It would strengthen accountability, assist with implementation at the national level and further implementation of the global development agenda. Such guidelines would thus be an important tool to better understand and to advocate for human rights-based drug policy and to support human rights-based development efforts.

With the generous support of the German, Swiss and Colombian governments, UNDP is partnering with the University of Essex, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and Harm Reduction International to develop the guidelines. The process of developing the guidelines will also entail close consultation with several UN Member States, international organisations, civil society and communities of people affected by drugs. Their advent would be a fitting way to celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration in 2018 and provide an important tool for Member States to meet their commitments to leave no one behind.