

Stijn Goossens

Civil Society Delegation International Harm Reduction Association

Contribution to the CND related to the promotion of health and human rights of people who use drugs

As our comments are related to the entire agenda we suggest that it should be included in the final session.

Thank you, Mr Chairman, for allowing me a slot to speak, and to the Commission and its secretariat for expanding the opportunities for Civil Society organizations to contribute to these debates, and to the discussions at the CND in general.

I speak here as civil society representative on the delegation of the International Harm Reduction Association and as spokesman for the International Network Of People Who Use Drugs (INPUD vzw). Also I am a member of the UN Civil Society Task Force that's preparing the High-Level Meeting on AIDS to be held in New York June, 10-11, representing one of UNAIDS named key-population: the people who use drugs. Maybe this is difficult to grasp but we beg the Commission and the organizations present here to open their hearts and minds to our words.

Civil Society organizations have an important contribution to make in this area of policy. Civil society involvement can help to improve the policy discussions and help governments to engage with, and have the direct and valuable input from representatives of organizations of people who use drugs, academics, drug policy analysts, farmers organizations and so on.

We are plainly aware of the suffering and harms drugs can cause to individuals and understand the need of drug control, most specially to keep children away from drugs – legal or illegal.

People who use drugs are considered to be a part of the problem. People who use drugs themselves are the most affected by the policies on drugs. Let us be a part of the solution.

In his speech on Monday, Mr Costa talked about a 'stabilization' of the world drug problem, at around 200 million users. We at INPUD do not know how accurate this figure is or whether it is increasing or decreasing, but if it is true then we are talking about 200 million citizens who do not forfeit their humanity and human rights simply because they choose to use substances covered by the international drug control system. There are not 200 million threats to social order - most of us wish to get on with our lives without harming others. Some of us have problems with our use, and may need help. We cannot all be treated as criminals. Many of us want to help develop drug policies that are more effective in reducing harm to both users and non-users. This is why INPUD is here.

We believe that the Commission and the other institutions of drug control would greatly benefit from the involvement of People who use drugs as part of the civil society engagement in the process of drugs policy making:

- To work together for improvement and to make more cost-effective the treatment and harm reduction measures for people who use drugs.
- To cooperate closely together in the global fight against AIDS, Hepatitis C and other blood born diseases.
- To avoid peoples unnecessary dying.
- To avoid the unnecessary, but socially harmful and expensive incarceration of people just because of the consumption of drugs that are considered to be illegal.
- To cooperate closely together in the fight against the criminalization, stigma, discrimination and

marginalization of people who use drugs and to work together for social inclusion and health.

- And to avoid violations of the human rights of people who use drugs.