

Thank you Madame Chair. I am David Borden, executive director of DRCNet Foundation, a US-based NGO also known as StoptheDrugWar.org. In partnership with NGOs from throughout the world, we have advocated at the CND since 2015 for policies rooted in health, development, human rights and security.

For the 2016 UNGASS, we submitted a statement with over 300 organizational signatories that additionally called for the UN to begin a process of updating the drug conventions. Our coalition, which included leading human rights and health NGOs, further argued for the supremacy of human rights obligations vs. those of other treaties, in cases of irreconcilable conflict.

The current drug control framework presents challenges to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. One of those is the illicit criminal economy that is fed by criminal prohibition of drugs. This economy drives street crime, funds insurgencies and corruption, and creates other instabilities. All these hinder the achievement of peace, justice and strong institutions.

Prohibition drives the spread of infectious diseases, by placing drugs in a criminal underground, encouraging syringe sharing, and increasing marginalization. The high financial price of street drugs drives some addicted persons to desperate behaviors like prostitution or property crime, undermining health and well-being.

Arrest or conviction records for low-level drug crimes impede efforts to find good employment, particularly in disadvantaged communities. This harms the goals of decent work and economic growth; reduced inequalities; and sustainable cities and communities.

In many ways our prohibition-based system competes with the human rights system, ensuring that the worst human rights violations will sometimes erupt. Some countries have decriminalized personal drug use, as called for in the UN Common Position, but others are engaged in extrajudicial drug war killings. Some rely primarily on alternatives to incarceration, others have mass incarceration. Some countries provide the full range of needed health services to address substance misuse, while some even ban methadone, an essential medicine according to WHO. There is documenting of indigenous peoples' medicinal plant varieties, to provide them with intellectual property protection, but there's also aerial fumigation of crops using toxic chemicals.

Good drug policymaking requires meaningful metrics, which in turn require taking a careful look at all of these issues and more. The CND can play a role in elevating the global discussion to that level. Without this, conversely, 2019 may stand in the way of 2030, rather than helping it.

As a final point, I note the continued shortfall in global AIDS funding, including for programs addressing injection drug use. It is our hope that UN member states will increase their spending in that area. This is all the more important as we plan our steps forward from COVID-19.

Thank you.