

**Adjustments to Drug Policy Are Needed to Make Eradication of Poverty a Truly Integral
Objective of UN Policies as a Whole**

Submitted by: Drug Reform Coordination Network (DRCNet)
NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC of the United Nations

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the 2017 ECOSOC Integration Segment. I am David Borden, executive director of DRCNet Foundation, also known informally as StoptheDrugWar.org. We coordinate a coalition, US-based but global in scope, which submitted a statement with nearly 350 organizational signatories for UNGASS. We argued for the supremacy of human rights; for policies rooted in health, development, human rights and security; and for the UN to begin a process of updating the drug conventions.

We believe that international cooperation for the eradication of poverty would most effectively be implemented, and the various work areas of ECOSOC toward that goal better integrated, if based on those priorities. We commend the inclusion of agencies such as WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP and others in the UNGASS process. We strongly support the Outcome Document's strong emphasis on the SDGs.

To achieve the SDGs, and good policy generally, it is necessary to acknowledge both sides of the drug control equation. Prohibition creates substantial social costs apart from drugs' inherent harms. In academic terms, the acknowledged concept is that criminalization increases average harm per unit of drug consumption – possibly reducing the number of users, but at the cost of intensifying certain harms.

This has strong bearing on SDG goals that relate to eradicating poverty. I refer in particular to SDG goals 1, 3, 8, 10, and 16. Prohibition drives the spread of HIV and Hepatitis, by placing drugs in the underground and encouraging syringe sharing; and the high financial price of street drugs drives some addicted persons to desperate behaviors such as prostitution and property crime, standing in the way of the goal of good health and well-being. Arrest or conviction records for low-level drug crimes impedes efforts to find good employment, particularly in disadvantaged communities, affecting the goals of decent work and economic growth; reduced inequalities; and sustainable cities and communities. The illicit drug trade prohibition creates drives street crime; and funds insurgencies, corruption and other instabilities, hindering peace, justice and strong institutions, among other goals.

Short of ending prohibition, UN member states can implement sophisticated measures to reduce the harms of drug control and better serve the goal of ending poverty. Fully funding harm reduction services worldwide, and eliminating the legal obstacles that stand in the way in many jurisdictions to opioid substitution therapy or syringe exchange, for example, would facilitate the ending of disease. Focusing enforcement efforts on the individuals who are doing the most to disrupt the direct physical safety of communities is more effective than indiscriminating street sweeps, for example. Tolerating illicit drug crop growing may be necessary while communities lack realistic alternative means of livelihoods that work in practice.

The UNGASS did not address most of the questions that world thinkers have raised about prohibition. But the contributions made by UN agencies to UNGASS show they do recognize the

harms of drug control. Should the UN still not take this up, 2019 may stand in the way of 2030 rather than helping advance it, and efforts to end poverty will suffer.

As a final point, I note the alarming prospect of global AIDS funding decreasing, among other issues impacting harm reduction services for injection drug users. It is ur hope that member states will sustain a strong level of AIDS funding. We support the "10 by 20" shift colleagues have proposed, to move 10% of global law enforcement budgets to fully fund harm reduction by 2020. Epidemics of serious, infectious diseases is one of the gravest obstacles to ending poverty that the world faces.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this statement for this important ECOSOC Segment.