

DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL: STATEMENTS

New York, 20 November 2015 - Deputy Secretary-General's remarks to Informal Briefing to Member States on the Work of the United Nations to Address the World Drug Problem [As delivered]

The world drug problem is a major threat that affects security, governance, justice, human rights, health and development.

Criminal networks erode institutions, feed corruption and obstruct governance. Drug cultivation is linked to poverty and the illicit production and laundering of the proceeds have been linked to deforestation and environmental degradation. The drug trade is helping to fuel violence in many parts of the world.

And now we also as you know criminal networks are colluding with terrorists and others at the nexus of greed and violence.

Drug trafficking intersects with transnational organized crime, terrorism and violence. A number of non-state armed groups profit from the illicit drug trade. Drug production, trafficking and consumption undermine stability, governance and development in many countries. This leaves them even more at risk from the illicit drug trade.

The United Nations has responded for decades by developing treaties, carrying out programmes on the ground and advancing global progress.

The 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem sets clear goals and targets.

The 2016 General Assembly special session offers a valuable opportunity to take stock and lay the foundations for adopting sound policies for the ten-year review in 2019. At that time, States will set the course for the following decade, as we all know.

The outcome document of UNGASS [United Nations General Assembly Session] next year [2016] is already taking shape.

Member States have already identified elements that need to be considered in evaluating drug policies.

They agree that we need to focus on important issues such as, and I numerate them here only by rubrics:

- the health and well-being of drug users.
- prevention strategies.
- the availability of pain medications for those who need them.
- alternatives to incarceration and proportional sentencing.

- a reduction of drug-related violence.
- and alternative livelihoods for those involved in production.

These elements would be the basis for comprehensive global action.

The United Nations advocates for re-balancing international policy on drugs to focus more on public health, prevention, treatment and care. We also want to highlight economic, social and cultural aspects and measures related to the drug problem.

The international legal framework – under the three main drug Conventions – is based on concern for the health and welfare of people. It is also underpinned by human rights norms and standards.

The only way to rise to the drug challenge is to adopt, in my view, an integrated approach that includes development, security, public safety, governance, public health and human rights.

This afternoon's presentations will highlight what the UN is doing on criminal justice, human rights, health, including HIV/AIDS, and development. We will also have the opportunity to hear from UN University on its consultations and research in this area.

The Plan of Action will run concurrently with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs represent an ambitious global consensus. And, I commend the Member States for their work over the years on this very important agenda -- consensus around shared development priorities and objectives. Our policies to address the world drug problem need to be complemented in the broader development agenda.

The drug issue can be polarizing indeed – and sensitive as we know from our debate back home in our home countries, and between us, of course, also.

To navigate the difficulties, I recommend two guideposts.

First, we need better data collection and research to underpin evidence-based assessments and decisions.

Second guideposts should be we must always place human rights at the centre of our decisions. In fact, human beings I would say, at the centre of our decisions. We have a duty under the United Nations Charter to the world's people, remember the first three words of the Charter, to reaffirm fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of all persons.

So together, and that is perhaps the most important word in today's world, together, let us make the most of the 2016 special session to set the course for national and international policies which truly assist our efforts towards healthy, peaceful and just societies.

I look forward to hearing your views, but before that you will hear the views from my close colleagues and friends on the podium.