



HELSINKI FOUNDATION
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



Monday 12th June 2023

Dear Secretary-General Guterres,

We are writing to urge you to mark this year's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking (also known as World Drug Day) on 26th June 2023, with a strong statement calling on the international community to adopt drug policies that are based on evidence and human rights, and are aligned with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as we mark its 75th anniversary.

The International Drug Policy Consortium, Penal Reform International, the Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation, Drug Policy Alliance, Instituto RIA, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Harm Reduction International, and the Transnational Institute welcome your strong leadership in [promoting](#) 'non-discriminatory policy solutions centred around people, health and human rights' with regards to the global drugs situation. This is particularly relevant considering the theme for this year's World Drug Day: 'People first: Stop stigma and discrimination, strengthen prevention'.

We also welcome your instrumental role in pushing for improved coherence within the UN system on drug policy matters, in particular with the adoption and dissemination of the [UN System Common Position on drugs](#), which encourages the entire UN family to speak with one voice in promoting drug policies that are 'truly balanced, comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based, human rights-based, development-oriented and sustainable'.

Over the past year, we have seen considerable progress, in particular within the UN human rights system, in pushing for a stronger human rights agenda in international drug policy debates. The ground-breaking [resolution 52/24](#) entitled 'Human Rights Council contribution with regard to the human rights implications of drug policy' represents the most [ambitious UN political document](#) on the human rights dimension of drug policy to date, and will enable the OHCHR to produce a new report as a contribution to the upcoming 2024 mid-term review of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration on drugs.

The ongoing involvement of UN entities such as the OHCHR, UNDP, UNAIDS, WHO, UN Women and others will be essential to ensuring that the 2024 mid-term review constitutes a watershed moment for the international community to take stock of the state of international drug policy and pave the way forward. This is particularly critical in view of the blatant and widespread human rights abuses that continue to take place worldwide in the name of drug control. The mid-term review will be a major opportunity to propose a real change of course in global drug policy, and human rights considerations must be front and centre of this review process.

Last year, for the first time, 13 Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council issued a [joint statement](#) on 26th June, concluding that ‘The UN system, the international community and individual Member States have a historical responsibility to reverse the devastation brought about by decades of a global “war on drugs”’. As 26th June 2023 will be the last World Drug Day before the 2024 mid-term review, it will be a key opportunity for you to **issue an unequivocal statement that reinforces the urgent need for transformative change in drug policies, and calls for an end to the unmitigated human rights disaster caused by overly punitive drug control.**

Furthermore, we encourage you to consider making reference to the global campaign, ‘[Support. Don’t Punish](#)’. For over a decade, the campaign has [mobilised thousands of people](#) and resourced [hundreds of grassroots groups](#) to build bridges between affected communities and decision makers, promote community leadership, and challenge state violence and neglect in favour of rights-affirming and caring responses. **Your support on the day would strongly resonate with this global show of force for meaningful change and inspire advocates for drug policy reform all over the world.**

As ever, we remain available to support your work at the national and international level.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Fordham
Executive Director
International Drug Policy Consortium

Olivia Rope
Executive Director
Penal Reform International

Zara Snapp
Director
Instituto RIA AC

Dr. Dan Werb
Executive Director
Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation

Martin Jelsma
Director, Drugs and Democracy
Transnational Institute

Kassandra Frederique
Executive Director
Drug Policy Alliance

Carolina Jimenez Sandoval
President
Washington Office on Latin America

Maciej Nowicki
President of the Board
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Naomi Burke-Shyne
Executive Director
Harm Reduction International