

Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Sixtieth session
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Remarks by Amb. Alicia Buenrostro, Permanent Representative of Mexico, at the side event “Implementing CND Resolution 59/5: Best practices in mainstreaming a gender perspective in drug policy”

Madam Chairperson of the Commission,

Dear representatives of civil society organizations and organizers of this event,

Dear Friends,

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of Mexico, to thank you all for inviting us to be a part of this initiative.

As you know, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all public policy, but particularly when it comes to drug policies and programmes, is crucial to my Government.

Building on our domestic efforts in this regard, and with the support of leading partners such as those gathered here today, we have also strived to raise awareness at the international level, of the need to bring an inclusive gender-specific approach into the global efforts to address the world drug problem. That was the main purpose of resolution 59/5, adopted last year by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

Let us not forget that we are not working in isolation. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development has clearly highlighted that achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is paramount to achieving all of its goals and targets, on the path towards sustainable development.

Gender equality means the factual empowerment of women and girls, and is a necessary basis for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

When translating this into policy, this mandate should include an accurate analysis on the specific needs of those who are at potential risk, or most affected by certain manifestations of the world drug problem. It also means developing measures aimed at actively involving women and girls in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies, in order for them to truly address their specific needs.

For Mexico, the gender issue has a double commitment. It brings together two foreign policy priorities and, in turn, two areas of opportunity with considerable room for improvement in our domestic policy. On the one hand, the promotion of the gender perspective itself, and on the other, the interest in moving towards more balanced, more comprehensive and fairer drug policies.

However, we must be realistic. There are still many aspects of the drug problem, starting with the situation in my own country, that translate into gender imbalances that affect the development of women and girls who find themselves in vulnerable situations.

And it is also important to recognize that a gender perspective is also about assessing how drug policies affect men differently, therefore adapting and targeting our interventions accordingly.

Sexually transmitted diseases, sexual violence and drug-related crime are examples where women where women face a considerably disadvantageous situation.

Structural barriers such as poverty, unequal access to education and healthcare services, as well as a lack of opportunities, set out conditions that could possibly lead to an eventual involvement in differentiated links of the illicit drug traffic chain. Resolution 59/5 also highlighted how women who are sole or primary heads of household, or caretakers of minors, sick or elderly members of their families, may become involved in high risk activities, including illicit drug trafficking. This underlines en enforces the linkage between drug-related crimes and social vulnerability conditions.

Another example of specificities related to gender and/or age can be accentuated throughout the drug chain. For example: young women are regularly employed in the lowest links of the drug-chain, whereas young men are majorly exposed to more brutal physical violence and coercion. Both genders are used in a differentiated manner, as couriers and in the cultivation processes of illicit crops.

Still, nowadays, despite the efforts the international community or particular countries have made to achieve a better gender balance, women's participation in the drug chain and drug abuse patterns constitutes a social transgression of the traditional gender roles, resulting in a double social stigma that affects key areas of reinsertion: such as limited access to health treatments or dominantly male-designed recovery and rehabilitation facilities and harm reduction services.

Moreover, there is still a larger probability for women to be constrained to cope with abuses and violence in return for protection, nourishment or more drugs.

But there is good cause for optimism as well. Let's recall that gender equality and the provision of justice for minor drug-related crimes have not always figured in the debates on the world drug problem. The fact that we can do so now is a great step. It means, that through CND resolution 59/5, we have engraved a fingerprint, on which we must continue to build.

And we will strive to hold on to it and expand it. And let reassure you that Mexico has continued to do so not only at the CND, but in different multilateral and regional mechanisms, including the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission and the Inter-American Commission of Women, both within the Organization of American States, as well as in the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe.

At the national level, I also want to share one of our main efforts, which we have achieved thanks also to the collaboration that we have established among our national gender promotion entity (INMUJERES) and Equis Justicia para las Mujeres, which is here with us today. This collaboration, has us to join forces and create a space for inter-institutional dialogue to generate proposals that enrich drug policies with a gender focus.

Through a series of 4 inter-institutional dialogues, we aim at analyzing the current situation of women incarcerated for drug offenses in Mexico: an issue that ca not and should not be postponed any more.

The first of the round tables took place last January, and the next one will be held in April. Among the main challenges, we have identified the following:

1. The need to ensure that drug-related criminal justice processes fully consider a gender perspective, taking into account the specific context and circumstances of offenders.
2. The need to explore alternative measures to imprisonment, considering gender specificities.
3. The need to apply an intersectional approach, that is to say, how drug policies affect transgender, disabled and indigenous people differently.
4. The need to provide employment training within prison settings and to those who have already served their sentence, and to channel these people to existing gender-promotion and empowerment programs.
5. The need to create specific social reintegration programs designed according to gender specificities.
6. The need to reflect on the impacts of children living in prisons: include from the perspective of children, adolescents and single parents.

7. The importance of undertaking substantive legislative reform as a basis for the proportionality of sentences.

8. The relevance of certifying studies carried out in prison settings by offenders.

9. The overarching need for the collection and analysis of reliable data, particularly on the adolescent population in prisons.

In this sense, the implementation of CND resolution 59/5 Resolution includes all of the aforementioned elements and underlines the imperative to promote an action-oriented transversal-gender approach to drug-related policies and programs.

We need to act here and now! So I invite you and your countries to share your own experiences and join us in this regard.

Thank you!