

Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Pompidou Group

14:30 – 16:00 Thematic session: Human rights at the heart of drug policies

To ensure a dynamic session the format of a panel discussion was chosen. Panellists:

- Hannah Bardell, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- Ann Fordham, Executive Director of International Drug Policy Consortium
- Michel Kazatchkine, Global Commission on Drug Policy
- Pavlo Pushkar, Council of Europe
- Jallal Toufiq, INCB, Morocco
- Mahmood Zaved, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Moderation: Thomas Kattau, Pompidou Group

This panel format will be based on discussions animated by a moderator around four specific issues related to human rights and drug policy. Each panellist will have a **maximum of 4 minutes speaking time per issue**. The Moderator will open the discussion with cue questions and then pass the floor to the panellists in varying order (see below).

1. Balancing the rights of the individual with security and public health perspectives

Stigmatisation leads to discrimination and denial of rights. A negative stigma of addiction and problematic drug use syndrome is increasingly observed and has become a matter of concern. Alcoholism and drug addiction ranked top, in terms of degree of social disapproval in a list of 18 conditions ranked for 14 different countries in a WHO study. In nearly all being a drug addict was reported to be more stigmatised than having a criminal record for burglary. Stigma fosters isolation and increases the risk of drug use, higher risk taking and relapse. It fosters the transition from recreational use to substance use disorder. At the same time, stigmatising continues to be a widely accepted form of disapproval for behaviour outside the collective norm. Negative labelling of drug use is seen as a legitimate prevention strategy. Stigmatising and social shaming is widely accepted as a way of deterring crime and drug use.

- *How can we work around this dilemma?*
- *How can we ensure that drug policies meet their aims and be effective in guaranteeing rights?*

2. Building international alliances for humane drug policies

According to the UN, what we are facing globally in the near future is population growth and mass movements of people. Rapid urbanization will bring about growing divisions in societies and unequal perspectives for a satisfactory life. The WHO expects this to lead to an increase use of substances and other mind-altering behaviours such as gambling, gaming, virtual realities to manage stress, enhance performance, pain control and for emotional wellbeing. Which in turn is prognosed to lead to more dependency and addictive behaviours. Goal no. 3 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development consequently calls for strengthening prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol

- *In which way can the Group provide extra added value in advancing humane drug policies in comparison to other international organisations?*
- *Can you see a specific role you would like the Group take to advance human rights in drug policies on a global stage?*

3. Setting and monitoring human rights standards in drug policies

In the past decade the human rights dimensions of drug policy have risen to prominence in international and European policy debates. At European and UN levels it has for many years been

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clearly agreed that the response to drug use and the drug trade should be implemented in full conformity with human rights. UNGASS 2016 has not only given more prominence to the issue but set the call for action. Despite this awareness conflicts and tensions between drug policy goals and compliance with human rights standards continue. These are often the result of unintended consequences of drug control policies. While governments design drug policies in conformity with human rights obligations, the unintended adverse consequences continue to be widely observed.

- *What should be the benchmarks for human rights standards in drug policy?*
- *How can we practically and usefully assess human rights compliance in drug policy implementation?*

4. Defining human rights related goals in drug policies

The Pompidou Group will soon start elaborating a new 3-year work programme for adoption by its ministerial conference at the end of 2022. Following the adoption of the new mandate for the Pompidou Group, this will be the first time that non-substance related addictions, such as online gaming and gambling disorders, can be tackled by the Group. Gambling and gaming programmes are specifically designed to appeal to repetition and risk taking. Studies show that behaviour experienced by excessive use mirrors behaviour patterns incurring when drugs affect the brain. The WHO has assessed that addictions are among the paramount challenges for global public health. Some voices say that the spread of addictions in itself is a threat to human rights and democratic societies as the free will of the human beings will be impaired.

- *What in your opinion should be among the priorities the PG would be best placed to tackle?*
- *What would be compelling ‘selling’ arguments for paying more attention to the impact of drug policies on human rights?*