

UNGASS outcomes, opportunities, challenges, & looking forward to 2019

Ann Fordham, Executive Director
CityWide Conference, Dublin
17th November 2016

After UNGASS 2016....



“revising the approach on drugs maintained so far by the international community can no longer be postponed”

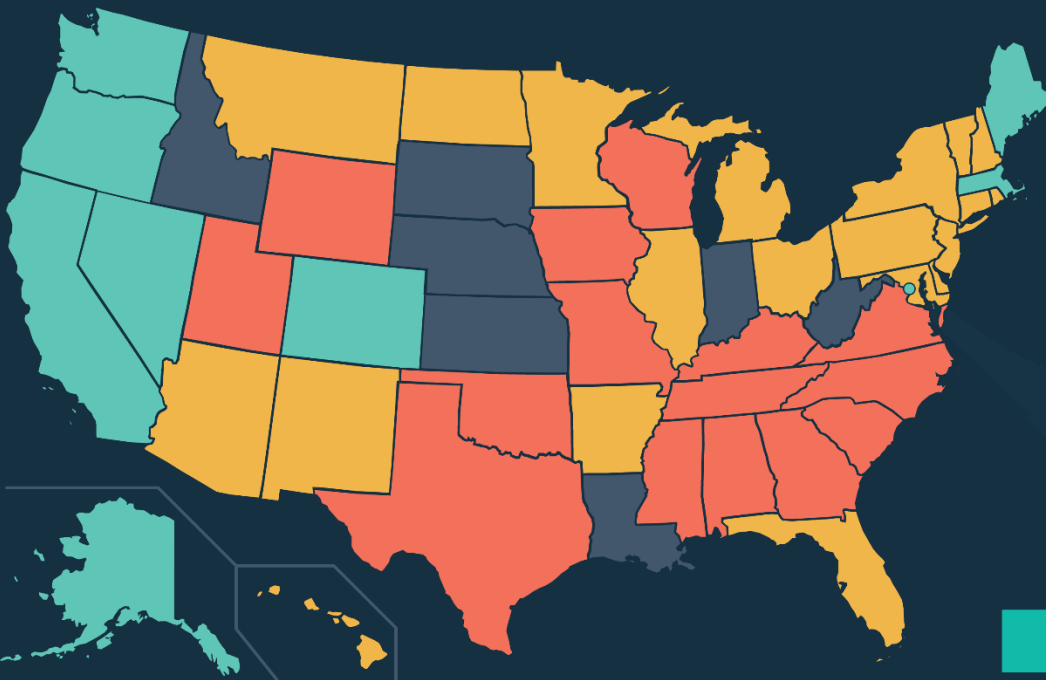
"conduct an in depth review, analyzing all available options, including regulatory or market measures, in order to establish a new paradigm that would impede the flow of resources to organized crime groups”

Colombia at the UN General Assembly, 2012

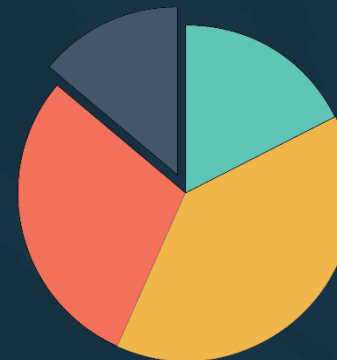
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US CANNABIS LEGISLATION

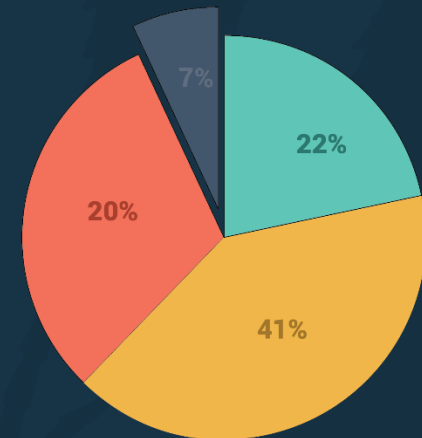
2016
November



Number of States



Population



Non-medical
(~recreational)

Medical

CBD-only



An opportunity....




“I urge Member States to use these opportunities to conduct a wide-ranging and open debate that considers all options.”

26th June 2013

Goals for the UNGASS

1. Ensure an open and inclusive debate
2. Re-set the objectives of drug policies
3. Support 'new' approaches
4. End the criminalisation of affected populations
 - *Ensure proportionality*
 - *End the death penalty*
5. Commit to harm reduction




idpc
International Drug Policy Consortium

UNGASS Asks

April 2015

**The Road to UNGASS 2016:
Process and Policy Asks from the IDPC**



Introduction

On 19th to 21st April 2016, there will be a United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) held in New York, dedicated to the issue of drug policy.^{1,2} The General Assembly is the highest policy making and representative organ of the United Nations (UN), and its infrequent Special Sessions focus on pertinent topics at the request of member states. The UNGASS on drugs has the potential to be a ground-breaking, open debate about the international drug control system – but there is much work to be done to ensure that it fulfils that potential.

The International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) is a global network of more than 130 civil society organisations that come together to promote objective and open debates on national and international drug policies.³ This document outlines the five main “asks” that the Consortium members will collectively call for between now and

2016. These “asks” have been developed through detailed consultations with IDPC members and partners, and will each be the subject of more detailed briefing papers in the coming months:

- ASK 1:** Ensure an open and inclusive debate
- ASK 2:** Re-set the objectives of drug policies
- ASK 3:** Support policy experimentation and innovation
- ASK 4:** End the criminalisation of the most affected populations
- ASK 5:** Commit to the harm reduction approach

An open and inclusive debate?

✓ Progressive contributions from 15 UN agencies

✓ Involvement

for

✓ Information

✓ Mainstreaming

✓ Civil society



tum

✗ Outcomes

✗ Vienna dominated over New York

✗ Not an honest assessment of the failures (at least in the Document)

✗ CS participation at meeting itself was undermined

Resetting the objectives of drug policy?

- ✓ Outcome Document welcomes and highlights the SDGs
- ✓ Specific mention of the target to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030
- ✓ Shift from three pillars to seven themes – including access to medicines, human rights and development
- ✓ 6 countries explicitly calling for new objectives and indicators (Benin, Brazil, Colombia, Ghana, Slovenia, Thailand)
- ✗ Reaffirmation of “a society free of drug abuse”
- ✗ Proposal for new indicators was removed
- ✗ Very few measurable targets

Promoting new approaches?

- ✓ A number of member states called for reform
 - ✓ 18 calling for shift in paradigm
 - ✓ 9 calling for regulation
 - ✓ Creation of new alliances among progressive member states (e.g. the Cartagena Group, with new regions represented: Africa, Caribbean)
- ✗ No acknowledgement in outcome document of the lack of progress
- ✗ Elephant in the room throughout (only 2 calls for treaty reform)
- ✗ No mention of cannabis policies or need to review tensions with the conventions
- ✗ 24 countries/regional groups still calling for a war on drugs approach, 18 calling for a drug-free world

Ending criminalisation?

- ✓ Progressive contributions from 15 UN agencies (including OHCHR, UN Women, UNDP, etc.)
- ✓ Outcome document calls for “alternative or additional measures with regard to conviction or punishment”
- ✓ Calls for less punitive approach in country statements (22 supported decriminalisation, 17 for proportionate sentences, 61 against the death penalty)
- ✓ Acknowledgement of the need for a gender perspective (mostly Europe and Latin America but also some African & Asian states)
- ✓ First references to proportionality of sentencing
- ✗ No specific mention of decriminalisation in the outcome document
- ✗ No mention of the need to abolish the use of the death penalty
- ✗ Country statements show clear lack of consensus

Recognition of harm reduction?

- ✓ Outcome Document was best yet for Vienna, with hard-fought 'wins' on naloxone, NSP and OST
- ✓ Unanimous support from UN agencies
- ✓ Positive country statements from over 30 countries/regional groups, 2 countries against
- ✗ No consensus on the term "harm reduction"
- ✗ Regression for a General Assembly statement
- ✗ No acknowledgement of missed 2015 targets
- ✗ No call for redirected funding

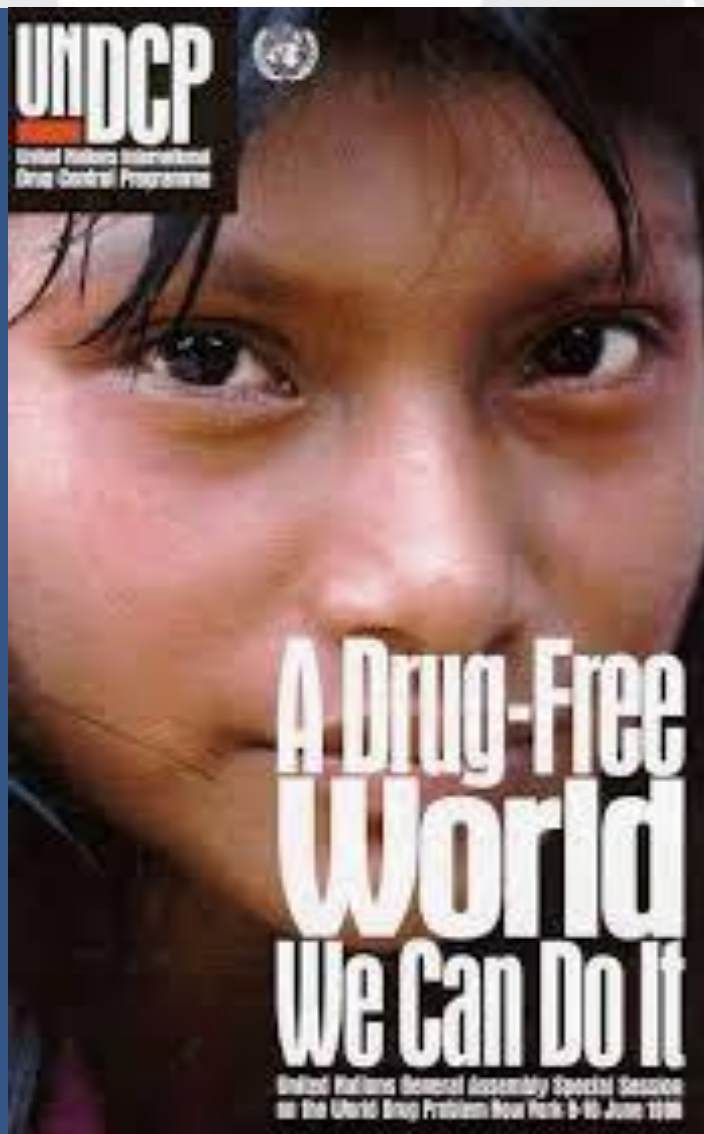
2015

Adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals



1998

1998 UNGASS on drugs



Diplomacy or denialism?

- Mixed feelings after UNGASS
- Outcome Document was disappointing, but important progress made on health, human rights, gender and development
- Country statements clearly show the fractured consensus
- Civil society voice was strong, diverse, momentum is growing
- Important basis for working towards 2019 – e.g. 7 themes



What next? The road towards 2019

- Widening door for health and human rights – hold the lines and keep pushing
- Cannabis reforms – game changing?
- Process for genuine evaluation of drug policies???
- Political realities – what role will the US play now???



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