



AGENDA (draft)

13th INFORMAL DRUG POLICY DIALOGUE

San Juan- Puerto Rico
23- 25 April 2015

Lodging

Hotels DaHouse, Milano y Casablanca
All situated in Old San Juan

Thursday, April 23

18.00- 21.00 Welcoming reception offered by the PR State Department, drinks and snacks
Venue: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe (CEAPRC)
Calle Cristo # 52, Viejo San

Friday, April 24

07.00- 8.45 Breakfast for all Hotel Casablanca:

09.00 Venue CEAPRC

- Welcome and opening remarks by hosts, and brief explanation of the process
Rafael Torruella (Intercambios Puerto Rico); Rafael Jaurbe (Puerto Rico State Department); John Walsh (WOLA); Pien Metaal, moderator (TNI)
- Round of introductions

09.30 Session I: The Caribbean drugs market panorama
Introductions by: Esther Best (Trinidad & Tobago); Michael Tucker (Jamaica); Louis Jeune Jnr Moline (Haiti).

The Caribbean is traditionally known as a transit area for cocaine, due to its geographical location between major markets (US and EU) and the production area. Its consumption has steadily increased in the past decades. While the cultivation and consumption of cannabis is rooted in the region, as well as its distribution and traffic between islands and the mainland. During the last few years we have seen the emergence of other substances, such as heroin and amphetamines. The high geographical and geopolitical diversity of the Caribbean hampers effective control of trafficking routes. In this first session we try to get a picture of the region in terms of the magnitude of current illicit drug market, its impact and effects on societies, by sharing criteria and firsthand knowledge from different parts of the region.

- 11.00 Break
- 11.30 Session II: Harm reduction policies: what would work for the Caribbean?
Introductions by Marcus Day (St. Lucia); Rafael Torruella (Puerto Rico); Santo Rosario Ramirez (Dominican Republic).

The extent of 'problem drug use' in the Caribbean is difficult to quantify due to the lack of available research data. However, a picture of the regional situation may be developed using treatment monitoring data as well as various anecdotal sources. This evidence suggests that the main drugs used in the Caribbean are alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and crack cocaine 'crack'). The use of crack plays a role in the transmission of HIV in the region, just like sexual behaviour has a role. Little is known about injecting drug use in the Caribbean, and although it seems to be rare, in some places it is increasing. Harm reduction policies and practices exist on a small scale, but would need expansion to reach a higher impact on health indicators and general wellbeing. In this session we will discuss what specific harm reduction instruments would be worthwhile considering in the Caribbean region and how the debate can be shifted towards its acceptance as a common policy.

Debate

- 13.30 Lunch
- 15.00 Session III: Caribbean cannabis policies and options for reform
Introductions by Vicki Hanson (Jamaica); Susan Fuller (Belize); Patrick Junior Cottle (St Vincent & Grenadines – via Video); Elena Lagomarsino (Uruguay)

In the Caribbean there is considerable discussion about alternatives to the prohibition of cannabis, but in most of the islands and countries cultivation, consumption, and sale are outlawed and cannabis consumers are criminalized and prosecuted. In some countries, legislative reform is already underway, while others are talking about changes, and in some countries the issue is still taboo. A CARICOM initiative to study on the regional situation regarding cannabis is unfolding slowly, demonstrating a political opening in light of the reforms taking place elsewhere. In this session we will discuss the cannabis reforms and debate underway in the region, the problems to be resolved and objectives achieved, as well as the lessons of reform initiatives in other places, such as Uruguay.

Debate

- 16.30 Break for tea- coffee- refreshments
- 17.00 Continuation of debate- a short introduction on the situation in the United States on cannabis reforms, by John Walsh
- 18.00 Closure of the day
- 19.00 Dinner

Saturday, April 25

- 7.00- 8.45 Breakfast for all in Hotel Casablanca
- Venue: Casa Cortez: Calle San Francisco 210
- 9.00 Session IV: Drug related crimes and prison population.
Introductions by Rudolf de Kort (Aruba); Rose-Marie Belle Antoine (St. Lucia);

Veronica Velez (Puerto Rico).

The Caribbean region is characterized by a high prison population density, one of the world's highest rates. Little is known about the extent to which this incarcerated population is composed of persons detained for drug offenses, or about the type of drug crime for which they have incarcerated and sentenced (if they have been sentenced at all). The prison infrastructure and medical services for people who are ill and/or with problematic drug use are considered to be of very poor quality. In this session we will discuss the effects of the focus of drug policy on incarceration and its impacts on the regions prison problems.

Debate

11.00

Break

11.30

Session V: UNGASS and the Caribbean

Opening remarks by: Mark Golding (Jamaica); Sonia Eljach (Colombia); Arturo Castellanos (Mexico); Martin Jelsma (Netherlands)

One year from now, in April 2016, the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs will take place in New York City. Preparations have been marked by difficult negotiations on several questions, including: the extent to which the Vienna-based Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) will control the process; the right balance between Vienna, Geneva, and New York; how to ensure meaningful involvement of all relevant UN agencies, academia, and civil society. Last but not least is the question of how open the debate should be. Will it be restricted to discussions over implementing the 2009 Political Declaration and its targets for 2019, or can the UNGASS challenge the current global drug control strategy, even raising questions as to modernizing the three UN drug conventions? Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala have played a leading role within the OAS context and by calling for the UNGASS, and a group of like-minded countries is gradually shaping up around certain positions, including Ecuador, Uruguay and Costa Rica. Caribbean countries have thus far been largely absent from the debate not least because most of the debate has occurred at the CND in Vienna, where few Caribbean countries are represented. The outcome of the April 8, 2015, ECOSOC elections for CND membership means that the coming years there will not even be one Caribbean nation represented among the 53 CND member states. While non-member states are allowed to fully participate in the CND preparations for the UNGASS, in practice few Caribbean representatives are likely to travel to Vienna for the purpose. Hence the importance of moments in New York, such as the general assembly upcoming High Level Thematic Debate on the UNGASS process scheduled for May 7. In this session, we will discussed of the state of UNGASS preparations, its relevance for the Caribbean region, and how Caribbean countries could become more actively engaged in the process, and perhaps join the growing group of like-minded Latin American countries to try coordinate certain positions.

Debate

13.00

Conclusions and closure

13.30

Closing lunch