

# The Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme: politics, policies and prospect for change

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## Abstract

Meetings of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) are no forum for debate and change. The author, a former senior officer of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), shows how CND meetings are manipulated in the interests of 17 developed countries that largely fund UNDCP—the CND's 'civil service'. However, these major donors are not united on policy or on how to apply the UN drug Conventions, so CND decisions reflect the lowest level of disagreement, with major splits on policy ignored. The USA, Japan, Sweden and most former Soviet Bloc nations want to maintain or tighten worldwide prohibition, supported by the International Narcotics Control Board, a body co-located with UNDCP. Australia, Canada and several EU states are in technical compliance with the Conventions, but their policies make parts of the Conventions ineffective. Against the wishes of the USA and UK, Latin American and Caribbean countries want stronger demand reduction policies among the main 'drug consumer' states. The paper shows how this affects UNDCP, where inherent conflict between specialists and generalists, plus an eclectic mixture of nationalities and abilities have compounded problems of leadership and management. With most staff on fixed-term contracts paid for indirectly by the major donors, many fear for their jobs if they offend one of them, or make a wrong decision. Non-renewal of contract has been a weapon to stifle dissent and internal debate on policy reform. Paralysis often results. Meanwhile, what the CND claims as success in implementing various UN action plans is often more the result of countries reporting process, not necessarily progress. This impression of successful action masks a global policy failure that is itself fuelling pressure for change. Three possible ways are suggested through which change may be effected.

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It is 5 years since the United Nations General Assembly held its special session on drugs (UNGASS) in 1998, and time for a scheduled UN review of progress. The United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs will carry out the review in a 2-day special session after its annual meeting in April 2003 at its Vienna headquarters. The aim of the review is to examine how far governments have achieved the targets set out at the [1998 UNGASS](#) meeting.

There are six areas on which governments are to report and assess progress:

- Action plan for the implementation of the declaration on the guiding principles of drug demand reduction;
- Action plan for the international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops;
- Alternative development;
- Measures to promote judicial cooperation;
- Action plan against Illicit manufacture, trafficking and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and their precursors;
- Countering money-laundering.

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There have been expressions of hope among the political, treatment and research communities that the April 2003 meeting will produce a lively debate, a genuine assessment of what has been achieved, and a prospect for change. For reasons set in this paper, this will not happen. The interesting question is why? This paper will look at the policymaking and decision processes, and the structures and mechanisms of the [United Nations](#) and how these inhibit change, and examine how progress in achieving the goals of UN-GASS will be evaluated.

The strength of the claim in this paper that nothing will change in April 2003 arises from the author's 8 years working for the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) in Vienna between 1990 and 1998, initially as the first head of the demand reduction section and then as inter-regional advisor on demand reduction. The work entailed writing the annual 'Extent, patterns and trends in drug abuse' report to the Commission of Narcotic Drugs, for the years 1991–1993 and 1995, 1996 e.g. ([E/CN.7/1996/5](#)), as well as numerous position papers, such as the 'Basic Principles of Demand Reduction' ([E/CN.7/1995/4](#)), 'Principles of Primary and Secondary Prevention', ([E/CN.7/1996/6](#)) and 'alternatives to conviction and punishment', ([E/CN.7/1995/6](#)) and other papers ([E/CN.7/1996/8](#)). Responsibilities also included being chief of the secretariat for drafting the Declaration on Drug Demand Reduction adopted by the 1998 UNGASS and the subsequent action plan to implement the declaration. ([A/RES/54/132](#) annex) The author was also responsible for organizing various expert groups, UN meetings, and participating in many commissions and conferences. In this paper I have drawn on this experience, together with previous work for various UN drug policy bodies dating from 1975. The crux of this paper is that by demonstrating how the UN works from the inside in formulating policy and trying to implement it, it is possible to make a reasonable assessment that the prospect for change is poor.

In the UN, appearance and reality are two different things. Major conferences are carefully choreographed presentations, not arenas for discussion. Discussions, debates and compromises take place at much earlier stages before formal meetings. UN conferences are like plays where all roles are carefully defined and the scripts written in advance. They are not places for debate but for statements of position, where any potential conflict has been headed off months before through a series of preliminary discussions and preparatory meetings.

This is not to say that these meetings are not worthwhile, but it is essential to understand the process whereby decisions are made, to understand the significance of what appear to be irrelevant speeches and the avoidance of issues when the conferences take place. What they achieve may often be buried in the docu-

mentation, and remain so until committed or industrious people dig out the fine print and start trying to hold governments to their promises. Not only in the drugs sphere, but also at other major United Nations international conferences, there are often expressions of frustration and disappointment by expectant pressure groups, politicians and media commentators that more has not been achieved. It is only by understanding the processes whereby the major United Nations conferences are organised that their outcomes can be understood, and, if desired, be influenced.

### **Background—the international conventions and 1998 UNGASS meeting**

Domestic legislation relating to illegal drugs can be seen as the implementation of three internationally agreed Conventions: the 1961 Single convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended in 1972; the [1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances](#); and the [1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances](#). Parties to these Conventions may introduce stricter domestic legislation than that demanded by the Conventions but they should not bring in more lenient legislation. The Conventions after the 2003 Commission will remain formally intact, and for many years to come ([Bewley-Taylor, 2003](#)). Change will only come about when groups of countries say that specific aspects of the Conventions are inappropriate for the situation of today, and do not fit in with what each country sees as a realistic and constructive drug policy.

It is worthwhile looking at why and how this all has come about. After the 1998 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, there was strong pressure by many countries, in particular the group of 77 (see below) which was at that time led by Mexico, to have a demand reduction convention. There was much informal discussion on this at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), and several tentative resolutions drawn up, but these efforts were resisted by the US, the UK, Germany and many other of the Western European and Other States (WEO), either because of the cost of convening the necessary conference or because such a convention might infringe national sovereignty. Within the UN, members of the General Assembly are arranged, unofficially, into regional groups for voting purposes and to ensure fair geographical representation. The WEO (formally known as the WEOGs—Western Europe and Other Governments) group comprises all of Western Europe plus Australia, Canada and New Zealand and although the USA does not belong to any regional group, it attends WEO meetings. Basically, the core of this group comprises the old G7 economic grouping.

Because its members provide most of the UN's finance, so they determine much of the UN's policy. The four other regional groupings are Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the group of Latin America and the Caribbean (the GRULAC).

The group of 77, a grouping of developing countries established to try to counteract the weight of the G7, and in particular most of the GRULAC, wanted demand reduction to be the subject of an international agreement because they were tired of being criticised, usually by the USA, for producing drugs. Because the main market for drugs from the Latin American countries was, and remains, the United States, they wanted the USA to accept responsibility for driving the drug trade by its high consumption levels. 'If you did not consume the drugs, we would not be producing them' was their argument. It became clear, however, that the basis of resistance by the USA, supported by the UK, was a belief that demand reduction was essentially a domestic matter that should not be the subject of binding international agreement. Supply reduction was, however, very much a matter for international agreements because the drugs were trafficked from one country to another. However, the group of 77 could point out that this belief was inconsistent with the USA's and the UK's previous acceptance of article 3 (2) of the 1988 convention, which requires each country to make the possession of drugs for personal consumption a criminal offence under their domestic law.

Trying another approach, Mexico pressed for an international conference to review all the Conventions on the basis that the single convention was written over 30 years ago. They worked through informal diplomacy from 1988 and made a formal approach to the UN in 1993. While the principle was not attacked, the project was dropped after due discussion on the grounds of cost. This particular means of dropping ideas is one much favoured, and was in this case led, by the UK. Eventually a compromise was reached and it was agreed to hold a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to discuss many aspects of the illicit drug trade and to work towards having not a convention but a declaration on demand reduction.

This was the 1998 UNGASS. It adopted a political declaration and a declaration on the guiding principles of drug demand reduction, as well as approving two action plans—on the suppression of trade and use of ATS and on crop eradication and alternative development. The UNGASS also 'decided' or 'advocated' action in three other areas—control of precursors, judicial cooperation and money-laundering.

What this will lead to may not be as clear as might be thought. The exact wording in a United Nations document is important because it establishes the extent to which the Member States are obligated to particular policies and actions. The UNGASS agreed that 'all

States were to take into account the outcome of the present session when formulating national strategies and programmes and to report biennially to the CND on their efforts to meet the above mentioned goals and targets for the years 2003 and 2008'. The [first biennial report](#) was produced in 2001 and the Commission will have the second ready to assess progress at its 2003 meeting.

It is important to examine these goals carefully, as well as the means by which they are to be assessed. But first the scope and power of the Commission needs to be addressed, because it is critical to have an understanding of its powers and limitations in order to assess what can be done.

### Policy making and the decision process at the UNDCP

The UNDCP was created at the UN Office in Vienna in 1991 ([A/RES/45/179](#)) to try to resolve the confusion of having three co-located but separate UN bodies with differing but overlapping responsibilities for policy and implementation in the drugs field. These were:

- The division of narcotic drugs (DND). Created in 1946 from the League of Nations international civil service that administered the drug control system. It was the body responsible for the preparatory conferences on international drug control and acted as secretariat to the CND.
- The United Nations fund for drug abuse control (UNFDAC). Set up in 1971 at the instigation of the USA to ensure action in the field, it ran programmes and projects to suppress the growing and trafficking of illicit drugs. These were initially targeted at helping customs authorities and the police but over time became more concerned with promoting alternative development in the drug-growing areas.
- The Secretariat of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). The INCB was established by the 1961 Convention merging two existing bodies. In essence the Board's functions were intended to be the monitoring and control of the import and export of narcotic drugs (plus cannabis and cocaine) through a system of individual governments estimating their need for these drugs for 'scientific and medical' reasons and the Board authorizing the growing of the plants in particular countries to supply this need. The responsibilities of the Board were subsequently widened under the 1971 convention on psychotropic substances and the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

The 'civil services' of these three bodies merged to form the UNDCP. The merger of a field-based opera-

tion with two secretariats did not auger well and it may be argued that if more attention had been paid to the differing functions of these organisations and to management tasks and problems, it might have led to a different solution than that found. After many subsequent reorganisations, the secretariats are again functioning *de facto* as separate bodies within the organisation.

The two bodies these civil servants serve are the INCB and the CND.

The INCB is the successor body to the first organisation set up by the League of Nations in 1929. It comprises 13 individual ‘experts’—principally pharmacologists, pharmacists, lawyers, police officers and medical doctors. Its original purpose was to license the legal production of opium around the world for medicinal purposes, but it has assumed a wider role in recent years, reporting on trends in drug trafficking and use, monitoring precursor chemicals, as well as commenting on policy development among UN Member States, particularly if INCB members consider there has been a deviation from the treaties and Conventions. The Board can only ‘request explanations’ and ‘call upon governments to adopt remedial measures’. The ultimate sanction is simply ‘to call attention of the Parties, the Council and the Commission’ to any actions which they think are undermining the 1961 single convention. However, its annual report is independent of any UN organisation and is paid for by the United Nations from central funds.

The CND, was formed in 1946 to advise the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) ‘and prepare draft international agreements on all matters relating to the control of narcotic drugs.’ Hence it was responsible for drawing up the Conventions and the declarations ([E/RES/1991/38](#)). As a formally constituted organisation of the UN, the CND meets annually for a period not exceeding 8 days ([E/RES/1991/39](#)). The body is crucial to all international drug policy making, as is clear from

the chart below. The Commission comprises 53 UN Member States, elected by ECOSOC. Because ECOSOC has 54 members, the CND cannot be larger than its parent body. Other non-members can, and do sit as observers, so that although CND meetings comprise as many countries as wish to attend, whether UN Member States or not, only the 53 official members can vote. In 2002, for example, 56 additional Member States sent observers. With the Holy See and Switzerland, there were, in effect, 111 states represented.

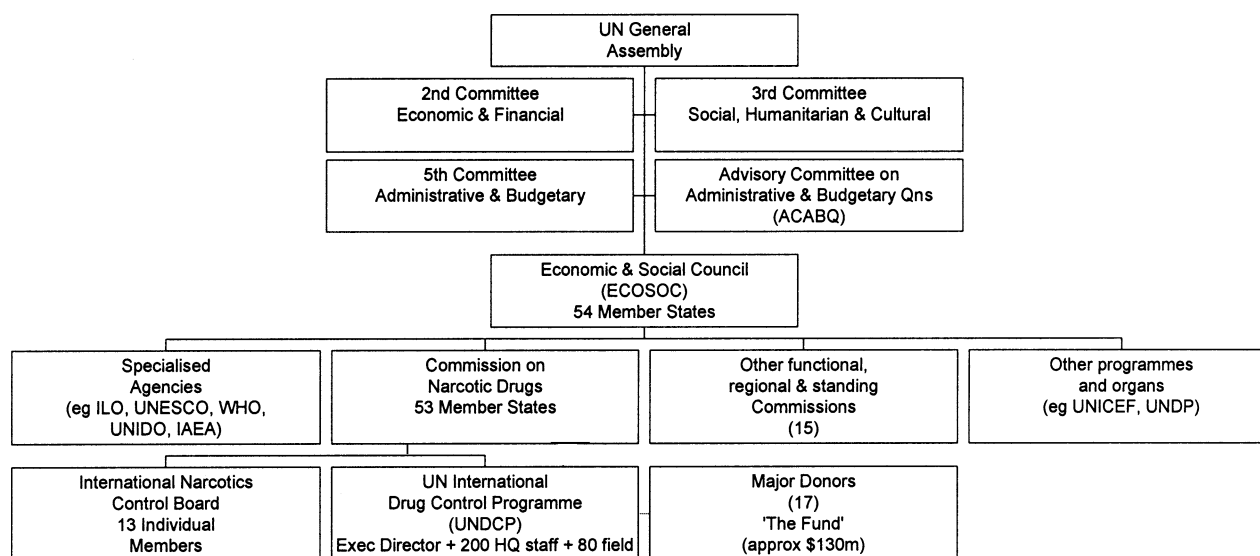
Other mergers took place in 1997 with what was once the Crime Branch, but which had been renamed several times to emerge as the Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP). Yet another change of name came about in September 2002 with the creation of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (ODC) from the UNDCP and the CICP, but the fundamental core of the organisation is the larger and dominant UNDCP.

Indeed, UNDCP still operates as a separate organisation, not least because its principal finance, ‘The Fund’, is what UNFDAC brought to the 1991 merger. It is ring-fenced for projects and is specific to it ([A/RES/45/179](#), 1990 para. 6).

The chart shows how the UN drug organisations fit into the UN system. This shows the CND as the UN’s pre-eminent drug policy-making body. The UNDCP derives all its authority from the CND, though most of its funds from the 17 major donors who provide ‘The Fund’. For most practical purposes, these 17 major donors have a decisive influence over both the CND and the UNDCP. The CND can only now pass resolutions that have been costed. If money for their implementation is not found by New York headquarters and the regular budget, the donors must find it and they are under no obligation to fund that which they do not wish to. Since New York has no money, mainly because of the USA not paying its contributions, then no new initiative can be undertaken without the major donors agreeing.



### The UNDCP in the UN Hierarchy: controlled by the CND, funded by its major donors



The specialised agencies of the United Nations, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have their own governing and financial structures. WHO has a World Health Assembly, and an Executive Board, a secretariat and professional staff at headquarters headed by a Director General to carry out policy, plus six regional offices. They send their annual reports to ECOSOC, which receives reports from 14 specialised agencies and 10 functional commissions. Officially ECOSOC coordinates all their work, and under Chapter 10 article 64.2 of the [UN Charter \(1946\)](#) 'may communicate its observations on these to the General Assembly'. The reality is that the specialised agencies are independent organisations only nominally under the aegis of the General Assembly. INCB submits its annual report to ECOSOC through the CND, which may only comment on it if it wishes.

#### The Commission on Narcotic Drugs: how it works

In the Commission, as in the General Assembly, no votes are taken. Everything is settled by consensus. This is because in the original charter for the UN only those countries that are fully paid-up members can vote. Since the USA is behind with its dues, there is an informal agreement that nobody votes. This means that every decision usually comes down to the lowest common denominator—the one that is least offensive to the largest number. If any member of the Commission were against a particular resolution, it would not go through. Attempts would be made outside the plenary session to

resolve disputes, but if this could not be done some face-saving solution, compromise or vague wording in a resolution would be used. For example, an attempt by Russia to win approval for a ban on heroin for medicinal use led to a 2-day impasse in 1995, which was eventually resolved by asking for the views of WHO, which initially failed to come up with any report, then produced nothing of any significance. Two-years on and personnel changes meant that the issue was not as pertinent as before.

Membership of the delegations is indicative of policy approaches by Member States and in whose hands policy rests. Many countries send representatives firstly of their foreign affairs ministries and their staff in their missions in Vienna, which are in themselves staffed by diplomats from foreign affairs ministries. Few countries send delegates from other sections of their governments, such as their health departments. Only two, Greece and Slovakia, sent delegates from education to the 2002 Commission.

So at the 2002 meeting of the DND, there were 604 country delegates, of whom 247 were from permanent missions in Vienna. They were augmented by yet more members of their foreign affairs ministries at home.

This preponderance of diplomats and law enforcement representatives militates against change and helps to perpetuate inertia within the Commission. Any changes have to be planned over a long period, usually lasting several years. Any changes achieved have never occurred through debates on the floor of the Commission, but first through informal agreement between groups of states. These agreements are then taken back to national governments for discussion, to be

taken forward at the next Commission. A resolution will be drafted by a Member State, usually before the meeting and now sometimes circulated by e-mail to people and delegations that are known to favour the views being put forward. This is where personal knowledge and friendships come into the policy dimension. An initial meeting of interested parties where changes and additions are made, is followed by several informal meetings before a submission to the Secretariat, who will have it translated into the six official UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese). The draft resolution will be circulated, with those countries that take a particular interest adding or deleting what they find acceptable or unacceptable. Some contentious resolutions will go through several drafts, others only one. Usually if agreement cannot be achieved the resolution does not go forward and very rarely is it withdrawn once submitted. Resolutions are then submitted at the end of the meeting for adoption by the CND and/or onward transmission for adoption later by ECOSOC.

Also represented at CND meetings are UN, international and regional organisations, which are themselves representative of states and views. Most of these generally support the existing Conventions. These include the WHO, ICPO-Interpol, the World Customs Organisation (WCO), the ILO, the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO), Europol, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Organisation of African Unity, or African Union, as it is now known. Many of these organisations are specialised agencies which have their own policy making bodies and are financed by Member States directly, and although they send their annual reports to ECOSOC and the General Assembly, these bodies do not exercise any direct policy or financial control.

Theoretically, there should be coordination between them all: the role of the CND was expanded in 1990 for it to give policy guidance to UNDCP and to monitor the UN's Global programme of action (GPA) on drugs and the UN's System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP). However, attempts to coordinate across the UN system soon proved administratively difficult because of inter-agency argument. Agencies pushed for what they wanted, irrespective of what anyone else was doing or whether it fitted into any system-wide plan, while at the same time demanding that UNDCP pay for it all (E/CN.7/1999/5). Member States could give no proper oversight of this and it became a wasteful paper exercise because the General Assembly's subsidiary ECOSOC, and the CND as one of ECOSOC's functional commissions, have no control over the independent specialised agencies such as the WHO and UNESCO. An evaluation of the success or otherwise of the SWAP, was unfavourable

(UNDCP, 1998). Even an Expert Group convened to review and strengthen the machinery for drug control concluded that the SWAP had 'yielded few, if any results.' (E/CN.7/1999/5). The mechanism through which it was supposed to work, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), sub-committee on Drug Control, was found to be ineffective. The composition of the 'Expert Group' that reached these conclusions, however, begs a question in itself. It comprised an ex-head of the USA delegation to CND who subsequently became an ambassador, an ex-employee of the USA government, a member of the Swedish delegation to CND, an employee of the British Foreign Office, a Japanese and a Swedish representative, and an ex-employee of UNDCP. Is this the composition one might expect of an Expert Group, unless it was convened largely for political reasons?

### Keeping within the conventions

The majority of UN Member States have long opposed any change in the Conventions. Of the WEOs, the three most vociferous opponents of change and slackening of the interpretation of the Conventions are the USA, Sweden and Japan. Other countries that support this approach fall roughly into two categories: previous USSR states and dictatorships. Many Arab countries are also strong opposers of liberalisation, while many former USSR states have been so overwhelmed by drug use and AIDS that their governments feel that they cannot cope with the problems, so they see a loosening of drug controls as likely to exacerbate an already critical situation. At the same time, some ex-USSR countries are run by an oligarchy of criminals who make money from illicit drugs (Allix, 1998; Cooley, 1999; Handelsman, 1995).

These factors combine to produce a surprising set of allies in favour of keeping all aspects of the drug trade illegal, though for quite different reasons. To some extent, this is reflected in the composition of the delegations to the CND. So, as recently as 2002 the CND reaffirmed its support for the Conventions and called 'for the implementation of all the provisions of the international drug control treaties in particular those that oblige States Parties to limit the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances exclusively to medical and scientific purposes', because Member States were concerned about 'lenient policies towards the use of illicit drugs' (CND Res/45/15, 2002). This was much stronger than an earlier resolution condemning the 'recreational and leisure use of drugs among young people' (CND 44/5, 2001).

Those countries that favour change promote their case not by confrontation but by elaborating their policies and arguing that they fall within the Conven-

tions. Thus, change does seem to be coming about in Europe, not through the CND but through creeping, if not furtive, legalisation or just decriminalisation of illicit drugs in cases of simple possession. There are two areas where policy seems to be changing and where there are also calls for policy change: the prescription of heroin for heroin users and the legalisation or *de facto* legalisation of cannabis.

*De facto* legalisation can be achieved by keeping the possession of drugs for personal consumption a criminal offence as required by the 1988 Convention, but without flouting the letter of the Convention. Means of doing this may involve an adjustment to the penalties that are deemed appropriate, such as a fine, police caution, an unrecorded reprimand or counseling; or the drugs concerned may be reclassified into different legal categories where different penalties apply. This does not mean that possession has been legalised and it allows the continued, possibly more forceful prosecution of trafficking or production.

In the Netherlands, for example, the possession of drugs for personal use is still illegal, including that of cannabis. The Dutch have not changed the law; they simply do not enforce it with regard to possession of cannabis for personal consumption. The UK is experimenting with similar non-enforcement in one part of London. Since 2001, Portugal, Luxembourg, Italy and Spain have either decriminalised cannabis possession or imposed only administrative sanctions for personal use. A recent survey by the [EMCDDA \(2002\)](#) found that ‘discontinuance was quite common’ at the prosecution stage for the possession of small amounts of drugs if this was not in a public place. They concluded, ‘Most Member States discontinue action at or before the court stage.’

The case for ‘medicalisation’ via doctor’s prescription is easier to argue, as this automatically means that any drugs concerned are provided legally because the Convention allows use of the drug for medical and scientific purposes. Since ‘medical and scientific’ purposes were not defined in the 1961 Convention, medical prescription is ‘medical use’. This means that any government can define addiction as an illness and say that it needs to be treated with heroin, methadone or any other drug deemed appropriate. Therefore, after successful trials, Switzerland has now moved to permanent prescribing of heroin to heroin addicts. The Netherlands is still evaluating similar trials, while the UK has signaled a return to the ‘British’ system of GP prescription of heroin, instead of confining the practice to a few licensed psychiatrists, who decided amongst themselves to prescribe only oral methadone, and not to continue with prescribing intravenous heroin ([Spear, 2002](#)). By the same token, cannabis can also be prescribed for any illness that the medical profession deem appropriate and the government approves, always allowing for a safer,

pharmaceutically controlled means of delivery than smoking. This is already the case in Canada; the UK is currently carrying out trials.

Therefore, there can be, and is, wide variation in public policy and law enforcement practice between countries, without necessarily violating the Conventions.

### **The role of the international civil service within UNDCP**

The size of UNDCP has fluctuated greatly since its inception. Usually at headquarters in 2002 there are about 200 staff, including all general service (GS) people such as clerks and secretaries, but not including finance and personnel staff who were shared with other UN Vienna organisations. In the field there are usually about 80 professional staff. All WEOs are represented, holding many key posts, some of which are specifically earmarked for nationals of particular major donors. Partly to ensure ‘fair’ representation, other UN regional groupings had nationals scattered through various posts and levels, which means in practice that superior ability may not necessarily ensure that the most qualified candidate is appointed to any particular post. In general, most permanent staff are generalists, while most of the specialists—such as social scientists with drugs experience, or former police or customs officers, lawyers and pharmacologists—are on fixed, but renewable contracts. Senior administrators are usually career officers, while the GS staff below them are a balance of local recruits and nationals of a wide variety of Member States—again to spread UN jobs around Member States. There is, in fact, a complicated quota system applied throughout the UN whereby governments are allowed a certain number of posts according to their population and size of contribution. Men far outnumber women in senior ranks; there are more women than men in the junior, GS ranks.

The main working languages are English and French, with English dominant for meetings and the drafting of policy documents. Although all professional grade personnel are required to be proficient in two UN languages, native English speakers have a decided advantage throughout the organisation.

This cultural diversity and structure would make it difficult for any UN organisation to be that independent, professional, efficient machine described by Max Weber ([Bendix, 1959](#)). When the UN was established, the US and UK may well have hoped that their own civil services would provide exemplars, but they have national focus and few foreign employees. Some UN personnel identify wholly or at least principally with the UN, but others consistently ‘play their own side’, putting their national loyalties first. Consistent unity of purpose will always be difficult under such circum-

stances. But there are deeper problems, and these apply to the whole of the UN system from its inception to today, and revolve around the persistent interference of the major powers in the running and particularly staffing, of the UN. These issues go beyond the scope of this paper but nevertheless affect the operation of the organisations (for a detailed account see [Melvern, 1995](#)).

The Executive Director (ED) of UNDCP is constrained in several ways. He may suggest a policy based on the advice given him, or on his personal interest, but funds will only come from the donors based on policy laid down by the CND and what they wish to fund. Funds from the donors come under three headings: general purpose, soft earmarking and hard earmarking. General purpose funds go into a general fund for use by UNDCP, either for staff or projects, as the ED wants. Soft earmarking indicates a general sector than the donor would wish to funds for such as alternative development, support for police or customs services, or for demand reduction. Hard earmarking applies to funds that are released only for specific projects of which the donor approves and has usually had a say in their design or implementation. There has been an increasing tendency towards hard earmarking amongst the donors, which limits both the options of the ED and the funds for posts at head office. Since personnel are always changing, or because of a precarious financial situation, or even on the whims and personal loyalties of senior staff, there is often a lack of continuity that makes it impracticable to implement policy from Vienna. Also the organisational structure does not facilitate easy exchanges between the specialists and the field. As in many civil service organisations, the generalists far outnumber the specialists and occupy critical posts surrounding the ED, so that he does not have to talk to anyone who might disagree with him. One ED took 3 years to take the lift one floor up to meet the staff there; he came with his security staff, and expected the staff to pay for the coffee.

Nor are hierarchical authority structures necessarily effective. Numerous networks and friendship groups cut across rank and even organisations. These networks are overlapping and cross-cutting, based on for example nationality, sexual orientation, previous shared offices, children attending the same school (in the main, children of civil servants have only three secondary schools to choose from in Vienna), being a neighbour, or having worked with someone even though people are now in different organisations. As in all large organisations there are also the protectors and the protected; the latter may be for any of the above reasons, or merely because of an ability to deliver work on time for a cherished project. Some of these links are very strong, such as the nationality link for some people, whereas for some of the British, this is of no matter at all, unless you are 'one of us', that is male, Oxbridge and/or UK civil service.

Not appreciating this multi-dimensional web can lead to many failures to understand what is happening and incomprehension of why things should be so. A typical British civil servant will often be 'at sea', not realizing that what has been said at meetings he has attended may well be relayed to junior staff before he gets back to his office, and that major personnel and policy changes could totally pass him by.

From the outside, the power of the insiders always looks greater than it really is, and this is as true of UNDCP as any other UN agency. Their main sanction is to facilitate or block what the Member States want. Rarely does this stem from a directive from the top; it is more likely to be the result of individual attitudes and beliefs. There are certain posts that are critical to whether a policy moves forward, and the art of operating in the UN is to know how to find several ways around a blockage. Mostly the bureaucratic genius is expressed by blocking manoeuvres, to the frustration of many governments, particularly if they are unsure of who is doing it and why. Rarely do civil servants try to make or lead policy other than to suggest or articulate what Member States say that they want, partly because their greatest fear is of getting anything wrong. It is a philosophy of many bureaucracies that 'it is better to do nothing than to be wrong'. In the UN this is often taken one stage further to 'it is better to stop anything than to let it happen because it might be wrong'.

Add to this that most officers in the field are not technically qualified or competent in specialist areas—and many do not read, understand or want to follow what the headquarters staff of UNDCP in Vienna suggests—there is neither rationale nor consistency in many policy areas around the world. What bureaucrats do best is to operate and at times manipulate the system in which they function. Most of those in Vienna simply block proposed changes, not through maliciousness, but because they are steeped in the Conventions and this constrains all their actions. Lawyers, who are a strong professional group within the UNDCP with a large number of senior posts, could do nothing else. They see themselves not only as upholding the Conventions but also as making sure, through framing model laws for Member States, that the rest of the world follows suit. In addition, the CND Secretariat is its own dedicated section within the UNDCP, comprised mainly of lawyers, and is principally dedicated to the smooth running of the CND. In this culture, rows and dissent, even arguments, are avoided, so it is inevitable that senior officers are never in the forefront of change. That is simply not their role. Any changes have to be agreed by the Member States and driven through by them. This is why an intimate knowledge of how the organisation works and is funded is vital if change is to be contemplated.



## The influence of funding on the UNDCP

Understanding the funding arrangements for UNDCP is also crucial to understanding its working and the behaviour of the civil servants. Only about 10% of the UNDCP's expenditure comes from the regular budget provided centrally by the UN. INCB, however, is funded almost entirely from the UN's central, 'regular' budget in New York because it is a body established permanently by the Member States through the Conventions. This means that its posts are permanent, with INCB's budget guaranteed and not subject to fluctuations in funding. The main body of UNDCP has a few regular budget posts dating from the old DND that were established mainly to pay for the CND Secretariat and fulfill other functions requested by Member States; these are regarded by the UN's administrative and financial committees as core posts. It was because this produced little action on the ground that UNFDAC was set up in 1971 to implement policy in the field. Initially it came under the DND but it soon spun out to become an independent organisation. It was entirely funded by contributions from Member States, initially only about 10, later about 17 countries. When the three bodies merged in 1991 to form the UNDCP there were thus few centrally funded permanent posts with the new organisation. Only 10% of UNDCP funding comes from the regular budget. The bulk had to be paid for by the major donors.

Because Italy was for many years the largest single contributor to UNFDAC, an Italian headed it. Italy has similarly occupied the post of ED of UNDCP from its inception, even though Italy's contribution has fallen from almost half in the 1980s to about one sixth now. In 1995 they donated more than \$8 million, USA just over \$7 million, UK almost \$7 million, Sweden \$6 million, European Commission and Germany, both \$4 million, France \$2 million, Denmark \$1.5 million, followed by Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Spain, Australia, Austria, Canada, Belgium, and Finland donating from \$800 000 to \$300 000. The programme budget for 1994–1995 was \$161 700 000, but fell in 1998–1999 to \$115 million, of which nearly 80% was earmarked, with particular donors specifying which projects their money is to be used for. In this way, policy is also determined not only by the Commission but by particular countries dictating which policies and projects they will fund—or allow to be funded—and which they will not. For many years UNDCP was not allowed by the USA to fund needle exchanges, even if funds could be found from other countries. To get round this, joint projects were undertaken with partners who would fund the needle exchange element in a large package that included drug prevention and education, which could be paid for by UNDCP. One such example was a demand reduction

project in Brazil where the World Bank put in \$10 and UNDCP \$2 million.

In spite of these funding arrangements, some posts are specifically approved in New York by the fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ; see Chart 1, above). These posts have the security of tenure of regular budget posts if the incumbent can survive 5 years. But the fund remains the dominant staff paymaster. This is not what it was set up to do; its job was to oversee the implementation of projects in the field, but this in turn cannot be done without staff, hence one of the many reasons for a continuous tension and upheaval in the organisation.

This further emphasises the role of the major donors, who provide the fund. If any resolutions of the Commission have financial implications, these have to be approved by New York headquarters or funding must be obtained from the donors. Thus, *de facto*, international drug policy and implementation are controlled by the donors, as nothing new can be paid for, or staff employed to do the work, without their consent. In 1997, when Pino Arlacchi, ED from 1998 until 2002, went public with his plans to turn the UNDCP into a more proactive, executive body, he was quickly brought to heel by the major donors, who reminded him of the limits of his authority, which derived almost entirely from them in practical terms.

Tension therefore increases when Member States that are not major donors demand that the UNDCP helps them pay for projects in the field. This often adds considerable pressure at HQ in Vienna for the UNDCP to provide funds and increase staff to meet these demands. However, to juggle resources, the UNDCP usually wants to ensure that projects are technically validated before implementation so as to avoid repeating previous major disasters. There is also considerable pressure at the same time from UN general managers in New York to cut staff posts paid for directly by major donors because this is inappropriate for UN staff, who are supposed to be beholden to no individual or group of Member States. At the same time, major donors press the UNDCP continuously to cut staff paid for from the fund, so as to save on costs.

One result is that those not on permanently funded posts may be threatened with non-renewal of contract even after more than 10 years or more of working for the organisation. Should a member of staff become distrusted by a powerful major donor, or be thought to be 'difficult to manage'—specialists who know more than their generalist superiors are particularly vulnerable—this provides a virtually unchallengeable way of getting rid of them. Specialists with a low profile—particularly women—are also vulnerable because they are seen as people who will not cause sufficient fuss to be a nuisance

if they are let go. The reasons for non-renewal of contracts may even be unjustly personal: one former senior UNDCP officer systematically purged, or tried to purge, any staff member who had previously been in the police or the military, irrespective of their current professional merit.

Another technique exploits the UN rule that all staff must serve at any duty station, as the secretary-general requires. In effect, this means that staff can be sent anywhere the ED wants. Punishment postings to the field were not infrequent, to places such as Yangon, Myanmar; Lagos, Nigeria; Dakar, Senegal; Hanoi, Viet Nam; Riga, Latvia; Vientiane, Laos. To avoid such a fate, a staff member with a family, children in school and a house in Vienna is unlikely to challenge the system. Another way of keeping staff in line is that pensions are not vested until 5 years of service. However, if staff last more than 5 years, and if they have are on secondment from their home civil service, they have to decide whether to stay or go. If they stay they may lose their right to returning to their home civil service, and hence, if they lose their UN job they become unemployed.

The result is that many UNDCP staff are in constant fear of their jobs. This is particularly worrying for them where they have little prospect of obtaining similarly highly paid work elsewhere, or if forced to return 'home' to their country of nationality, particularly if its economy is a poor one. All of this discourages even internal argument, let alone radical thinking. People are often more concerned with politicking to keep their jobs than actually doing them. Only those with expert, transferable skills can afford to stand on principle, although this too causes tensions with the generalists who comprise most of the staff. Such structural and internal conflicts create instability, particularly where staff do not know whether their contracts will be renewed from year to year, and in some cases from quarter to quarter.

When the inherent tension between specialists and generalists is taken into account, internal politics can produce paralysis, especially when the generalists out-rank the specialists and behave arbitrarily. Most generalists usually claim knowledge and expertise because they have learnt 'on the job', but this knowledge is often made up of personal opinion unenlightened by reading or study, let alone contact with drug users—the latter being a significant gap in the experience of most UNDCP staff. One senior officer, an engineer by discipline and proud of it, proclaimed at one internal meeting that there had been no research into the causes of drug abuse. When an annotated bibliography of more than 2000 references was sent to him on the subject (Fazey, 1977) it was returned unread to the author with a curt note of thanks. But all the specialists knew the senior officer had made a fool of himself. It

was one of many events that undermined any remaining authority and confidence in his leadership. He left UNDCP to take up a more senior UN post in Asia, finishing his career with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General.

The UNDCP, and other parts of the UN office in Vienna, and from all accounts many other UN organisations, agencies and bodies, was also discriminatory regarding female staff, with some staff openly misogynistic. There was not one, but a proliferation of glass ceilings throughout professional staff grades and those for the GS staff. At the same time nepotism and cronyism were not unknown, often at a subtle level whereby mutual favours would be exchanged between neighbours and friends who had no apparent connection within the organisation. This also applied between different UN organisations. One staff member, expecting his ex-boss and friend to return to the organisation as his superior, spent much of his time secretly working for him and for the organisation to which he had moved, to the prejudice and detriment of UNDCP and the considerable benefit of the other organisation.

In addition to this there has often seemed to be internecine warfare within UNDCP at senior level. This became public early in 2001 when Michael von Schulenberg, the head of operations and deputy to the ED, resigned in frustration. His valedictory report to the ED was damning and he had previously referred to the organisation as 'a snake pit', where he said that there was malice aplenty. Copies of the report somehow found their way to all the major donors and into a number of leading newspapers in Europe and North America, precipitating investigations by UN auditors and headquarters staff (A/56/689). It proved an important factor in the departure of Pino Arlacchi as ED when Kofi Annan decided his contract should not be renewed. Von Schulenberg moved to a senior post with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Others also left, but 'the family' of United Nations organisations found them posts elsewhere. As in many bureaucracies, in order to get rid of a disastrous manager who is sufficiently senior and well-connected or who has worked a long time with the organisation, they are moved on, usually by being promoted. The more senior the person the greater the likelihood that their government will intervene with pressure for the person to stay or be moved because the government will often see such failure as a loss of face for both individual and country. WHO suffered from this country-based intervention in the recent past. Thus competence, knowledge and efficiency are not necessarily the most highly prized qualities, and this reflects both on decisions and the lack of them, and must be taken into account for anyone trying to effect change.

## Major donors

The major donors—Italy, USA, UK, Japan, Sweden, European Commission, Germany, France, Denmark, Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Spain, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Finland and Canada—meet senior UNDCP staff twice a year within a closed meeting. They examine projects that have been undertaken, and discuss where and how they would like existing and further money spent. In general, only the Scandinavian countries put money into demand reduction. Most of the money goes to supply reduction and suppression of illicit traffic and cannot be diverted for other purposes, as Pino Arlacchi was to find out when he tried to pursue policies and projects of his own.

The major donors also discuss drug policy outside the constraints of the UN through their participation in the Dublin Group. This was established in 1990 at the behest of the USA, with its first meeting in Dublin, hence its name (Boekhout van Solinge, 2002). The group took over the functions of CELAD, the European Committee to Combat Drugs, which was an informal grouping within the EU to discuss drug policy. To the EU were added Australia, Japan, Canada the USA, plus Sweden, which at the time was not an EU member, and Norway. The EU, therefore, no longer had its own exclusive policy group; in effect it was taken over by the USA, and the other hardliners, Sweden and Japan, who opposed reform and were against such practices as the prescription of heroin and needle exchanges. From 1999, Russia came on board after joining the G7 to make it G8. Dublin Group members are largely drawn from foreign affairs ministries; few people with practical or substantive knowledge are involved in its activities. It meets for 2 days, twice a year in Brussels and once every 3 years in Washington, but has neither status nor mandate. The EU does the administrative work. Decisions are taken in advance of the CND. In addition there are up to 70 ‘mini-Dublin Groups’ around the world, which meet on a regional basis. Although some might see this group as redundant, it is still strongly supported by the USA, and so is likely to continue. Thus there exist informal policy groups comprising virtually the same members, who control the purse strings not only of the UNDCP, but the UN itself.

## The CND and UNGASS 2003

The success criteria for governments in meeting the targets set out in the political declaration of UNGASS 1998 were established by the CND’s reconvened 42nd session, November–December 1999. This was a working group ‘to elaborate guidelines to facilitate reporting on the implementation of the GPA’ adopted by the GA in 1988. They recommended that the reporting on the GPA

be discontinued and replaced by a biennial report on the political declaration of 1998. This was a distinct step forward since squabbling between the UN agencies involved in the GPA was making it unproductive (E/CN.7/1999/5).

However, the first biennial report of the ED (United Nations, E/CN.7/2001/16) was based entirely upon what governments wished to tell the ED. Unsurprisingly, none was willing to admit that they had not made large strides in achieving targets, or to criticize other countries for not telling the truth in what they told the ED, as in doing so they would expose themselves to the same charge. The next report will also be based on such voluntary data. The most that is likely to result from it is a resolution urging all governments to report again for 2008.

It is interesting why these dates were chosen. It seems reasonable to suggest reporting 5 and 10 years after a major initiative but they happen to mirror President Clinton’s promise in one of his weekly radio broadcasts before the 1998 UNGASS to reduce drug taking in the USA by half by 2003 and to ‘win the war on drugs’ by 2008. When the UNDCP produced the first drafts of the 1998 Political Declaration it hoped to impress American diplomats by matching the UNDCP’s timetable to that of the USA. What did not seem to occur to UNDCP staff, however, was that President Clinton would be out of office long before 2003, while the UNDCP, CND and the Member States who adopted the Political Declaration, would still be here and stuck with the timetable. This is a small illustration of how the USA does not always have to exert direct overt pressure on UNDCP because the organisation knows what the US policy is, and will try to follow it. Sometimes, this eagerness leads to the commitment to impossible goals, as in ‘A Drug Free World—We Can Do it’, the slogan adopted for 1998 UNGASS. It reflected both the eagerness to follow the line of the United States with a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to drugs, while demonstrating a lack of appreciation of the situation in the world by the UNDCP’s senior management. The belief of many people in the USA government that there should and could be a drug-free society had been elevated to a global aspiration by the UNDCP. Most UNDCP staff were dismayed with the realisation of how out of touch senior staff were, or, in some cases, how cynical they themselves had become.

That said, what governments actually committed themselves to was set out at the 1998 UNGASS in the Political Declaration, which gives more room for manoeuvre than trying to adhere to the Clinton goals. This gets the UNDCP partially off the hook. Moreover, reporting to the CND has been organised around what programmes are in place, not how effective they are. Therefore as long as countries report that they are doing

something, then they will have achieved the goals set out in the Political Declaration.

The action plan to implement the demand reduction declaration is interesting because there was a strenuous attempt to sabotage it by the UK government when it was proposed: a change of wording to the Political Declaration did not give the UNDCP legislative authority to continue with the action plan. Only intervention by the GRULACs, supported by the Netherlands using its then presidency of the EU, ensured its progression to final adoption by the General Assembly. Nevertheless, there was an impact: these diplomatic manoeuvrings meant that the action plan did not have the same force as the other action plans approved by the 1998 UNGASS because goals were left imprecise. Governments were called upon to commit to the plan and to provide resources for its implementation, as was the UNDCP (CND Res/43/2, 2000). A resolution of the General Assembly (CND/RES/54/132) urged 'all Member States to implement the action plan' and included it as an annex to the resolution. In the Political Declaration there was a commitment 'to achieving significant and measurable results in the field of demand reduction by the year 2008'. If, however, significant and measurable results include, say, providing drug education to an extra number of schoolchildren or producing media campaigns, then these can be said to be significant and measurable. A brief look at the First Biennial Report of the ED confirms the approach (E/CN.7/2001/16). Only the action plan in relation to ATS talked about reducing the demand for these drugs, which of course includes ecstasy. It was reported, 'more than half (57%) of governments replying to the questionnaire reported that measures had been taken to reduce the demand for ATS.' There was no reporting as to whether these measures had been successful. In a resolution at the 2002 meeting CND A/Res/45/2), however, they were 'alarmed about the increasing use of ATS, in particular among young people'.

As to the Action Plan on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops, there is only a continued massaging of the figures and a refusal to acknowledge reality, as with such statements that there is 'sustained eradication in China, Bolivia, Guatemala, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Peru, Thailand and Turkey' (E/CN.7/2001/16). No mention is made, whatsoever, of opium production in North Korea, which the USA has accused of mass-producing illicit narcotics worth \$100 million a year (Ward, 2002).

Other areas of agreed cooperation appear less problematic. There is judicial cooperation, precursor chemicals are being monitored and anti-money laundering laws have been passed. The 2002 CND meeting decided that a brief ministerial statement should be made on these areas (CND A/Res/45/7, 2002) at the 2003 review meeting.

In effect, it should be possible to report progress in nearly all areas under review, even though this may be difficult to square with the clear evidence the number of illicit drug users is still increasing. Where progress has not been notable is on the supply side. Here, however, the war in Afghanistan provides an excuse, as well as an opportunity to express the hope that peace should eventually enable an eradication programme to begin.

All evidence suggests that illicit drug markets remain strong and that international control of the supply of drugs has been ineffective. The international community, however, persistently finds ways to mask this failure, such as by stating at its meetings that what has been achieved so far is a success. As we have already seen, however, there is a potential fault line running through the international community between those countries that want the Conventions adhered to rigidly and those that are finding ways of sticking to the letter of the Conventions while acting very much against what the hard-line nations would regard as their spirit. Describing progress as success when ground continues to be lost in drug control can therefore be seen as a means of covering up the fault line. It fudges the main issue while making it possible for everyone to agree on something. The cocoon in which the international community has wound around itself is, and will be exceptionally difficult to penetrate.

### Outlook for policy change

For years, the leading Member States of the UN considered the demand for drugs a domestic policy issue. Moreover, the former Soviet bloc claimed to have no drug problems because of the claimed superiority of its political and economic system. Because, within any UN body, one country would not call into question the veracity of any statement made by another country concerning its own domestic situation, this approach prevented and neutralised any criticism of any other country for its policies. Since 1990, domestic demand for drugs has become universally recognised as an international issue, despite the fact that this view was never supported by the foreign affairs ministries of many countries, and continues to be opposed by many of them. Now, however, electoral considerations mean that many governments are in retreat in the sense that they want a domestic policy that is different from that demanded by the Conventions and runs counter to the policies and practices of some powerful countries. Therefore, rather than raise issues that would bring opprobrium from other UN Member States, some governments are quietly going their own way.

There are at least three possible scenarios for change: one is for enough Member States to ask for reconsideration at the Conventions by way of a plenipotentiary



conference to draft a new Convention to replace the others (Bewley-Taylor, 2003). This has been suggested many times before and has always been blocked on the basis of cost. Countries that call for change are not always those countries that will have to bear the brunt of the cost of a large plenipotentiary conference. Something that has not been tried before is for individual Member States to establish an earmarked fund for such a conference, and if it did not meet the required amount in, say, 3 years, then the funds could be repaid. This would circumvent the practical problem of securing funding through existing channels: normally, funding would come from the UN's regular budget, and before a resolution even got to the General Assembly, it would have to go through two standing committees of the General Assembly, namely the fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) and the ACABQ. These committees can be pressured, and their deliberations also depend on who is the chairperson, which in turn can be manipulated, usually by a major donor or two.

The second option for limited change is to pursue the quiet path that is being followed now by several European States, and other countries such as Canada and Australia, but to do so a little more vigorously. They are interpreting the Conventions in the light of their own needs. This occurs especially in relation to the possession of illicit drugs and the use of controlled drugs for medicinal reasons. The advent of HIV/AIDS has led many countries to argue that to limit its spread is more important in the short term than getting everyone off drugs (see e.g. the UK [Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs](#), 1988). The Dutch government's policy is to separate cannabis and hard drug markets through special cafes so that users do not have to buy cannabis from heroin suppliers, who can then be pursued more vigorously. Switzerland and the Netherlands prescribe heroin to heroin addicts, a policy abandoned by psychiatrists in the UK, not through law or political edict. The UK's politicians have re-taken control now and the policy seems likely to be revived. None of these activities are contrary to the Conventions, although the INCB consistently argues that they are. However, the INCB is not the ultimate arbiter of the interpretation of the Conventions although it would give this impression. Even the commentaries on the Conventions do not have legal authority. The INCB chose to criticize Australia's policy of providing injecting rooms. 'Some states unfortunately challenge the policy of the federal government and choose to support policies that run counter to the treaty obligation limiting the use of drugs to medical and scientific purposes only, by establishing heroin injection rooms where illicitly obtained drugs can be injected under supervision.' (INCB, 2000). It also criticised the decision of Canada's Supreme Court to allow the medicinal use of cannabis. However, it is not the place of INCB to question a decision of the Supreme

Court of any country, nor to interfere with the separation of the polity and the judiciary (INCB, 2002). Limited change is therefore possible by those countries willing to ignore the hubris of INCB and the policies of the USA.

The third option is to open up the policy debate to discuss the appropriate level of decision-making. Demand reduction and the consumption of drugs were put on the international agenda from two different perspectives. The requirement that the possession of illicit drugs for personal consumption be made a criminal offence in domestic legislation was an important article in the 1988 Convention. On the other hand for many years members of the GRULAC had argued that the consumer countries must take responsibility for fuelling the production of illicit drugs. Consumer countries could not continue to blame the producer countries, they argued, as the sole cause of the drug problem. But how does this impact on policy? Through aid, many countries now benefit from money, other resources and expertise in trying to tackle their domestic problems of consumption. The difficulty arises for the very reasons that many countries argued that there cannot be a universal policy on demand reduction: domestic conditions are so variable that drug policy needs to be tailored to the country, its culture, and its social and religious customs. The parallel is with alcohol policy where some countries are totally prohibitive, while others keep alcohol under tight control and yet others have a more liberal approach. The key question is whether domestic drug policy is best developed at national, rather than international level. The EU principle of subsidiarity is useful here. Under it, decisions are taken at the lowest possible administrative level, closest to those affected by them. Applying this to drug policy would enable Governments to repatriate their own domestic decision-making on the issue.

From the foregoing, it seems unlikely that a formal change of policy can be brought about before or at the CND of 2003. What might be possible is to establish a policy group with a very low-cost secretariat, with one or even half a person's time initially to keep the group going. The important point is that no government should see the secretariat as 'theirs' and that no one else should see it as belonging to any pressure group or movement.

What may be difficult is to persuade governments that they need yet another policy group on drugs. They already have the CND, major donors and the Dublin Group. In all three, the USA is a major player. What might be needed to advance the debate is a group without the USA and, preferably, without Sweden too. One possibility might be to establish a Southern Europe Group, which might invite other countries such as the Netherlands and possibly the UK to join, but their reaction might also be—who needs yet another drug

policy group? It is possible that countries might prefer to go their own pragmatic ways, but buoyed in the knowledge that many others are traveling the same path.

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*A Note on the United Nations Reference System.* The necessary and sufficient means of referencing a UN document is by its symbol only. e.g. E/CN.7/2001/16, where E means ECOSOC, the parent body of the CND, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 7, its order of establishment as an organisation in the United Nations, 2001, the year of the meeting, and 16, the document number of the documents prepared for this meeting. (The editors give a number to the document in the order that it comes to them. This is not related to the agenda item.) In a similar way the letter A designates the General Assembly. This does not, however, inform the reader of what the reference is about. Therefore fuller details have been included for purposes of clarity. Referencing is by order of the authority, and within that by date. Thus all General Assembly documents are referenced by date, followed by ECOSOC, then CND. In the same way, most of the Conventions could be referred to by their Treaty Series volume and number alone, such as *Treaty Series*, vol. 976, No. 14152, for the 1961 Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, but this again would not aid comprehension. Resolution referencing is equally obscure to the outsider but perfectly clear once explained. CND/45/5 means the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, at its 45th session and resolution number 5. Since the 45th session was in 2002 that was the year of the resolution. It still does not indicate what the resolution was about, hence the inclusion of the titles.

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