

## Rome Consensus 2.0: towards a Humanitarian Drug Policy

Concept Note for a Side Event during the 63rd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Wednesday 4th of March 2020, 9.10 am, BR-A room, Vienna, Austria.

### Background

The non-medical use of controlled substances and related problems have increased in the past 50 years: around 585,000 people are estimated to have died as a result of drug use in 2017, and the rates of overdose deaths continue to rise in North America, Europe and elsewhere. Despite this, there are still few administrations in the world that have a clear understanding of the essential role of care systems in addressing the drug pandemic. Eliminating any barriers to the access of evidence-based services for drug users is the starting point of what we call a humanitarian drug policy.

A health-based drug policy encompasses adequate provision of evidence-based prevention and awareness measures, in order to make more accessible treatment, care and mental health services. Indeed, a Humanitarian Drug Policy takes a realistic and non-judgmental approach to drug consumption: it takes care of people who use substances through treatment and public health measures. Moreover, alternative measures in the criminal justice field represents an effective solution for engaging those who need help for their addiction within a public health approach, empowering people with drug disorders to take control of their addiction, health and lives. Such alternative measures can include pre-arrest deflection and diversion programmes, that avoid incarceration for consumers who needs treatment.

The preambles of all three international drug control Conventions state their concern for ‘the health and welfare of mankind’, and the Outcome Document of the thirtieth Special Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGASS 2016) affirm that appropriate emphasis should be placed on individuals, families, communities and society as a whole, with a view to promoting and protecting the health, safety and well-being of all humanity. Finally, the SDGs represent a unique opportunity to re-consider the humanitarian drug policy an effective strategy to reduce human suffering and to tackle drug dependence in a health-centred approach.

### The event

With this aim, in order to establish a new commitment for a humane and effective drug policy based on evidence, reason and compassion, and free from violence, force and stigmatization, the event will provide an opportunity for Members States and CSOs to learn about the Rome Consensus initiative and reflect together on how a humanitarian based approach could be considered as a valid, alternative and viable strategy in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in line with the Outcome Document of UNGASS 2016.

The Side Event is sponsored by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Partnership on Substance Abuse, and co-sponsored by the Government of Italy, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (Drug Prevention and Health Branch), the World Health Organisation (Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse), and by the co-founder of the Rome Consensus initiative: the Levenson Foundation, the C4 Recovery Foundation, PTACC (The Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative Alliance) and the Villa Maraini Foundation.

### Location

The event will be held at the BR-A room, Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, at 9.10 am, during the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. An early breakfast will be offered.