



International Task Force on Strategic Drug Policy
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STATEMENT ON SO-CALLED ‘HARM REDUCTION’ POLICIES

Representing drug prevention, treatment, and policy organisations from around the world, the International Task Force on Strategic Drug Policy met in Brussels, Belgium on Feb 27-28 to discuss effective drug policy strategies and compose this statement on so-called “harm reduction.” (Signatories on next page)

We support the United Nations position that the goal of national and global drug policies and strategies must be to prevent or stop drug use. We agree with the United Nations that drug demand reduction is a fundamental pillar to sound drug policy. We support abstinence from drug use as a reasonable and achievable goal for public health policy. We support a policy of no use of illegal drugs or destructive use of legal drugs.

Rational drug policies which recognise that the temporary use of measures to reduce harm with the goal of ultimate abstinence are fundamentally different from so-called ‘harm reduction’ drug policies which accept the inevitability of drug use.

The phrase ‘harm reduction’ and its obvious meaning has been hijacked and cynically employed by those whose goal is to legalise drugs. They use the obvious, universal desire to reduce harm to promote the legalisation of drugs. Drug legalisers use the phrase to gain the sympathy of well-meaning people and government officials.

We oppose so-called ‘harm reduction’ strategies as endpoints that promote the false notion that there are safe or responsible ways to use drugs. That is, strategies in which the primary goal is to enable drug users to maintain addictive, destructive, and compulsive behaviour by misleading users about some drug risks while ignoring others. These strategies give the message that society has given up on the addict, condones their drug use, and condemns them to a life of drug dependence. So-called ‘harm reduction’ as a drug strategy undermines drug prevention efforts and messages by taking advantage of drug addiction and deadly diseases like HIV to advance the political agenda of drug legalisation lobbyists and billionaire advocates.

We support the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) position on so-called ‘harm reduction’ that does not support stand alone needle exchange programs and taxpayer-funded shooting galleries (so-called safe injection rooms) because such policies encourage drug use and violate UN Conventions. Article 4 of the 1961 Convention, which:

...obliges State parties to ensure that the production, manufacture import, export, distribution of, trade in, use and possession of, drugs is limited exclusively to medical and scientific purposes. Therefore, from a legal point of view such facilities violate international drug control conventions.

We oppose usurping multi-national treaties and agreements and replacing the goal of preventing and reducing drug use with a strategy by whatever name (e.g. so-called ‘harm reduction’) that seeks to normalise various forms of drug use.

We support comprehensive prevention, treatment, and enforcement strategies to prevent and eliminate illegal drug use, and thereby their undeniable harm. We support harm prevention and harm elimination through expanding treatment, outreach, and social services for drug users, addicts, and those with infectious diseases. We support research into effective outreach and treatment techniques for addict populations.

It is insufficient, illogical, and inhumane to proclaim that drug dependence should be maintained in the name of so-called ‘harm reduction.’ History, science, and reason tell us that drug use *can* be prevented, and drug dependence *can* be overcome and its attendant consequences reduced, if not eliminated.

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