**Intersessional panel discussion on human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem**

*Concept note (as of 24 January 2024)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Monday, 5 February 2024, 10.00 a.m. to 12 p.m. Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva** *(will be broadcast live and archived on* [*https://media.un.org/en/webtv*](https://media.un.org/en/webtv)*)* |
| **Objectives:** | The intersessional panel discussion is aimed at providing space for a constructive and inclusive dialogue on human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem, informed by the findings contained in the report “Human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem”(A/HRC/54/53) prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.  The objectives of the panel include the following:   * To enhance understanding of the specific human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem; * To discuss the impact of such challenges on various community members; * To highlight recent positive developments towards human rights-centred drug policies; * To improve understanding of the key recommendations highlighted in the report, including those related to the development of effective drug policies grounded in human rights. |
| **Chair:** | **H.E. Omar Zniber**, President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening statements:** | **Mr. Volker Türk**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  **H.E. Philbert Johnson**, Chair of the 67th session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs  *(Video message)* |
| **Panellists:** | * **Ms. Christine Stegling**, Deputy Executive Director and Assistant Secretary General of The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) * **Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu**, Director of the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) * **Ms. Ann Fordham,** Executive Director of The International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) * **Ms. Adeeba Kamarulzaman**, Commissioner of The Global Commission on Drug Policy (GCDP) |
| **Outcomes:** | The outcomes are expected to include an improved understanding of the challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem identified in the report, including, among others, the lack of unequal access to treatment and harm reduction; the “war on drugs” and the militarization of drug control; overincarceration and prison overcrowding; the use of the death penalty for drug-related offences; disproportionate impact of punitive drug policies on children and youth, people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples, and women; challenges in humanitarian and other crisis settings related to drug use; and challenges related to the right to a healthy environment. The outcomes will be included into the report to be prepared by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for human rights on the summary of the panel discussion. |
| **Mandate:** | On 4 April 2023, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution [52/24](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G23/081/24/PDF/G2308124.pdf?OpenElement) in which the Council decided to convene an intersessional panel discussion before its fifty-fifth session, in an accessible format, on human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem, informed by the findings contained in the report ([A/HRC/54/53](https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5453-human-rights-challenges-addressing-and-countering-all-aspects)) prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to have a constructive and inclusive dialogue on this issue with relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and specialized United Nations agencies and civil society and affected populations, and with the participation of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The Human Rights Council also requested the High Commissioner to submit a report on the panel discussion to the Council at its fifty-fifth session. |
| **Format:** | The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. The opening statements and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by a two-part interactive discussion and by conclusions from the panellists. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover the opening statements, panellists’ presentations, their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from 14 States and observers, 2 national human rights institution and 4 non-governmental organizations. Each speaker will have one-and-a-half minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. Panellists will respond to questions and comments during the remaining time available.  The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). |
| **Accessibility:** | In an effort to render the Human Rights Council more accessible to persons with disabilities and to promote their full participation in the work of the Council on an equal basis with others, the panel discussion will be made accessible. International sign interpretation and real-time captioning in English will be provided and webcast during the panel discussion. Participants can access live English captioning on the StreamText web page (<https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=CFI-UNOG>) during the event itself. Hearing loops are available for collection from the Secretariat desk. Oral statements may be embossed in Braille from any of the six official languages of the United Nations, upon request and following the procedure described in *The accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities* (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/accessibility>). |
| **Background:** | In its resolution 52/24, the Human Rights Council reaffirmed the commitment made by the General Assembly to respecting, protecting and promoting all human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals and the rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies, to taking the steps necessary to implement the operational recommendations contained in the outcome document of the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem”, in close partnership with the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations and civil society, and to sharing with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs timely information on progress made in the implementation of those recommendations. The resolution also reaffirmed the 2019 Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem.  The Human Rights Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report, in consultation with States, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant United Nations agencies, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, on human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem, to present it to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-fourth session, also in an accessible format, and to share the report with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the policymaking body of the United Nations with prime responsibility for drug control and other drug-related matters, through the appropriate channels.  Pursuant to resolution 52/24 of the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted to the fifty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council in September 2023 the report A/HRC/54/53 entitled “Human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem”. The report was also shared with the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs in December 2023 at the reconvened sixty-sixth session of the Commission.  The report A/HRC/54/53 outlined human rights challenges in addressing and countering key aspects of the world drug problem. According to the report’s findings, the main areas of concern are: the lack of and unequal access to treatment and harm reduction; overincarceration and prison overcrowding; the use of the death penalty for drug-related offences; the disproportionate impact of punitive drug policies on children and youth, people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples, and women; challenges in humanitarian and other crisis settings related to the controlled drugs; challenges related to the right to a healthy environment; and the “war on drugs” and the militarization of drug control. The report also provides an overview of recent positive developments towards human rights-centred drug policies. Finally, the report provides a range of recommendations on the way forward in view of the upcoming midterm review of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration and for contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. |
| **Background documents:** | * Human Rights Council resolution 52/24, [A/HRC/RES/52/53](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G23/081/24/PDF/G2308124.pdf?OpenElement) * Report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on “Human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem”, [A/HRC/54/53](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G23/156/03/PDF/G2315603.pdf?OpenElement) * [The 2019 Ministerial declaration](https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/2019/Ministerial_Declaration.pdf) on strengthening our actions at the national, regional and international levels to accelerate the implementation of our joint commitments to address and counter the world drug problem |