

**ENCOD Executive Committee  
European Coalition for Just and  
Effective Drug Policies**

[www.encod.org](http://www.encod.org) | [office@encod.org](mailto:office@encod.org)  
Twitter: @encod | Facebook: @ENCOD



## **MANIFESTO FOR JUST AND EFFECTIVE DRUG POLICIES**

Vienna, 15 March 1998

On March 15, 1998, 14 NGO's from Europe, Africa and Latin America met in Vienna, Austria, to prepare a common opinion towards the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on Drugs, that would take place 3 months later in New York. After many hours of debate, the result was the adoption of a Manifesto for Just and Effective Drug Policies. This Manifesto has since been signed by hundreds of organisations worldwide and represents the vision of the International Coalition of NGOs for Just and Effective Drug Policies (ICN). In 2004, on the General Assembly of ENCOD in Copenhagen, it was decided to adopt the title of the Manifesto in ENCOD's name: European Coalition for Just and Effective Drug Policies.

The International Coalition of NGOs working for a just and effective policy on drugs would like to present the following Manifesto. The members of this coalition collectively endorse the principles stated in the Manifesto. However, in supporting this document, each of the subscribing organisations is indicating its formal agreement only in those areas where it has specific competence. At the same time, each acknowledges the expertise and authority of the other member organisations in their respective fields.

### **FOR A JUST AND EFFECTIVE POLICY ON DRUGS**

As NGOs\* concerned with the growing impact of the illicit drugs trade, and those policies intended to control it, on global development, we wish to present the following considerations and proposals.

We state the fact that in most countries, drugs control policies currently intend to comply fully with International Conventions on Drugs (1961, 1971 and 1988); that these policies have proven unsuccessful in countering the illicit drugs trade, and, to the contrary, have contributed to its increase; that these policies have had damaging and counter-productive effects; that the weakest links of the illicit drugs chain (drugs consumers, couriers, and rural populations involved in the cultivation of illicit drugs-linked crops) have suffered a disproportionate amount of the negative consequences of drugs control policies.

Among these consequences are:

- a) Violation of basic human rights (political, economic, cultural, health etc.) of the weakest links in the illicit drugs chain;
- b) Criminalisation and discrimination which provoke the marginalisation of drugs consumers and those farmers involved in the illicit cultivation of drugs-linked crops, as well as other poor sectors of society who are involved in the production and trade of illicit drugs as actors with little or no responsibility;
- c) Expenditure of funds destined for law enforcement which would be better spent establishing adequate prevention, harm reduction and treatment programmes;
- d) Damage caused to the environment through unsustainable eradication and substitution methods;
- e) Violation of the national sovereignty of those nations who have signed the International Conventions on Drugs, and in particular of the so-called drugs-producing countries.
- f) Erosion of the Rule of Law through the creation of national and international drugs control bodies that escape democratic control, as well as through the extension of arbitrariness and corruption;

Therefore, we consider these drugs control policies to be inefficient, ineffective, and a major impediment to the introduction of innovative strategies for addressing the issue of illicit drugs both globally and locally. We fear that the reinforcement of current policy will lead to a worsening of the drugs situation, and to an increased lack of credibility of these policies in the opinion of the general public.

Furthermore, we note that the current drugs control policy has taken place in the context of economic globalization and trade liberalisation and that such processes may have created conditions in which the effective implementation of most drugs control policies would be impeded.

We believe that drugs control policies should be subordinated to guiding principles of sound governance, such as those laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on Biodiversity, among other international agreements. We refer in particular to those principles which guarantee respect for social, economic and political rights, and the cultural diversity of all human beings, and those which take into account the sustainability of the planet. We believe that such policies should be dedicated primarily to supporting the creation of structures that would allow for the reduction of eventual harm that the production, trade and consumption of illicit drugs can cause.

Therefore, we propose that the governments of the world take the following measures to improve current drugs control policies, thereby increasing their effectiveness, viability and credibility:

- a) Non-prosecution of the cultivation of drugs-linked crops by small-scale farmers, and implementation of economic, political and social structural measures with the consensual agreement of all sectors concerned in order to offer real alternatives to dependence on the cultivation of such plants;
- b) Suspension of forcible eradication operations and those eradication measures which have negative impacts on the environment and on human health, such as the devastating practice

of aerial fumigation with herbicides and defoliants;

c) De-link military involvement from counter-narcotics efforts, including the demilitarisation of areas of illicit cultivation;

d) Non-prosecution of drugs consumption while looking for means of regulation that are socially and culturally acceptable to those local populations involved, and the implementation of broad measures, including harm reduction, to prevent and treat the problematic consumption of drugs;

e) Abolish any exceptional drugs control legislation which violates universally agreed legal and processual guarantees;

f) Guarantee all rights pertaining to pluralistic democratic societies characterised by tolerance and an openness of spirit, referring in particular to freedom of speech and expression on drugs-related matters for all individuals;

g) Guarantee the sovereignty of nations and peoples over their own legal systems, and avoid, in particular, possible impositions on so-called drugs-producing countries;

h) Guarantee transparency in the use of money and goods confiscated from drugs trafficking, and ensure that such goods and money are used for socially beneficial purposes.

Likewise, we propose the establishment of a new method of classifying psychoactive substances, whether currently licit or illicit, which would be based on scientific data and would evaluate these substances according to the harm they cause to human health.

According to the considerations and proposals put forward in the present text, we also call upon the governments of the world to allow for a broader margin for signatory states of the International Conventions on drugs (1961, 1971, 1988) to experiment locally with alternative policies (which may include steps for the legalisation of certain substances), from which the international community might draw useful lessons in its search for a more just and effective drugs policy.

\* The term NGO is used here in its broadest sense, to include all popular associations, institutions and organisations.

The following organisation signs this Manifesto:

Name:

Address:

Contact person:

Please send your signature to: [office@encod.org](mailto:office@encod.org)