



Promoting fair and
effective criminal justice



Oral Statement

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Thank you Chair,

Penal Reform International, the International Drug Policy Consortium and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network welcome the report of the Office of the High Commissioner on the implementation of the joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem with regard to human rights.

With data suggesting that the number of prisoners exceeds official prison capacity in at least 120 countries, we note that OHCHR have reiterated the fact drug policies are fueling the crisis of prison overcrowding in several regions. These policies include tougher law and order approaches, mandatory use of pre-trial detention, disproportionate lengths of sentences or even the death penalty, frequent delays in the judicial system, poor monitoring of inmate status and release entitlement and the failure to grant parole. Furthermore, the report notes the ongoing concern that many women are imprisoned disproportionately for low-level drug dealing offences.

The recommendation remains the same: alternatives and additional measures and proportionate sentencing as human rights-compliant measures should be adopted by states urgently in response to drug offences. Decriminalisation of drug use is also a key reform to reduce overincarceration, address stigma and health issues.

We acknowledge the work of the Human Rights Council, including this OHCHR report, in documenting the impacts of punitive drug policies on human rights and encourage the human rights system to further address this issue. This can be done by:

- Firstly, assessing and reporting on the implementation of the UNGASS on drugs Outcome Document with regard to human rights-relevant commitments, and;
- Secondly, given the impact of drug policies on human rights, the human rights system should contribute to the work of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to strengthen inter-agency cooperation and UN-wide coherence on drug policies.

The human rights systems' contribution to the 2019 Review of the Plan of Action on International Cooperation to Counter the World Drug Problem, and the implementation of the UNGASS Outcome Document would bring the required human rights perspective in the design and implementation of drug policies.

Distinguished delegates, it is clear from the Office of the High Commissioner's report that such a perspective is desperately required to counter the human rights violations committed under drug policies every day.

Thank you.