

Community Consultation on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Foreign Trade and Development Policy – Response

Harm Reduction International and the **International Drug Policy Consortium** welcome the opportunity to take part in this Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) consultation.

Our comments relate to the following questions:

Question 3: What new priority areas could the government identify? Resources are limited and we need to make choices.

Question 9: In addition to the above, do you have any other recommendations in the area of foreign trade and development cooperation?

At international level, the Government of the Netherlands has played an important role as a champion of pragmatic approaches to drug policy which minimise the health and social harms of drug use and drug policy. The Government's efforts in this area have been significant in supporting lower- and middle-income countries to advance against Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries).

Ahead of the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs, representatives of the Netherlands based in Geneva and Vienna were a vital voice for a new approach to drug policy, moving away from unrealistic goals such as achieving a drug free society. This advocacy, delivered in collaboration with other key governments and with civil society partners including our own organisations, helped to secure a new and more balanced international document on drug policy which welcomes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, committees' member states to ending, by 2030, the epidemics of AIDS and tuberculosis, as well as to combating viral hepatitis and other communicable diseases, inter alia, among people who use drugs, including people who inject drugs (in accordance with the SDG target 3.3) and for the first time includes commitments to health and human rights.

More recently, as preparations begin for the 2019 Commission on Narcotic Drugs Ministerial Segment meeting, the Netherlands First Secretary in Vienna has played a key role in defending the 2016 UNGASS on drugs outcome document as the most recent global consensus, blocking concerted efforts by more conservative states to backslide to earlier, drug-free targets.

At the same time, in Geneva representatives of MoFA have helped to protect dedicated the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) funding aimed at addressing the HIV epidemic among people who inject drugs and have worked with both of our organisations to highlight the political and financial crisis facing harm reduction services around the world. We particularly appreciated the presence of Ambassador Lambert Grijns at key UNAIDS meetings, demonstrating the Netherlands' commitment to this key population at a time when they are largely overlooked.

The MoFA has also demonstrated this commitment by funding harm reduction services and advocacy through its support to the Robert Carr Civil Society Networks Fund, the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria and Dutch-funded programmes such as the Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response (PITCH).

Harm Reduction International and the International Drug Policy Consortium strongly encourage the Netherlands to maintain this international leadership, which not only draws on Dutch domestic experience and expertise of harm reduction and drug policy, but will also help to achieve results in the area of conflict and instability, which the new MoFA policy identifies as a priority.

For further information:

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