

EINDHOVEN DECLARATION ON PROTECTING THE CHILD FROM ILLICIT DRUG USE AND SECURING A DRUG-FREE SOCIETY

Worried by the gradual, but consistent, drift away from the obligation to prevent the initiation or onset of illicit drug use, in favor of complacency bordering on condoning illicit drug use, expressed as 'a right to harm reduction';

Considering that the concept of 'harm reduction' has no formal or commonly agreed definition at the UN level despite its inclusion in various documents;

Cognizant of the provisions of Article 33 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) - the most ratified of all United Nations Human Right treaties and also the only Human Rights Treaty to talk about illicit drugs - which explicitly obliges State Parties to take all necessary steps to ensure that children are protected from the consequences of illicit drug use;

Recognizing that in convoking the three conventions jointly referred to as the 'International Drug Control Conventions', there is global recognition of the need for international benchmarks and parameters to address a problem that is universal in scope and is approached identically in the 1988 Drug Convention as in Article 33 of the CRC;

Observing the deterioration in the quality of life in the family and the community, by extension the society at large, directly linked to addiction, dependence or affliction of one or more members of a family or the community to illicit drugs;

Believing in the enormous collective capacity of parents, extended families, communities, corporate bodies, and society, when well actuated, to effectively address any scourge that threatens the sanctity, sustainability and well-being of society;

The Conference of experts on illicit drug issues (policy, treatment and practice), impacted families, grassroots organizations, and youth organizations participating in the 'Wake-up Drug-Free is the Key' International Conference on Drug Prevention organized by Stichting One Voice One Message, Rise4life and Moedige Moeders in Eindhoven, The Netherlands from 20th – 21st March 2025, served as the venue for deliberations into how best to attain the joint goals of ensuring people are able to live in drug-free environments and that children are protected from illicit drug use and related harms.

National and territorial authorities, multi-state and multilateral agencies and institutions, corporate entities, communities and civil society organizations, and concerned individuals across the world are encouraged to adopt and endorse the following recommendations as ideal towards ensuring that children are protected from illicit drug use and that a drug-free society is attained and sustained.

1. Secure a drug-free society by protecting the right of all, particularly children, to live in a drug-free environment

Respect for the rights of individuals when addressing illicit drug issues, policies and practices which also recognizes and incorporates the overriding interest of communities

and society at-large to exist and prosper in a drug-free environment, remains paramount and should be adhered to.

2. Prioritize prevention of initiation or onset of illicit drug use in all policy and action plans

The reality of prevention as the primary strategy to genuinely reduce harm is unassailable. Cessation, recovery and rehabilitation should be the ultimate goal of any genuine drug treatment efforts.

3. Protect children from exposure and participation in environments trivializing or encouraging illicit drug use

In keeping with the spirit and intendments of Article 33 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) the need to protect children from exposure to every form of illicit drug use, which automatically entails a drug-free environment, should be paramount and infused in all efforts at addressing the drug issue.

4. Mobilize the community to assume ownership and leadership of efforts at addressing illicit drug use

Parents, extended families, communities, grassroots organizations and corporate entities should be encouraged and empowered to take ownership and leadership in efforts and processes at addressing illicit drug use. Illicit drug use adversely impacts on the individual, families and the communities, making it cost-effective to best address as close to its source as possible.

5. Resist and reject the push to normalize illicit drug use

By the zero-tolerance expressed to the following vices against children under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): economic exploitation of children (Article 32); sexual exploitation (Article 34); slavery and trafficking (Article 35); other forms of exploitation (Article 36); torture and other cruel and degrading treatment (Article 37); and use of children in armed conflicts (Article 38), humanity affirms a resolve to protect the child as a cardinal path to protecting and ensuring sustainability of society. Continuing efforts by diverse entities to exclude the protection of children from all aspects of illicit drug use as envisaged in Article 33 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, should be treated as unacceptable. We urge all, just as we say 'No' to the other special protection concerns above, to say 'No' to illicit drug use, and implement policies and practices which advance a zero-tolerance approach to exposing the child to any form of illicit drug use and involvement in the supply side of controlled substances.

6. Unequivocally establish that there is, and can be, no right whatsoever, to detract from the right of the child to a drug-free life and an environment free from drugs. Thus all claims to a so-called 'right to use drugs' can have no legal substance

According to the present international legal treaties, adopted and ratified, children have a legal right to protection from illicitly used drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties and to prevent children's involvement in the production and/or supply side of such substances according to Article 33 CRC. There is no legal provision to confer a right to use illicit drugs.

7. Ensure that regulatory agencies charged with certifying medicines adhere to the scientifically rigorous and time-tested pathways to registering such products when

dealing with controlled substances such as cannabis, LSD, MDMA, psilocybin, and other such substances and their derivatives

Efforts by relevant international and domestic agencies to skip or circumvent established scientific protocols for certifying as medicines products containing historically controlled substances or their derivatives should not be allowed. All products to be certified as medicines must undergo similar and appropriate tests and trials to ensure efficacy and guard against adverse impacts on humans.

Graphically boxed text on the Declaration webpage:

In 2007 the story of a seven year old girl who died in tragic circumstances shocked an entire nation. Her parents, both long-term heroin users, had completely neglected her, leaving her malnourished. They kept her from school and medical care. When she died in squalor, she weighed 9 kilograms - the weight of a one year old child.

In 2013 a 3 month old baby died in a car in burning heat. His Dad had gone in to his workplace to enjoy some down-time, using some marijuana with a co-worker, forgetting the child.

These can happen anywhere in the world. Recreational and casual drug use enables a culture that harms the child in so many different ways. Drug users have choices, children most often don't.