

STATEMENT

Secretary-General's message on International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

New York, 26 June 2015

In September, leaders from around the world will meet at the United Nations to adopt an ambitious new sustainable development agenda to eradicate extreme poverty and provide a life of dignity for all. This ambition, while achievable, must address various obstacles, including the deadly harm to communities and individuals caused by drug trafficking and drug abuse.

Our shared response to this challenge is founded on the international drug control conventions. In full compliance with human rights standards and norms, the United Nations advocates a careful re-balancing of the international policy on controlled drugs. We must consider alternatives to criminalization and incarceration of people who use drugs and focus criminal justice efforts on those involved in supply. We should increase the focus on public health, prevention, treatment and care, as well as on economic, social and cultural strategies.

We must address the nexus between illicit drugs and violence, corruption and terrorism. A balanced approach recognizes the close connections between those who traffic in drugs and criminal networks involved in firearms smuggling, kidnapping, human trafficking and other crimes. This work must also include redoubling efforts to prevent the supply of the precursor chemicals that are the foundation of so many illicit drugs.

Promoting international cooperation through the UN conventions on transnational organized crime and corruption is essential to addressing today's security and development challenges. No criminal should escape justice. The balanced approach calls for unity of purpose within the international community, including the UN, civil society and, most importantly, the world's nations. No country can work in isolation. Comprehensive and integrated efforts at the local, regional and global levels offer the best hope for dealing with the traffickers, while taking care to protect vulnerable groups and marginalized communities.

Efforts against illicit drugs must be connected to our work to promote opportunities through equitable and sustainable development. We must continually strive to make the weak and fragile stronger. The United Nations General Assembly special session on the world drug problem, to be held in April 2016, can advance this cause, with countries sharing knowledge and forging common solutions.

On the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, let us raise awareness about the value of applying a balanced approach to these problems based on an understanding that sustainable development can and must catalyze change across all these fronts.