

General Assembly: Statement by Marlene Mortler, Drug Commissioner of the Federal Government of Germany, in the General Debate of the Special Session on the world drug problem

Apr 20, 2016

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Millions of people around the world are suffering from poverty, crime and violence. While drugs are not the only reason to blame for their plight, they do have an appalling part to play. What do we have to show for the international drug policy of recent decades? Can we continue on our current course?

Ladies and gentlemen,

Of course, we need effective law enforcement to control drug trafficking, money laundering and corruption – in fact, our agencies must be even better networked and co-ordinated internationally. Here we are on common ground. However, law enforcement alone will never be able to resolve the drugs issue. Instead, drug policy must put people and public health first! Dependency is no moral failing, it is a disease. A disease that can be treated with good outcomes. And, what is more, in line with human rights.

Prevention, counselling, harm reduction, substitution treatment – this approach has an excellent track record in Europe. The success is obvious – lower crime rates, less HIV, less hepatitis cases. For drug policy to match the reality on the ground, it must provide for sentences that are reasonable: Here in New York, let us agree to only punish drug offences in line with the proportionality rule. Indeed, let us go one step further and make it clear that the death penalty can never be a tool of human rights-based drug policy!

Prevention, harm reduction and treatment efforts that are people-centered - these are the mainstays of drug policy. Another one is the prosecution of the criminal networks. Yet I am convinced that our drug policy needs another cornerstone: an effective policy for alternative development strategies. People whose existence and livelihood depends on growing drug crops, need real, actual alternatives. They need financial support, they need help to help themselves. Therefore, Germany has set up a new programme called the “Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development“. We are going to introduce it to you here in New York.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Drugs destroy lives, they ruin families, erode social structures and corrupt entire countries. That must change!

Let us finally make human health the focus of our attention!

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