

50th Session of the Human Rights Council

DRUG POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

The 50th Session of the Human Rights Council, to be held between 13 June and 8 July 2022, presents valuable opportunities for raising the human rights impacts of drug control policies worldwide and discussing pathways for reform. Here are some key sessions where drug policy will or can be addressed, and suggestions for recommendations and ways Member States can mainstream drug policy in the session.

ID ON THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ORAL UPDATE ON STATE RESPONSE TO PANDEMICS (RES. 44/2)

13 June, 10 am GVA

This Interactive Dialogue on state responses to pandemics is a valuable opportunity to raise several issues relevant to the [health and human rights impacts of COVID-19](#) and other health emergencies on vulnerable groups. This can also be an important moment to **urge governments to align their positions at the Human Rights Council with those at WHO**, particularly at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) established to negotiate the 'Pandemic Accord'. In this context, it is critical that Member States:

- Highlight the Accord as a crucial tool to [strengthen human rights protections](#) in public health emergencies, particularly for marginalised and criminalised groups such as, people in prison, people who use drugs, and sex workers, among others;
- Reiterate the need to guarantee the right to participation in international fora, by taking urgent and concrete steps to [open the process](#) in a way that promotes the meaningful and effective participation of communities and civil society;
- Encourage more active engagement by the High Commissioner and her Office in the INB process.

ID WITH THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

20 June, 10 am GVA

In this Dialogue, the Special Rapporteur will present her report on [violence and its impact on the right to health](#), which highlights the need to consider how structural violence and the intersection of different forms of discrimination impact the access to health for the most marginalised in society, such as LGBTQ+, sex workers, and people who use drugs. The Rapporteur recommends adopting a "comprehensive health response to violence" [that] takes into consideration the nature and extent of the harm caused by types of violence, as well as the context (that is, conflict, displacement), location (rural, urban) and personal characteristics of the survivors (sex, gender identity, disability, race, ethnicity, age). Furthermore, she recommends that Member States take into account the intersecting forms of discrimination that exacerbate the impact of violence on the survivors' enjoyment of the right to health.

This is an opportunity for Member States to:

- Welcome the report, and reaffirm their commitment to combat any form of interpersonal, structural, and systemic violence that interferes with the right to health, or is carried out in the name of promoting individual and public health;
- **Highlight the urgency to adopt a human rights approach to drug policy**, as an issue which is underpinned by historical and structural violence, affecting the most marginalised and preventing them from accessing essential health services, including harm reduction.

PRESENTATION OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER REPORT ON HIV/AIDS AND HUMAN RIGHTS (Item 3)

27 June, 3 pm GVA

After three years since her last [report on HIV and human rights](#), the High Commissioner will assess recent progresses, opportunities and gaps in HIV/AIDS responses, with a focus on human rights determinants and barriers. This is an important issue for the Council to continue addressing, also in light of recent pushback on evidence-based and human rights-centred HIV/AIDS strategies in multilateral fora.

In its [joint submission to OHCHR](#) ahead of the report, HRI together with IDPC, CDPE and Instituto Ria reviewed the impact of punitive drug control policies on key populations, and on the effectiveness of the HIV/AIDS response, including obstacles to accessing harm reduction and other essential health services, funding policies, and barriers faced by women who use drugs. The submission also highlighted the importance of well-resourced community-led advocacy, and identified some good practices.

Due to the lack of general debates at this Council session, the presentation of the report will not be followed by an Interactive Dialogue. Nevertheless, Member States can use other opportunities (including Dialogues on connected issues and informal discussions) to:

- Welcome the report, and reaffirm the need for strong and concerted efforts to effectively prevent HIV and guarantee equal access to essential services;
- Encourage Member States to repeal ineffective punitive laws, policies, and practices and promote the leadership of communities, including those marginalised and criminalised, in policymaking and implementation of HIV strategies;
- Highlight harm reduction as essential to promoting the right to health, and reiterate the need to close the funding gap for harm reduction.

ID ON HC ORAL PRESENTATION ON UKRAINE (RES. 47/22)

5 July, 3 pm GVA

The human rights situation in Ukraine will be a priority for this Council, discussed in a dedicated Interactive Dialogue (mandated by [Resolution 47/22](#)), as well as under Item 2, pursuant to Resolution [S-34/L.1](#) adopted at the end of the Council's [Special Session](#) "on the deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression", in May 2022.

This is a key opportunity to **highlight the impact of the conflict on the right to health**, particularly of already vulnerable and marginalised populations, and to **recommend all relevant stakeholders to ensure access to healthcare** to all those affected by the conflict, including access to harm reduction and antiretroviral treatment; while reiterating the need to guarantee the protection of civilians, and access to health services, in all situations of conflict.¹

Before the conflict, Ukraine had adopted some of the most [progressive harm reduction practices](#) in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as a way to confront one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in the region. Since the start of the conflict, several sites providing essential services (including opioid agonist therapy) to people who use drugs and people living with HIV closed, amidst systematic attacks against on healthcare; while others - included community-led ones - continued their operations in adapted forms. [According to UNAIDS](#), service provision remains "exceptionally challenging" in conflict-affected areas, and the

¹ Another key reference on this matter is Resolution 49/, which among others: "urges immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, including across conflict lines, ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches all those in need, particularly those in vulnerable situations, that the independence and impartiality of humanitarian agencies are respected, and ensuring the protection of humanitarian personnel and medical personnel engaged exclusively in medical duties;" and "expresses grave concern at the documented harm to the enjoyment of many human rights, including the rights to life, to education, and to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, caused by Russian shelling and bombing in populated areas."

scaling up of non-discriminatory interventions and funding - both in Ukraine and in receiving countries - is urgently needed.

SIDE EVENT: A BLUEPRINT FOR DRUG POLICY REFORM - A HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH TO DRUG CONTROL

21 June, 4 pm GVA

Public event organised by the Global Commission on Drug Policy and sponsored by Switzerland, discussing challenges and opportunities to further align drug policies with human rights.

It will take place at the Maison de la Paix in Geneva, Auditorium 2 (A2) and be live-streamed. Speakers include Commissioners Ruth Dreifuss, Louise Arbour and Juan Manuel Santos, as well as representatives of WHO, UNODC, and the University of Geneva.

More details will be available on the [website of the Global Commission on Drug Policy](#).

SIDE EVENT: WORLD DRUG DAY 2022: PRESENTING UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS' CALL TO ALIGN DRUG POLICIES WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

27 June, 1.15 pm GVA

Held on the UN World Drug Day, this side event will present a new joint statement by UN special mandates with a focus on the human rights dimensions of drug policies. Details on speakers and organisers to be confirmed soon. For more information write to contact@idpc.net.

HOW CAN YOU AND YOUR ORGANISATION PARTICIPATE?

- ✓ Engage your government contacts, in Geneva and in capital, to ensure that they are aware of these opportunities to highlight the human rights impacts of drug control at this Human Rights Council.
- ✓ If you have ECOSOC status, apply to deliver an oral statement. Oral statements can be delivered remotely and must be shorter than 90 seconds. The platform to apply for statements opens on June 9th at 2 PM CEST (link available [here](#)).
- ✓ Follow the sessions live or on-demand on [UN WEBTV](#) and comment on social media, using the hashtag #HRC50.
- ✓ Share information on, and take part in the side events.
- ✓ Share this briefing with colleagues working on human rights and on drug policy in Geneva and around the world, and encourage their active participation.