



To: Ms Ghada Waly, Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

7th March 2022

Dear Ms. Waly,

Subject: Open Letter on UNODC Youth Engagement in Decision Making

We the undersigned organisations are writing to you concerning the limited youth engagement in decision making by the UNODC, particularly at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Both the UNODC and the CND have made numerous commitments to provide meaningful participation of youth and youth related organisations in the development, implementation and evaluation of drug policies and programmes. This is strongly stated in the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document, the 2019 Ministerial Declaration and Resolution 63/4.

We would like to commend the UNODC's Listen First Program for providing countries with a basis to promote a more compassionate approach to youth drug dialogue and education. We believe the core value of this programme is listening to young people, and we would like to see the UNODC implement this throughout its work, particularly in the areas of decision making and policy building. We would be delighted to see youth led organisations, particularly those led by directly affected communities, be consulted and involved in programs such as Listen First. We would also like to commend the UNODC's efforts with the Youth Forum. But as we have highlighted in our 2021 intervention and multiple times in Informal Dialogues, the Youth Forum falls short of meaningful engagement and the lack of transparency surrounding its purpose, selection process and methods cause concern.

Therefore, we wish to have a meeting with you Ms. Waly, to discuss how to build mechanisms for meaningful engagement of young people and youth organisations, not just for the youth but with the youth.

We call on the UNODC and member states to take action on the following issues:

1. Provide clear, transparent, and public processes for the selection of Youth Forum participants, including a set of guidelines and publicly available timeline.
2. Ensure the Youth Forum is a youth-led space, run by youth for youth.
3. Provide the Youth Forum and Youth Forum participants with timely and relevant access to the proceedings of the Commission, including opportunities to engage with the proceedings by making interventions and consulting delegations on youth issues.
4. Provide clear and transparent opportunities for youth organisations to engage with the Youth Forum.
5. Provide clear and transparent opportunities for youth organisations to engage with the UNODC.



6. Include young people and/or youth organisations in national delegations and all decision making delegations or committees.
7. Clearly outline the ways in which UNODC will work to achieve these changes, and the measures being taken to ensure that meaningful youth engagement is effectively embedded as a core aspect for all of the Office's work.

We are eager to work with the UNODC, those involved with the Youth Forum and member states to advise and assist in achieving meaningful youth engagement and participation. Below we have provided some resources and guidelines on youth civic engagement and it would be our pleasure to assist the UNODC or any other body with implementing these guidelines.

We are looking forward to discussing these concerns and recommendations with you.

Yours sensibly,

Jason Ortiz

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jason Ortiz'.

Executive Director
Students for Sensible Drug Policy

Róisín Downes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Róisín Downes'.

Executive Director
Students for Sensible Drug Policy International

Resources

[Engaged and Heard! Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement](#) - UNICEF

[A Guide to Action: Young People's Participation and Civic Engagement](#) - UNICEF

“**Chapter 8: Engaging Youth in Policy Making Processes**”, Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being: A Toolkit, *OECD Development Policy Tools*, OECD (2017), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264283923-en>.



Youth Organisation Signatories

1. Students for Sensible Drug Policy Foundation (United States)
2. Students for Sensible Drug Policy International (International)
3. Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (Canada)
4. Catalyst: Rethinking the Americas (International)
5. Collectif Urgence Toxida (Mauritius)
6. DanceSafe (United States)
7. Drug Free Lumpkin 365 (United States)
8. Instituto RIA (Mexico)
9. International Young Leaders Council (International)
10. International Young Leaders Organization (International)
11. Latinoamerica por una Política Sensata de Drogas (International)
12. Legalize Belarus (Belarus)
13. NGO Re Generation (Serbia)
14. Scouting Ireland (Ireland)
15. Students for Sensible Drug Policy Australia (Australia)
16. The PACT (International)
17. Women In Response to Aids and Drug Addiction (Kenya)
18. Youth RISE (International)
19. YouthRISE Nigeria(Nigeria)
28. Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (International)
29. EuroNPUD - European Network of People who Use Drugs (International)
30. Fields of Green for ALL NPC (South Africa)
31. Foreningen Tryggere Ruspolitikk (Norway)
32. Harm Reduction Australia (Australia)
33. Harm Reduction International (International)
34. Institute for Policy Studies, Drug Policy Project (United States)
35. Integración Social Verter A. C. (Mexico)
36. International Drug Law Advocacy & Resource Center (International)
37. International Drug Policy Consortium (International)
38. International Network of People who Use Drugs (International)
39. Live4Lali (United States)
40. Merchants Quay Ireland (Ireland)
41. Metzineres (Spain)
42. Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (United States)
43. Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies Canada (Canada)
44. National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (United States)
45. Newtown Florist Club (New Zealand)
46. NORMAL Norway (Norway)
47. NZ Drug Foundation (New Zealand)
48. PsyCare Austria (Austria)
49. Recovering Nepal, National Federation of PUD and Drug Serice Orgnizations (Nepal)
50. Release (United Kingdom)
51. Rights Reporter Foundation (Hungary)
52. Romanian Harm Reduction Network (Romania)
53. Skoun, Lebanese Addictions Center (Lebanon)
54. Social Research & Evaluation Pty Limited (Australia)
55. StoptheDrugWar.org (United States)
56. The Perfectly Flawed Foundation (United States)
57. The Porchlight Collective SAP (United States)
58. Transform Drug Policy Foundation (United Kingdom)

Other Signatories

20. Asociación Costarricense para el Estudio e Intervención en Drogas (Costa Rica)
21. AGÊNCIA PIAGET PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO (Portugal)
22. Cannabis Equity IL Coalition (United States)
23. Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation (Canada)
24. Centro de Convivência É de Lei (Brazil)
25. Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign (Ireland)
26. Correaltion-European Harm Reduction Network (International)
27. Episteme. Investigació i Intervenció Social (Spain)



59. Transnational Institute (International)
60. UISCE - Union for Improved Services
Communication and Education (Ireland)
61. UN House Scotland (United Kingdom)
62. UNIDOS - Rede Nacional de Redução de Danos
(Mozambique)
63. West African Drug Policy Network (International)
64. Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network
(Zimbabwe)