



INTERNATIONAL DECLARATION OF UNITY

Harm Reduction and HIV Prevention: Solutions for the Twin Epidemic

An IDU Leadership Statement ¹

XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto, Canada

Today, the world's fastest growing HIV epidemics are among injecting drug users, a fact that is the result of inaction and missteps. After decades of experience and research on drug use and HIV and AIDS, the services we need to deliver are well-known. But such interventions can only be effective if supportive legislation, policies and attitudes are in place to prevent marginalization of drug users, eradicate stigma and discrimination, and ensure respect for human rights.

As leaders in the field of harm reduction and communities of people using drugs and living with HIV, we call on world leaders, policy makers, and communities represented at the International AIDS Conference 2006 to turn their political commitment into actual accountability, setting robust indicators and transparent reporting procedures to measure progress toward the speedy adoption and implementation of evidence-based policies. We urge:

- adequate coverage and low threshold access, including in correctional settings, to sterile injection equipment, condoms, methadone and buprenorphine as essential components of comprehensive HIV prevention and care;
- that drug users and all marginalized populations have equitable access to quality HIV prevention, medical care, and highly active antiretroviral treatment, that concrete country-level and global targets be established, and that progress be monitored;
- meaningful involvement of drug users at all levels of planning and policy, and financial support for their organizations;
- an end to disenfranchisement and human rights violations of drug users including mass imprisonment, punitive and degrading drug treatment programs, and the widespread use of withdrawal as a form of coercion.

Further, UNAIDS cannot fight the HIV epidemic when it faces counterproductive efforts from within the UN system. We demand that:

- the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as the UN agency tasked with leadership on HIV prevention among drug users, ensure that effective community protection against HIV is not ignored in the name of drug control and law enforcement;
- the International Narcotics Control Board, as the body charged with responsibility for monitoring implementation of the drug treaties, publicly and unambiguously endorse and promote harm reduction as an approach consistent with those treaties and monitor global delivery of substitution treatment and HIV prevention measures for drug users;
- the international community and all major UN bodies involved in drugs and HIV, approach drug use as a health and social matter which also requires some law enforcement interventions rather than being primarily a matter of criminal justice.

1) This statement follows the *IDU Leadership Statement* issued at the 2004 International AIDS Conference in Vancouver, CA, which can be viewed online at www.ahrn.net/library_upload/uploadfile/Leadership.pdf; the original Statement is based on a wide range of political declarations as identified in the endnotes. The current Declaration builds on recommendations published in a declaration prepared by the International Activists Who Use Drugs at the ICRDRH in Vancouver, Canada: *Why the world needs an international network of activists who use drugs* available online at www.brugerforeningen.dk/bfny.nsf/Pagesuk/DE15097B28F4D8CFC1257182007BE09A?OpenDocument&S=UK.