



UNGASS 2008 CND Anniversary Session



Antonio Maria Costa & Hans Lundborg with the Anniversary cake!

“We have to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time”

Antonio Maria Costa, UNODC

The 50th Anniversary Session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs took place in Vienna on 12-16 March 2007. Government representatives from about 150 countries went through a voluminous programme. This year's Session was presided by the Swedish ambassador Hans Lundborg, who enjoys support of the majority of the delegations. The Commission decides on such matters as what narcotic drugs need to be included into the UN schedules and how to classify them, how to control trading in precursors or what regulations are needed for travel across countries' borders with narcotic drugs from a controlled schedule, prescribed by a physician.

The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs is the governing body of the UNDCP (United Nations International Drug Control Programme) which in turn is part of UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) headed by Antonio Maria Costa. All these

organisations are located in Vienna.

Besides the government delegations from different countries, many other institutes and organisations used the opportunity to have their say during this week. Vienna NGO Committee is one of them. VNGOC is an association of non-governmental organisations, which work with narcotic drugs issues. VNGOC met for a separate conference during the 50th Session and had a pleasure of Antonio Maria Costa addressing the delegates.

Mr Costa criticised those NGOs that are of the opinion that the resources instead of being aimed at prevention and supply reduction should be directed to reducing drug related harm.

- Why so, Mr Costa exclaimed, shouldn't we be able to walk and chew gum at the same time? There is no reason for us not to be capable of both working with prevention, supply reduction and at the same time offer functioning treatment opportunities to those who got stuck in the drug abuse, Mr Costa said.

Read more about CND and drug policies

British newspaper apologises

The British newspaper The Independent on Sunday apologises for its long campaign for decriminalisation of cannabis. “If only we had known then what we can reveal today...” the leading article admits.

The paper have finally learned about addiction, mental health problems and psychosis caused by the drug which led to that a growing number of users, especially teenage smokers of cannabis, require drug treatment.

In 1997 The Independent, under 'the auspices' of its editor Rosie Boycott, started a campaign for de facto legalisation of cannabis. The paper also supported a march in London in 1998 in order to promote the use of cannabis. Furthermore, Rosie Boycott and 'her' paper initiated a campaign in order to gather signatures in support of its stance on cannabis.

“If only we had known then what we can reveal today...”

Independent on Sunday

The newspaper lead a consensus, which the Government could not resist, downgrading the legal status of cannabis from class B to class C – the fact that the news medium is now regretting.

★ ECAD NEWS

Today, The Independent on Sunday calls attention to quite different evidence, namely that more than 22,000 people in UK were treated for cannabis addiction last year. The number of people under 18 in treatment almost doubled from about 5,000 in 2005 to 9,600 in 2006.

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UNGASS and NGOs: Evaluation

During the 50th Anniversary Session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs that took place in Vienna on 12-16 March 2007, representatives of NGOs from all around the world met in order to prepare a conference in connection to UNGASS 2008.

UNGASS stands for The United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Narcotic Drugs that takes place every tenth year. UNGASS will evaluate whether the goals set up 10 years ago, in 1998 in New York, were reached and decide about the direction of work for the next period.

With support of EU and UN, the Vienna NGO Committee will arrange a series of regional conferences around the world. These conferences will provide an opportunity for NGOs to make their own evaluation of what has been done during the last 10 years within the field of drug combat. They will also give their view on how cooperation between the authorities and NGOs is functioning and come up with proposals for the future drug policies.

As a member of the Programme Committee, ECAD is co-responsible for the organising of the regional conference for NGOs from Eastern Europe and Central Asia. These conferences for about 25-30 persons will preliminarily take place in the middle of September 2007 in Kiev, Ukraine and in the middle of October 2007 in Belgrade, Serbia.

Representatives for both harm reduction approach to drug policies and more restrictive line will be invited to share their views at these conferences.

UN concerned over global drug development

Development of the world drug situation, control over chemicals used for producing narcotic drugs (precursors), legal status of the drug injection facilities – these are the questions discussed at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, CND's, 50th Session that took place in Vienna on 12-16 March 2007.

The UN meetings are recurrently used by the drug-liberal NGO-groups, lobbying for an inspection and a modification of the UN Drug Treaties. An attempt made at the 46th Session of CND in 2003 failed. For the time being there is no evidence of any government intending to raise this question at the UN.

The recent UN report published by the INCB criticised The Netherlands, Germany and Norway along with some other countries for continuing to operate facilities where drug abusers can inject drugs under overview of medical staff, with an excuse of reducing harm. Such facilities

We don't share goals with the harm reduction movement

At times, drug policy is as many other policies an enterprise that is rather difficult to understand. For an uninitiated it might seem that there is a lot of mere arguing and intern disputing about details. "Why, everybody is after the same thing", as one of my friends put it. If it was so, then some of these discussions were indeed unnecessary.

When goals are the same, there always are different ideas how to reach them. It is necessary to agree upon a common goal in order to have a constructive discussion about methods.

"Drug issue demands resources. These resources are limited. That is why the most important is to reduce harm associated with drugs and **not** that the number of people using drugs decreases", it is what Mike Trace from Beckly Foundation, one of the prominent figures of the legalisation movement, said recently at a reception.

We, who are used to easily agree that we should make our children do not try drugs, have no discussion partner there. We, who think that the entire production chain for illegal drugs needs to be fought, speak to deaf ears. Even in regard to harm reduction, which is a treacherous term, we miss each other semantically. If I would like the drug treatment's supreme goal to aim at that an abuser should get his/her health fully back, become completely drug free and live independently, their goals are much lower than that.

We do not share the same goals and that is why any discussion about methods is worthless.

Antonio Maria Costa said that we should be able to chew gum and walk at the same time. Unfortunately, the legalisation movement manages only chew gum.

Tomas Hallberg,

Reflection after CND's 50th Session in Vienna 12-16 March 2006

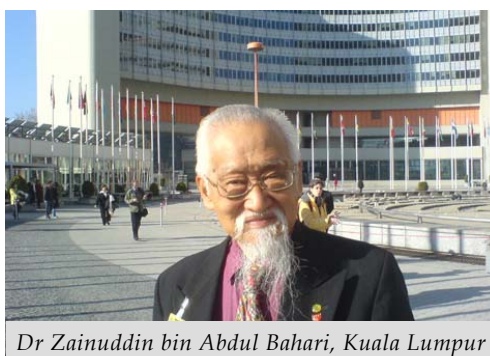
ties are a violation of the International Drug Control Treaties, the UN repeatedly points out.

Another country, whose development concerns UN, is Bolivia that argues for a traditional cultivation of coca bush. The tradition is supported by the country's president Evo Morales who used to grow coca bush himself.

A special subject for debate at the CND Session was sharpening of the control over the trade with precursors. There are concerns that a legal export of precursors can easily turn into an illegal drug trafficking. China for example is a large export country but its control system is defective. The EU countries present a united block at the CND in regard to this problem. The EU refers to its own system where export companies are obliged to demand certificate and to make sure that the receiver is serious.



Delegates from many countries meet in Vienna



Dr Zainuddin bin Abdul Bahari, Kuala Lumpur



Tomas Hallberg, ECAD

British newspaper regrets campaign for decriminalisation of cannabis

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The leading writer of the newspaper Jonathan Owen points out at "skunk", the highly potent cannabis strain with a 25-fold increase in the amount of the main psychoactive ingredient, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), as an explanation for the increased problem. New research published in middle of March in the Lancet magazine indicates that cannabis is more dangerous than LCD and ecstasy. The newspaper supported by some drug experts calls to press the Government in order to open up for a new drug debate and advertises "new thinking".

Professor Colin Blakemore, chief of the Medical Research Council, who backed the original campaign for cannabis to be decriminalised, has also "sobered up" and changed his mind.

He said: "The link between cannabis and psychosis is quite clear now; it wasn't 10 years ago."

A drug liberal bastion was forced to face down the truth! Now the newspaper calls for a tougher stance to be taken and the drug's original classification to be restored.



Of special interest is the unprecedented contribution to a newspaper debate by the Executive Director of UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), Antonio Maria Costa, who writes the following in The Independent on Sunday on March 25.

"Seldom does a leading newspaper take a high-profile stand in favour of drug liberalisation. It is less common still for such a campaign to be publicly retracted. The Independent on Sunday deserves great credit for having the courage to change its mind on cannabis on the basis of mounting evidence of just how dangerous the world's most popular illicit drug has become.

It cannot have been an easy decision. Many readers undoubtedly subscribe to the vague, laissez-faire tolerance of cannabis increasingly prevalent among educated people in Western countries. That growing consensus needs to be challenged.

Supporters of legalisation would have us believe that cannabis is a gentle, harmless substance that gives users little more than a sense of mellow euphoria and hurts no one else. It's not an unattractive image. Sellers of "skunk" know better. Trawl through websites offering cannabis seeds for sale and you will find brand names such as Armageddon, AK-47 and White Widow. ...

Amid all the libertarian talk about the right of individuals to engage in dangerous practices provided no one else gets hurt, certain key facts

Facts: Cannabis cultivation 'booming' in Britain

Cannabis cultivation is booming in Britain, with over the last six months production sites being raided at the rate of at least three a day. More than 1,500 cannabis farms have been closed down in London alone in the last two years, three times the amount shut down between 2003-2005. The research, published by DrugScope, reveals the staggering number of cannabis farms in operation, as police and cannabis growers adopt new tactics to detect and protect the crop. Ten years ago only 11 per cent of cannabis sold in the UK was grown here, a figure that has now passed 60 per cent. But the success of law

are easily forgotten. First, cannabis is a dangerous drug - not just to the individuals who use it. People who drive under the influence of cannabis put others at risk. ...

Second, drug control works. More than a century of universally accepted restrictions on heroin and cocaine have prevented a pandemic. Global levels of drug addiction - think of the opium dens of the 19th century - have dropped dramatically in the past 100 years. In the past 10 years or so, they have remained stable. The drug problem is being contained and our societies are safer and healthier as a result.

"The Independent on Sunday deserves great credit for having the courage to change its mind on cannabis on the basis of mounting evidence of just how dangerous the world's most popular illicit drug has become. "

Antonio Maria Costa

The exception is cannabis, the weakest link in the chain. It is a weed that grows under the most varied conditions in many countries, which makes supply control difficult. But we can tackle demand, especially among the young. ...

I am increasingly convinced countries get the drug problem they deserve. Those that invest political capital - backed by adequate resources - in prevention, treatment and rehabilitation are rewarded with significantly lower rates of drug abuse.

Sweden is an excellent example. Drug use is just a third of the European average while spending on drug control is three times the EU average. For three decades, Sweden has had consistent and coherent drug-control policies, regardless of which party is in power. There is a strong emphasis on prevention, drug laws have been progressively tightened, and extensive treatment and rehabilitation opportunities are available to users. The police take drug crime seriously.

Governments and societies must keep their nerve and avoid being swayed by misguided notions of tolerance. They must not lose sight of the fact that illicit drugs are dangerous - that is why the world agreed to restrict them. ...

Public attitudes need to change. The IoS has provided a valuable lead. It is time to explode the myth of cannabis as a "soft" drug."

enforcement in hitting local supplies has led to a 'cannabis drought' in some areas. In recent months there have been reports of cannabis being adulterated, apparently to increase its weight. Police say that 80 per cent of farms have more than 50 plants, with an average of 400 plants recovered per raid. Analysis of nationwide police raids reveals around two-thirds to three-quarters of cannabis farms were run by Vietnamese criminal gangs. Many of the growers caught, some as young as 15, are illegal immigrants.

/drugscope.org.uk

Drug Reports: UNODC & INCB

UNODC Annual Report 2007

The UNODC Annual Report for 2007 (covering activities in 2006) provides an overview of the organization's activities worldwide. It shows the range of activities undertaken in the field and at headquarters to make the world safer from illicit drugs and international organized crime. 2006 was a mixed year for international drug control. The good news was the remarkable success of the Golden Triangle countries, particularly Laos, in slashing illicit opium production to near-negligible levels. But those gains were eclipsed by the bad news from Afghanistan, the year's big story. Afghan opium production, which accounts for 92 per cent of total world supply, surged 49 per cent to a record 6,100 tonnes. UNODC warned Western countries to prepare for a possible increase in drug overdoses as a result of the increased purity of heroin.

INCB Annual Report 2006

On March 1, the Vienna-based UN agency INCB (International Narcotics Control Board) published its Annual Report 2006.

The report gives an overview of drug related issues on all continents. The present report also focuses on

- The deterioration of the drug situation in Afghanistan
- Counterfeit medicines flooding markets

- The abuse of prescription drugs, and
- How drugs fuel slimming craze

From the Report: Europe

- The INCB Board notes with concern that, despite its ongoing dialogue with the governments concerned, **rooms for abuse of drugs, including by injection**, remain in operation in a number of European countries in violation of the international drug control treaties. The Board encourages all governments to ensure that efficient measures are taken to address drug abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS in compliance with their obligation under the international drug control treaties.

- Europe has become the second largest illicit market for **cocaine** in the world. Cocaine abusers account for about 10 per cent of drug abusers admitted for treatment in the European Union.

- **Heroin** abuse has remained largely stable and even declined in Western and Central Europe, while the level of abuse has increased in Eastern Europe, particularly in members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and countries in South-Eastern Europe along the Balkan trafficking route.

The Report is available at http://www.incb.org/incb/annual_report_2006.html

50 per cent of needles from needle exchanges used to inject steroids

In an article for the paper Scotland on Sunday, the former director of the anti-doping programme at UK Sport, Michelle Verroken, writes, "Of the total number of needles exchanged in the UK last year, around 50 per cent were used to inject heroin or other illegal drugs, but the remaining 50 – the longer thicker needles able to penetrate deep into muscle groups – were used to inject steroids."

*Our European societies have experimented and evaluated both tolerance and intolerance to illicit drug use and drug abuse. It is our reflection upon this which guides us towards non-use. This in regard to our **neighbourhoods'** well being.*



ECAD is Europe's leading organization promoting a drug free Europe and representing millions of European citizens. Drug dealing and drug abuse cause enormous problems in Europe. Nations and their citizens are affected by the consequences of drug abuse. ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives and efforts against drug abuse supporting the United Nations Conventions which oppose legalization and promote policies to eradicate drug abuse worldwide. Has your city joined ECAD?

Scottish Children Dealing Heroin

Drugs are horrible...in every instance, but stories like this drive home the fact that the battle against drug trafficking and abuse must continue, if for no other reason, in order to protect our children.

Recently, a Scottish website reported that over 300 children were charged with dealing drugs over the last 3 years. Shockingly, all were under age 16, and some were as young as 10. The drugs being dealt ranged from heroin to amphetamines and everything in between. Scottish officials said they found the children were being supplied by older dealers and also by stealing from parents or older siblings that use drugs. Most of the kids were not themselves addicts, just business persons. In revealing these appalling statistics, Scottish officials also took to task those who want drugs legalized. Graeme Pearson, head of the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency, said: "Prominent people and celebrities who call for drugs to be decriminalised are not helping. Young people are using what they say as a justification for trying drugs." Children learn from the examples set by their parents but are also influenced by celebrities and others in the spotlight. That is why we must remain vigilant in educating our children about the dangers of drugs.

The drug free America report

EU and UN improve co-operation in the drug field

The EU Drug Centre EMCDDA and the UN drug control body UNODC informed that they have approved a new cooperation programme and produced new tools for the countries to collect more compatible data about persons requiring drug treatment.

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