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**Twenty-seventh Meeting of Heads of  
National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies,  
Latin America and the Caribbean**  
Guatemala City, 2-6 October 2017

**Draft report**

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**Addendum**

**Consideration of topics by working groups**

**(c) Alternatives to imprisonment for certain offences as demand reduction strategies that promote public health and safety**

**The working group on the above topic met during the sixth and seventh meetings, held on 4 and 5 October 2017. In its consideration of the topic in question, the working group formulated the following observations:**

1. Prison populations have significantly increased for drug related offences in most countries in the region, resulting in overcrowding, affecting the health of prisoners and other basic human rights.
2. The imprisonment of offenders convicted for minor drug offences is disproportionate to the gravity of many of the offences and has limited impact upon reducing illicit drug use, relapse and recidivism requiring a significant increase of budgets dedicated to prison administration.
3. Drug dependence is a complex multifactorial health disorder characterized by its chronic and relapsing nature that can be treated.
4. While some progress has been made in respect to the implementation of alternatives to imprisonment for drug offences, States are yet to explore a broader range of alternatives to imprisonment options.
5. Efforts made to implement alternatives to imprisonment are in alignment with existing criminal procedure reforms across the region that promote a greater use of alternatives and stimulate conflict mediation and resolution in a way that satisfies all parties involved.

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\* Available only in English, French and Spanish, which are the working languages of the subsidiary body.



**The working group drew up the following conclusions:**

1. Imprisoning those who have committed drug-related crimes of a minor nature is often a disproportionate punishment that does not prevent drug use.
2. Implementing the United Nations Standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice in respect to the use of alternatives to imprisonment for cases of a lesser gravity is an effective policy to address prison overcrowding, health-related issues and results in a reduction of costs for the State.
3. As drug use disorders are complex, multifactorial chronic health disorders characterized by relapses, it is necessary to take a comprehensive, multidisciplinary evidence-based response that includes harm reduction policies.
4. Any responses should enhance coordination between Health and Criminal Justice Systems.
5. Greater efforts need to be effected to compile and analyse data about the persons with drug abuse disorders in contact with the justice system and about the impact of alternatives measures to imprisonment, in order to define adequate policies and strategies.

**The working group adopted the following recommendations:**

1. Governments are encouraged to make full use of alternatives to imprisonment for people with drug use disorders in contact with the criminal justice system, particularly at the time of their arrest and at the pretrial stage, in order to provide evidence-based drug treatment thus reducing relapse, decreasing recidivism and crime rate.
  2. Governments are encouraged to employ a multidisciplinary approach in providing treatment and rehabilitation as an alternative to conviction or punishment and to enhance institutional coordination between justice, health, and social services authorities.
  3. Governments shall adopt measures to avoid barriers to access to effective treatments so as to guarantee that treatment is available, accessible, affordable, evidence-based and diversified to special needs of women, children and other vulnerable groups, while ensuring the implementation of a zero stigma and discrimination policy.
  4. Governments are encouraged to sensitize criminal justice officials to make appropriate use of the different alternative to imprisonment available under their internal legal framework that could be applied to persons related to minor drug cases and to enable the State to provide a social response to the original conflict from a human rights and public health approach.
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