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5th September 2025

**URGENT CALL FOR CONTINUED WHO LEADERSHIP ON
HARM REDUCTION FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS**

CC: Dr Jeremy Farrar (Assistant Director-General): farrarj@who.int

CC: Dr Tereza Kasaeva (Director, Department on HIV, TB, Hepatitis and STIs): kasaevat@who.int

CC: Dr Razia Pendse (Chef de Cabinet): pendsera@who.int

Dear Dr Ghebreyesus,

On behalf of the 177 civil society and community-led organisations listed below, we are writing to urge the World Health Organization to maintain and resource its strong presence, expert capacity, normative guidance and diplomatic voice within the harm reduction, human rights and drug policy spaces, to ensure the continuation of its crucial work in support of harm reduction and people who use drugs, and also through ensuring meaningful involvement of people who use drugs at all levels.

The WHO was the first UN agency to fully support and embrace the harm reduction approach through its guidance and policy, and is a global champion of, and leader for, effective policies and programmes that protect the rights and lives of people who use drugs from preventable harms such as HIV, hepatitis C, overdose and drug-related deaths.

We recognise that this is a time of unprecedented challenges for the WHO, as it is for health and human rights movements and stakeholders across the globe. However, **we urge you to ensure that current funding cuts and other geopolitical pressures are not allowed to weaken the WHO's role, its political will and its position as the normative leader for harm reduction and programmes for people who use drugs.**

The progress and achievements that have been made to date are down to the unparalleled technical expertise, experience and commitment of the Department of Global HIV, Hepatitis and Sexually Transmitted Infections Programmes, especially their commitment to ensure the meaningful involvement of people who use drugs and other key populations in decision-making processes and co-developing key guidance and policies.¹ In a context where harm reduction and community-led programmes on the ground are being decimated, and where other UN agencies and the Global Fund are facing their own funding crises, the continued leadership and expertise of the WHO in this field is more important now than it has ever been. The dedicated WHO secretariat capacity on harm reduction has directly contributed to the steady increase in countries adopting harm reduction policies and

¹ See, for example: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240052390> and <https://inpu.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/INPU-Who-Values-Preferences-Study-Report.pdf>

programmes around the world.² Losing this capacity, or weakening it through merger with other mandates or departments would be disastrous for our community and would further jeopardise harm reduction services and coverage.

Even before the recent pushback and defunding of human rights, health and development agendas, harm reduction was already facing a crisis of funding and political leadership – despite the overwhelming evidence for its effectiveness.³ People who inject drugs were already 14 times more likely to acquire HIV than the rest of the adult population.⁴ The funding for harm reduction in low- and middle-income countries was already just 6% of the estimated annual resource needs. Service delivery was hampered by disinformation and political resistance. Sweeping cuts to foreign aid this year have had an additional, immediate and devastating effect on programmes and those who access them, as well as on the available support for civil society and community-led advocacy, including community networking and empowerment.⁵ Now more than ever, we need the World Health Organization to lead, protect and promote harm reduction and champion evidence-based, rights-based policies and programmes for people who use drugs. A weakened WHO role would inevitably translate into setbacks not only for harm reduction, but for the broader fight against infectious diseases.

One timely opportunity to demonstrate the WHO leadership in this respect is through the 2025 Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) Resolution 68/6 (“Strengthening the international drug control system: a path to effective implementation”), which has mandated the appointment of a 19-person panel review the implementation of drug policy commitments and “consider what changes may be required in the existing machinery for the international control of narcotic drugs”.⁶ As per the resolution, one of the 19 panellists is to be nominated by the Director-General of the WHO, with the other places being filled by the regional groups of member states, the UN Secretary-General and the INCB. **This is a paramount opportunity to ensure that the WHO nominee is someone with specific expertise in, and an active champion of, harm reduction and human rights, and particularly someone who has a strong connection and relationship with the community of people who use drugs.**

As your civil society and community partners and allies, we look forward to continuing to support and collaborate with the WHO, and we urge your immediate consideration and action on the issues above due to the acute nature of our concerns and the potential impacts on people who use drugs around the world. We are here to support the WHO throughout these processes, and you can always rely on us as we bring the unique voices, expertise and lived experiences of people who use drugs at the global, regional and national levels.

For further information and any clarification, do not hesitate to contact the International Network of People who Use Drugs (office@inpud.net), Harm Reduction International (office@hri.global) and/or the International Drug Policy Consortium (contact@idpc.net).

Yours faithfully, on behalf of the following organisations:

1. Aavash Samuha (AS)
2. Academy of Perinatal Harm Reduction (APHR)
3. Acción Antiprohibicionista Ecuador
4. Achievable Souls Community Support Initiative (ASCSI)
5. Africa Network of People Who Use Drugs (AfricaNPUD)

² <https://hri.global/flagship-research/the-global-state-of-harm-reduction/>

³ <https://hri.global/flagship-research/funding-for-harm-reduction/cost-of-complacency/>

⁴ https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/2025-global-aids-update-JC3153_en.pdf

⁵ https://inpud.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/The-Human-Cost-of-Policy-Shifts_EN.pdf

⁶ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Drug_Resolutions/2020-2029/2025/Res_68_6.pdf

6. Akzept e.V.
7. Alacannabis
8. ALEPH
9. Alliance des Jeunes pour un Développement Endogène (AJDE)
10. Alliance Nationale des Communautés pour la Santé (ANCS) Sénégal
11. Any Positive Change Inc.
12. Asociación Bienestar y Desarrollo (ABD)
13. Asociación Costarricense para el Estudio e Intervención en Drogas (ACEID)
14. Association DrogArt
15. Association Sida Paroles
16. Australian Festival Association (AFA)
17. Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL)
18. Autamaimasa Health Foundation
19. Azadî
20. BASIS - Beratung, Arbeit, Jugend & Kultur e.V.
21. Being Alive/People with AIDS Action Coalition
22. Benzo Research Project (BRP)
23. Berkeley Needle Exchange Emergency Distribution (Berkeley NEED)
24. BerLUN e.V.
25. Black Heart Harm Reduction (BHHR)
26. Burundi Association of People who Use Drugs (BAPUD)
27. Catalan Network of People who Use Drugs (CATNPUD)
28. The Caucus on Harm Reduction and Drug Policy Reforms (CHRDPR)
29. Centre for Equitable Health Support and Rights Initiative (CEHESRI)
30. Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation (CDPE)
31. Centro de Orientación e Investigación Integral (COIN)
32. Chhattisgarh Drug Users Forum (CDUF)
33. Comité/Club UNESCO Universitaire pour la Lutte Contre la Drogue et autres pandémies (CLUCOD)
34. Community Health Project Los Angeles
35. Community Peers for Health and Environment Organisation (CPHEO)
36. Conectas Direitos Humanos
37. Confederacion de Federaciones de Asociaciones Cannábicas (ConFAC)
38. Correlation - European Harm Reduction Network (C-EHRN)
39. Crainn
40. Crew 2000
41. DAP Health
42. Decisive Minds
43. Delhi Drug Users Network (DUN)
44. Development And Welfare Now (DAWN)
45. DIBS / Safer Dance Basel
46. Doctors for Drug Policy Reform (D4DPR)
47. Dristi Nepal
48. Drug Free and Preventive Healthcare Organisation (DAPHO)
49. Drug Harm Reduction Advocacy Network Nigeria (DHRAN)
50. Drug Policy Alliance
51. Drug Policy Australia
52. Drug Policy Modelling Program, UNSW
53. Drug Policy Network South East Europe (DPNSEE)
54. Drug Science
55. Društvo AREAL

56. É de Lei Drop-In Centre
57. Estonian Association of People Using Psychotropic Substances (LUNEST)
58. Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA)
59. Eurasian Network of People who Use Drugs (ENPUD)
60. European Network of People who Use Drugs (EuroNPUD)
61. Fédération Addiction
62. Fédération bruxelloise de institutions spécialisée en matière de drogues et addictions (FEDA Bxl)
63. Fixpunkt e.V.
64. Forum Droghe
65. GAT Portugal
66. Harm Reduction Australia (HRA)
67. Harm Reduction International (HRI)
68. Harm Reduction Nurses Association / L'association des infirmiers et infirmières en réduction des méfaits (HRNA/AIIRM)
69. Harm Reduction Sisters (HRS)
70. Haven Addiction Centre Kiambu (HACK)
71. HAYAT
72. Health Action Support Initiative (HASI)
73. Healthy Life Advancement Promotion Initiative (HLAPI)
74. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR)
75. Hero's Health Community Support Initiative (HHCSI)
76. HIV Legal Network
77. HPLGBT
78. IDUCARE Inc
79. Indian Drug Users' Forum (IDUF)
80. Infodrog / RADIX
81. Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), Drug Policy Project
82. Instituto RIA, AC.
83. Instituto Terra, Trabalho e Cidadania (ITTC)
84. Intercambios Civil Association
85. International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)
86. International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD)
87. Iowa Harm Reduction Coalition (IHRC)
88. The J Healthcare Initiative (JHI)
89. John Mordaunt Trust
90. Justice Project Pakistan (JPP)
91. Kadashi Initiatives on Equity Health Empowerment and Education
92. Kenya Network of People who Use Drugs (KeNPUD)
93. Kisumu Network of Women who Use Drugs
94. KUZA TRUST
95. Kykeon Analytics
96. L'Isola di Arran ODV
97. La Società della Ragione
98. La Testería
99. Lab57 – Alchemica – Associazione di Promozione Sociale
100. Lace Boot Initiative For Women Who Use Drugs (LaBWWUD)
101. Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) Europe
102. Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) Netherlands
103. Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) UK
104. Legalize NL

105. Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat (LBHM)
106. Les Barbies Testeadoras del Bajío
107. Let's Budvocate
108. Live Again Recovery Center Organization
109. Maharashtra Drug Users Forum
110. Mainline
111. Malawi Drug Platform
112. Mandragora Foundation
113. Mantes La Galette (MLG 78)
114. Metzineres SCCL
115. Middle East and North Africa Network of People Who Use Drugs (MENANPUD)
116. Mistletoe Community Health and Right Initiative (MCHARI)
117. My Brain My Choice Initiative (MBMC)
118. National Harm Reduction Network (NHRN), India
119. Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA)
120. Network of Asian People who Use Drugs (NAPUD)
121. Next Generation Lawyers - Kenya
122. NEXT Harm Reduction Inc (NEXT Distro)
123. NGO Re Generation
124. NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA)
125. New Zealand Drug Foundation
126. Pakana Pride Enterprises
127. Pat Widow and Orphanage Care Foundation (PATWOC)
128. Peer Network of Users of Psychoactive Substances (PeerNUPS), Greece
129. Peer To Peer Supporting Group
130. Penington Institute
131. People Against Risks of Using Drugs Association (PARUDA)
132. Perkumpulan Peduli Kebijakan NAPZA (PPKN)
133. Perkumpulan Rumah Cemara
134. Persaudaraan Korban Napza Indonesia (PKNI)
135. PREKURSOR Foundation
136. PsyCare Ireland: Welfare and Harm Reduction CLG
137. Queensland Injectors Health Network (QuIHN) Ltd
138. RECLAIM Collective
139. Recovering Nepal (RN)
140. The Reformed Drug and Substance Abuse Initiative (REDSAI)
141. Release
142. Renaissance Africaine (RENAF RDC)
143. RESET - Drugs Policy and Human Rights
144. Responsabilité Espoir Vie Solidarité (REVS PLUS)
145. Rising Beyond the Bottle
146. Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha (SANGRAM)
147. Sex Workers Outreach Project, New South Wales (SWOP NSW)
148. Skoun Lebanese Addictions Center
149. SLN ODISHA
150. SLO Bangers Syringe Exchange and Overdose Prevention Program (SLOSEP)
151. SMART on Drugs
152. Soft Pure Heart Health Givers Empowerment Initiative (SPHHGEI)
153. Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP) International
154. Suar Perempuan Lingkar Napza Nusantara (SPINN) Foundation
155. Support Persons in Trauma Initiative (SPITI)

156. Service Users Rights in Action (SURIA), Dublin
157. Taimako Health Support Initiative (THSiN)
158. Tamil Nadu Drug Users Forum (TNDUF)
159. Tandika Youths Rehabilitation and Handcraft Group (TAYOHAG)
160. Tanzania Network for People who Use Drugs (TaNPUD)
161. Tasmanian Users Health & Support League (TUHSL)
162. The Sidewalk Project (TSP)
163. Transform Drug Policy Foundation
164. Unharm
165. Verein Z6 - Drogenarbeit Z6
166. West Africa Drug Policy Network (WADPN)
167. Women and Harm Reduction International Network (WHRIN)
168. Women in Response to HIV/AIDS and Drug Addiction (WRADA)
169. Women Initiative against Vulnerability for Harm Reduction (WI-VHR)
170. Workers for Ethical Substances Use Policy (WESUP)
171. Yayasan Gearakan Mandiri Pita Merah (GEMPITA)
172. Youth Awake for Better Society (YABS)
173. Youth RISE
174. Youth Watch Society (YOWSO)
175. Yuba Harm Reduction Collective (YHRC)
176. Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network (ZCLDN)
177. Zinnok Initiative For Women And Children