

PAHO STATEMENT TO THE 60TH CICAD ORDINARY SESSION

(Nassau, Bahamas. 2-4 November, 2016)

Good afternoon Mr. President and Delegates attending the 60th Ordinary Session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD).

On behalf of Dr. Carissa Etienne, Director of the Pan American Health Organization and Regional Director of the World Health Organization for the Americas, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to salute this Commission.

Substance use and related disorders pose a significant burden on public health, with tremendous social and economic costs to society. This is not restricted to the dependence disorders, but includes drug-related violence, various communicable diseases, such as HIV, Hepatitis, and Tuberculosis, and non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular and liver disease. They also contribute to increase incidence of injuries and death, such as those resulting from impaired driving.

The importance of a public health approach in addressing the world drug problem has been widely recognized by Member States, globally and regionally in the Americas, as a key element to achieve the goal of balanced, comprehensive and inclusive drug policies.

This approach relies on the principles of equity, social justice and human rights; it places emphasis on countries and populations in greatest need, with due consideration to the economic, social, and environmental determinants of health.

In this regard, five critical elements have been identified:

1. Prevention of drug use and reduction of vulnerability and risks;
2. Treatment and care of people with drug use disorders;
3. Prevention and management of harms associated with drug use;
4. Access to controlled medicines; and
5. Monitoring and evaluation.

All of these elements are included in the PAHO/WHO Strategy and Plan of Action on Psychoactive Substance Use and Public Health.

PAHO has been working in partnership with other relevant international and national agencies to promote comprehensive guidance in drug policies, focusing on the strengthening of intersectoral

collaboration between health sector and national drug control commissions. Special attention should be given to the progressive trend to legalize cannabis for medical and recreational purposes, the introduction of new psychoactive substances in the drug market, and the increasing violence associated with the illicit drug business.

PAHO is committed to continue strengthening its strategic collaboration with CICAD to support Member States in the monitoring and evaluation of the determinants and consequences of substance use problems in the Americas, as well as in the development and implementation of effective public health responses.

Thank you very much.

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