



Centros de  
Integración  
Juvenil, A.C.

## Centros de Integración Juvenil participates in the 66<sup>th</sup> Commission on Narcotic Drugs

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*CND Plenary session.*

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) held the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), where *Centros de Integración Juvenil (CIJ)* participated as an observer institution, member of the Mexican delegation invited to this international meeting.

During its regular session, the Commission reviews and analyzes

the world drug situation in order to make decisions and resolutions on the subject, including relevant topics related to the supply and demand of psychoactive substances, addiction prevention and treatment, and mental health, as well as emerging and cross-cutting issues.

This high-level meeting is organized in a series of plenary sessions that are simultaneously ac-

companied by side events where items related to the drug phenomenon are discussed. These are organized by Member States, United Nations (UN) entities, intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations (NGO). During the Commission, there are spaces for debate, some of which are aimed at young people such as the Youth Forum and the Vienna NGO Com-



*Miguel Camilo Ruiz Blanco, presidential figure of the CND 66<sup>th</sup> Session.*

mittee on Drugs (VNGOC) Ad-Hoc Working Group. The elections of the VNGOC Board are also held and the inclusion of new psychoactive substances in the international control lists is decided.

### The new CND Chair

Ambassador Miguel Camilo Ruiz Blanco participated as the presidential figure of the event for the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the CND. The ambassador is the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the UN and International Organizations in Vienna. This will be the second time Colombia occupies this position.

In the Commission opening, the chairman noted that “we have recently moved from the COVID-19 crisis to the war in Ukraine, to high levels of inflation and global food shortages. Each new crisis seems to diminish the priority we give to a persistent crisis that severely undermines our societies: the production and consumption of illicit drugs.”

He encouraged all attendees to work together to identify what can be improved and how to collab-

orate more efficiently and effectively. The diversity of the actors present, as well as the solidity and thoroughness of the contributions, give hope that the Commission will work to take firm and decisive steps in the search for actions in drug policies that are appropriate to the current situation.

### Highlights of the debate

Throughout the side events, the participants discussed current topics that have an impact on the global issue of drugs. Among these, the intervention of Gady Zabicky, National Commissioner against Addictions, was highlighted. He commented that the drug-centric discourse must be left behind, as people and their human rights must be placed at the center.

Other topics on the agenda included stigmatization, where it was emphasized that public policies and measures are needed to help counteract the stigma of substance use. In this regard, parents who use drugs generally identify this problem as a challenge despite the fact that they also have to

fight against drug use and the guilt of not being able to take care of their children responsibly. Along the same lines, drug use among women was discussed as they suffer a double stigmatization: the first for being women and the second for being drug users.

In relation to gender, it was noted that recent studies conducted by various organizations have pointed out that there is a lack of resources and treatment available for women who use substances. Therapeutic and legal support is usually denied to those who are users and suffer violence. Despite this, it is documented that police forces are the most common perpetrators of violence against women. In the same vein, transgender people are criminalized even more than women, simply because of their gender identity. Likewise, the judiciary system tends to implement a greater use of force, which increases the vulnerability of this group. In this regard, organizations such as UNODC were urged to support gender perspective training for health professionals involved in the treatment of substance use. It was also noted that material on gender-based violence should be included in harm reduction programs and that there must be coordination between legislation and public policies with a gender perspective.

### Strengthening of pharmaceuticals is a necessity

With regard to the availability and access to controlled substances, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) invited the main morphine-producing countries to increase the amount destined for palliative care and to give low and middle-income countries the pos-



sibility of purchasing affordable morphine instead of expensive synthetic opioids. In addition, it recommended strengthening national and/or regional production of generic pharmaceuticals to make them available in more countries at lower prices. Therefore, international cooperation was urged to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, preventing their detour for other uses.

On the subject of mental health, most reports have come to the same conclusion: flexible services should be provided with good communication between mental health and substance abuse teams, staffed by well-trained and competent professionals. However, the concept of co-occurring substance use and mental disorders is much broader. Thus, prevention and early intervention should be explored.

There is a consensus in the American continent that mental health care should include everything, from preventive programs to harm reduction. These elements should emphasize addressing the needs of individuals, not the policies that have historically favored prohibition.

In addition, the project entitled “Children whose parents use drugs” was discussed, which is a topic implemented by the Council of Europe’s International Cooperation Group on Drugs and Addiction (Pompidou Group) and is aimed at both children and parents who are affected by substance use, and focuses on the programs, services and practices existing in the different states to address the problem. Mexico participated in the second phase of this project along with ten other countries. As part of the findings of this side event, it was noted that children with substance-using parents typically present anxiety,



*Galilea Martínez, volunteer from CIJ Puerto Vallarta.*

depression, anger, guilt and shame, as they often feel afraid to speak up and ask for help.

### Youth Forum

The Youth Forum was held in a face-to-face format within the framework of the CND. The main objective of the Forum is to bring together young people involved in the field of drug use prevention, health promotion and youth empowerment. The Forum’s purpose is for participants to learn from their peers’ experiences.

The 2023 edition had the participation of 34 young people from 28 countries from all regions of the world including Mexico, which was represented by a young CIJ collaborator, Galilea Martínez, a volunteer from CIJ Puerto Vallarta.

Martínez is a psychology student at the University of Guadalajara and has developed prevention activities in information sessions, debates and learning dynamics in the community through CIJ.

**“We, as young leaders, generate a big impact on the development of future generations. I have learned and I believe that substance use is a reflection of the necessities of our society. In my work with children and teenagers, I have seen that evidence-based information transmitted with empathy can make a big difference”: CIJ Puerto Vallarta volunteer**

The Forum’s agenda included activities that helped the participants engage in dialogue and engage in group dynamics where they discussed topics related to

substance use and its environmental influence, as well as prevention and health promotion. They also had the opportunity to attend a side event organized by the government of Japan.

Finally, the Youth Declaration was presented, in which the participants pointed out that the foundations of substance use prevention must be laid through education, social programs and policies to prevent said use before it begins. Accordingly, they called on States to consult with youth, as this population sector offers a unique vision of drug use problems that is constantly evolving, fosters interconnected awareness without borders and ensures long-term sustainability.

*Breaking the cycle of substance use tomorrow requires youth engagement in prevention today.*

*Youth Declaration, 2023.*

## VNGOC Ad-Hoc Youth Working Group

The VNGOC Youth Ad-Hoc Working Group was carried out as part of the commitment to involve young people in prevention of substance use and treatment of mental health issues. This is an open discussion with young people between 18 and 32 years old who are part of a civil society organization at the global level. CIJ was represented at this event by Gabriela Velasco, a member of the International Relations Department.

The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the barriers that exist for youth to have greater participation in international policy forums related to the prevention and consumption of substances, as well as to participate in the identi-

fication of new areas of opportunity and provide a new perspective on these issues.

Among the points of the debate was the need for digital spaces to help inform the young population about the various public participation events related to drug use prevention, where their opinions can be heard and taken into account for the implementation of more and better policies at regional and global levels.

Inclusion at all levels and access to these symposiums for all populations was another of the proposals put forward by the participants, with the aim of amplifying the different perspectives among youth from all regions, including those who belong to or are part of an indigenous community. In addition, the importance of creating global networks that connect this population through regional or continental groups focused on prevention and public policies at the global level was discussed. It was also proposed to invite young people who have had substance use problems to share their experiences and help to continue promoting a culture of prevention.

## Future prospects

The 2024 session of the CND will be particularly relevant, as in 2019 the Commission adopted the 2019 Ministerial Declaration. In it, the member states agreed to review in 2029 the progress made in the implementation of international commitments on drug policies, with a mid-term review in 2024. This Ministerial Declaration seeks to strengthen actions at the national, regional and international levels in order to accelerate compliance with the joint commitments made to address and counteract the global drug problem.

**“This will be a good opportunity not only to reflect on the progress achieved in recent years, but also to rethink everything that is not being done properly”:  
CND chairman**



*Youth Forum participants.*