



EURASIAN HARM REDUCTION NETWORK

EHRN



ЕВРАЗИЙСКАЯ СЕТЬ СНИЖЕНИЯ ВРЕДА

ECCSB

NGO STATEMENT on behalf of the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) regarding the thematic debate Section (i) (Shared responsibility as a basis for an integrated, balanced and sustainable approach in the fight against drugs through domestic and international policies)

Presented at the 51th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Plenary Meeting, Vienna, 12 March, 2008.

Presenter:

Mr. Balázs Dénes

member of the Steering Committee of EHRN

Executive Director of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU)

Text: Peter Sarosi (HCLU)

Thank you Mr. Chair! It is a big pleasure to speak on behalf of the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and I appreciate the opportunity to address the delegates.

As a representative of civil society, I am very pleased to see the positive changes in the language and approach of this meeting.

At this session there is a lot of talk about the need of balanced approach in drug policies, which means a balance between supply and demand reduction, criminal justice and public health. But in reality, ladies and gentlemen, we rarely find the appropriate balance in the reports of UN institutions or in the reports of INCB, neither in drug policy budgets and activities in local, national and international level. While UNODC and INCB praises balanced approach, it seems to be more concerned about celebrities snorting cocaine than about the health and human rights of millions of injecting drug users living with HIV – without access to life-saving services and medications. The Executive Director of UNODC criticises fashion houses because their models use drugs just as a millions of other young people do, but it fails to criticise Russia for prohibiting methadone substitution treatment for IDUs, a medication included to the List of Essential Medicines by WHO two years ago. Most countries praised by INCB for their achievements in the

field of supply reduction do not comply with international standards with regard to human rights and do not introduce or scale up cost-effective harm reduction services, which can reduce the risks of crime, death and disease. I cannot find the balance in my own country, Hungary, where government spends 50 million dollars on supply reduction and only 12 million dollars on demand and harm reduction, and thousands of occasional marijuana users are coerced into treatment which they don't need, while heroin addicts are put on waiting lists to get into much needed treatment.

The current drug control system does neither seem to have a balanced and evidence based approach, nor can it „contain“ the drug problem, as Mr. Costa put it in his speech. The drug control system overemphasizes criminal justice at the expense of human rights and public health, governments allocate resources in a disproportionate way on supply reduction at the expense of demand and harm reduction. I would like to use this opportunity to ask delegates to urge their governments not to simply use „balanced approach“ as an empty slogan, but to put as much emphasis on public health as on criminal justice in terms of legislation, budget and coordination.

Thank you for your kind attention!