

PRESS RELEASES

Good Drug Policy Is Good AIDS Policy, Say International Experts

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MEXICO CITY—A press conference entitled “The Relation Between Drug Policy and HIV: A Global and Latin American Perspective,” part of the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, will address the serious consequences that ineffective drug policy has on a worldwide level, particularly in Latin America and Mexico.

The press conference, organized by Colectivo por una Política Integral Hacia las drogas—CUPIHD (Collective for an Integral Drug Policy) and the Angelica Foundation, features five international experts on AIDS, harm reduction, and drug policy, who will discuss how punitive drug policies have been unsuccessful and have led to the increase of HIV and the violation of human rights.

Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, will speak on the necessity to align drug policy with public health. “In so many countries users are imprisoned, put into labor camps, and denied HIV treatment. Clearly, such situations keep drug users far away from any services,” said Kasia Malinowska, director of the OSI Global Drug Policy Program.

“Even though AIDS and drugs are two key public health issues in Mexico, they are dealt with in completely different manners,” says Elsa Conde, a federal congresswoman in Mexico and a member of CUPIHD. “While the response to AIDS is information, education and treatment, the response to drugs are punitive policies that criminalize those that use them without educating and informing them on the effects of each drug and the ways to reduce the risks involved in their use. This results in violence, the spread of HIV and other serious diseases, and the violation of the fundamental rights to health and information.”

Alejandro Madrazo, also a member of CUPIHD, affirms that “It is essential that harm reduction be a part of government programs and public policies in regards to health in Mexico. This is a fundamental part of the Mexican government’s fulfillment of its obligation to guarantee the right to health of its population, an obligation it has under the numerous international human rights treaties it has ratified and article 4 of the Mexican Constitution.”

“Argentina offers hope that a reasonable discussion about drug policy can happen in Latin America “ says Graciela Touzé, director of Intercambios Asociación Civil, a leader organization in harm reduction, referring to the support recently given by President Cristina Kirchner to reviewing drug policy in Argentina, including decriminalization of drug possession for personal use and the inclusion of harm reduction strategies.

The press conference will be held on Wednesday, August 6, 4:00 p.m. in Room 2 (Mayas), Media Centre, Hall A, Level 1, Centro Banamex.

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