



THE CIVIL SOCIETY TASK FORCE ON DRUGS

**GLOBAL CONSULTATION
FOR THE MINISTERIAL SEGMENT
OF THE 62ND SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS, MARCH 2019**

FULL RESULTS REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Civil Society Task Force on drugs (CSTF) conducted an online consultation of 461 Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) respondents from 100 countries and territories in the fall of 2018. The consultation covered three key areas: (1) progress since the adoption of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem; (2) progress since the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs; and (3) alignment of NGO respondents' work with the Sustainable Development Goals. The consultation was designed to enhance and supplement the results of the global regional and thematic consultations conducted during the lead up to UNGASS 2016¹.

Key Findings:

➤ The majority of respondents endorsed extending the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action goals to 2029, even though there had been some or significant regression perceived over the past decade with achieving the goals.

➤ Respondents from different regions had notably different experiences of the drug policy landscape over the past decade, which was reflected in their diverging assessments of progress and regression. These are explored more deeply in the report.

➤ The majority (75%) of NGO respondents felt that their work advanced or supported the aims of one or more of the five goals.

➤ Respondent views were most divided on Goal 1 for illicit crop reduction: 41 percent of respondents disagreed with extending this goal to 2029 and offered alternative goals in its place.

➤ The most consensus among respondents (73% agreement) was for the extension of Goal 5 to reduce money laundering.

➤ The respondents were also divided in their assessment of the goal of a “World Free of Drug Abuse” – with the largest number of respondents (50% of the sample) indicating that this goal should not be extended beyond 2019

➤ The vast majority (70%) of respondents indicated that the entire UNGASS Outcome Document should be integrated into the next declaration or outcome, since it is the most recent consensus document.

➤ The majority of respondents (75%) indicated that the UNGASS Outcome Document was a helpful tool for their work.

➤ However, most respondents had not yet begun to see any notable local or national changes relating to the UNGASS Outcome Document and its operational recommendations.

➤ Almost all (95%) of respondents felt as though their NGO's work addresses at least one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and 19% of respondents felt as though they work towards all 17 Goals.

➤ 92 percent of respondents reported that their NGO worked to address SDG 3, which focuses upon health and well-being.

➤ Other SDGs most advanced and supported by the respondents were those on peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16), gender equality (Goal 5), quality education (Goal 4), and tackling poverty (Goal 1).

➤ These results show that much of the work of civil society organizations in the area of drugs can actually be defined as cross-cutting.

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¹Consultation results can be found at <https://www.cstfndrugs.org/cstf-for-ungass-2016/activities/global-civil-society-drug-survey/>

INTRODUCTION

The Civil Society Task Force on drugs (CSTF)² conducted an online consultation in the fall of 2018 in order to solicit civil society input in advance of the Ministerial Segment of the 62nd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) to be held in March 2019³. An initiative of the Vienna and New York NGO Committees on Drugs, the CSTF is an international, regionally and thematically representative group of 35 civil society leaders (see below) formed to ensure the

comprehensive, structured, meaningful and balanced participation of civil society in the UN General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem (UNGASS) held in 2016. The CSTF was reconvened in March 2018 in preparation for the Ministerial Segment, and conducted its online consultation in September 2018. The results of this consultation are summarized in this report and are intended to contribute to discussions during the Ministerial Segment with the goal of including the voices of NGOs from around the world in this important process.

² More information on the CSTF can be found at www.cstfondrugs.org

³ More information on the 2019 Ministerial Segment can be found at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/2019/2019-high-level-ministerial-segment.html>

The 35 members of the Civil Society Task Force on drugs



METHODOLOGY

Survey Development and Aims

This report summarizes data from a mixed methods study of NGOs around the world currently working in the area of drugs- including direct service provision, policy advocacy, research, prevention, harm reduction, education, and other arenas. The members of the CSTF collaboratively developed the consultation survey questions during the summer of 2018, with assistance from a consultant, Sheila P Vakharia PhD, and made them into a web-based survey with both quantitative and open-ended questions. The consultation covered three key areas:

- (1) progress since the adoption of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem (2009 Political Declaration)⁴;
- (2) progress since the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS)⁵ on drugs; and
- (3) alignment of NGO respondents' work with the Sustainable Development Goals contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁶. The consultation is meant to enhance and supplement the results of the global regional and thematic consultations conducted during the lead up to UNGASS 2016⁷.

⁴ Available at <https://www.unodc.org/documents/ungass2016/V0984963-English.pdf>

⁵ Outcome document available at <https://www.unodc.org/documents/postungass2016/outcome/V1603301-E.pdf>

⁶ For more information see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

⁷ The final report of the CSTF for UNGASS 2016 is available at <https://www.cstfondrugs.org/cstf-for-ungass-2016/documentation/cstf-reports-2016/>

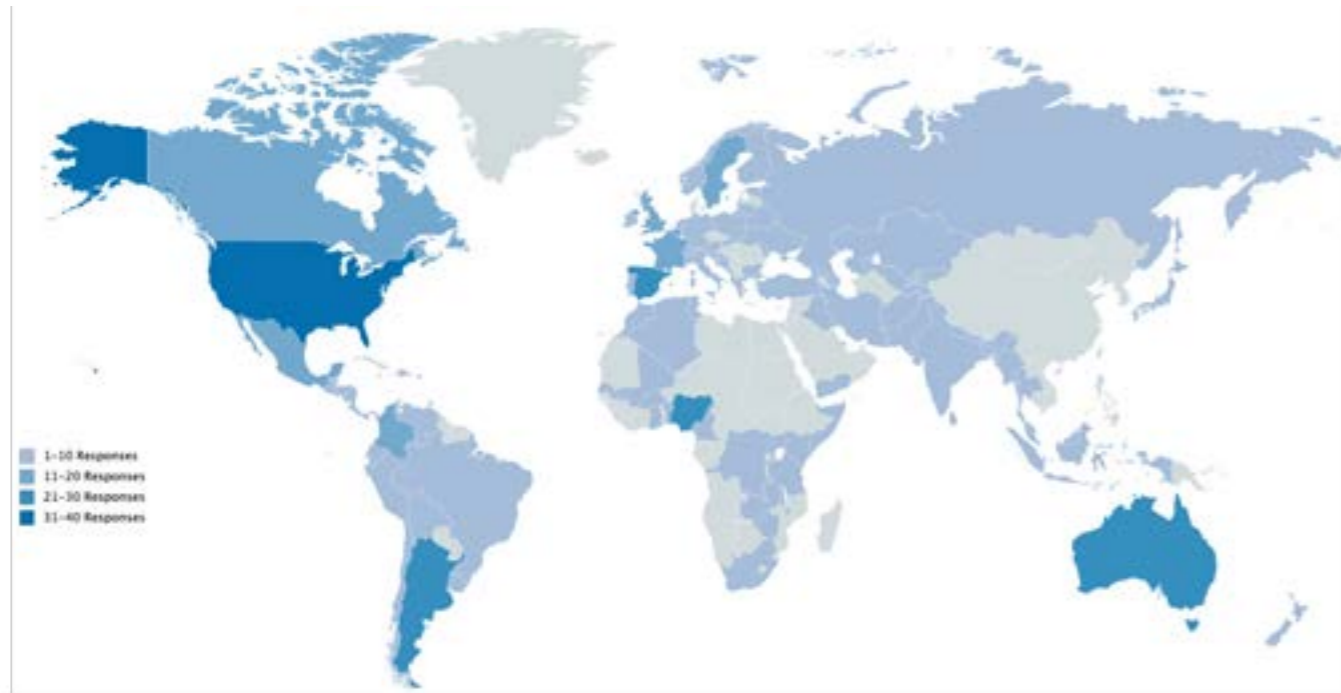
Data Collection and Data Analysis

The web link to the survey was circulated via emails, websites and social media by the CSTF, by the New York and Vienna NGO Committees on Drugs, and by numerous partners and networks around the world between October 2nd and November 4th 2018. The final instrument was translated into the six United Nations languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The final survey instrument was comprised of 94 questions in total, with Likert scale questions and open-ended text-based questions to elicit more in-depth and richer responses in certain areas. A 'skip logic' was incorporated into the survey so that some 'no' responses led to respondents skipping over follow-up questions. Qualitative survey responses in languages other than English were translated for analysis alongside the quantitative responses by a translation agency.

RESULTS

Survey Completion

Figure 1: Countries that responded to the consultation



A survey was considered to be ‘complete’ if the respondent completed all of the questions in the survey that they were asked. This survey had an average completion rate of 36.2% across the entire sample. Although the survey was started by 1,339 respondents, it was completed by 485 respondents. Of these, a final sample of 461 responses were eligible for this analysis (many of the ineligible responses were duplicates or responses from individuals who were not affiliated with any NGOs). The surveys with the highest completion rates were in French (42.7%) and Spanish (42.4%), while the highest number of respondents completed the survey in English (n= 296). Almost half of the responses were from Western Europe (25%), and from Latin America and the Caribbean (22%). In total, responses were collected from 100 countries and territories from around the world (see Figure 1). The largest number of countries and territories responded from Eurasia

(21), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (19) and Latin America and the Caribbean (19) (see Appendix).

Respondent Characteristics

The 461 completed and eligible survey responses represent a diverse range of NGOs from across the world – see Table 1. The majority of respondents work at the national level and are involved in direct service work with people who use drugs and other community members. Most respondents’ NGOs were relatively small, employing 10 or fewer employees, and almost 40% of NGOs have been in existence for over 20 years. The expertise and areas of focus of the NGOs was broad and the two most common areas of work were in prevention (25.4%) and harm reduction (18.9%).

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics.

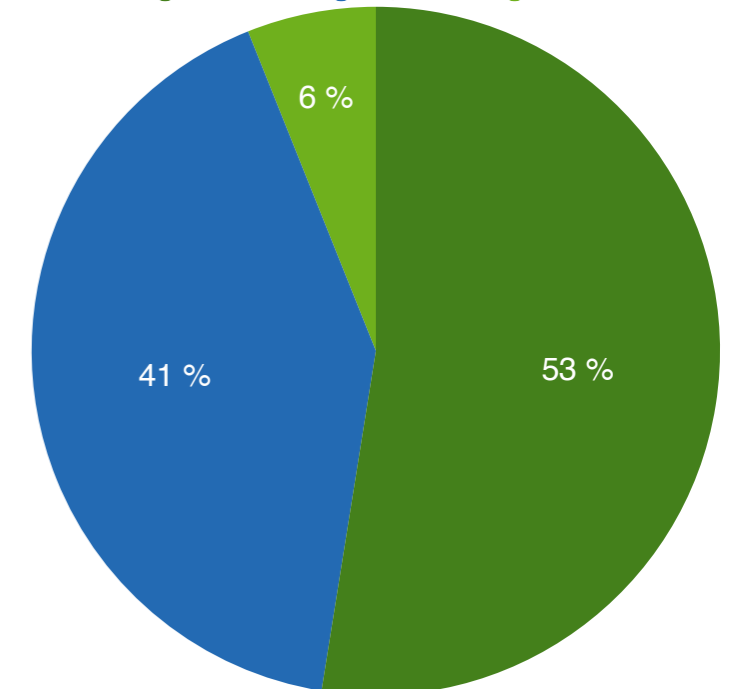
	Total sample N = 461 (%)
TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	
Direct Services Organization	182 (39.5%)
Advocacy Organization	147 (31.9%)
Network/Federation	71 (15.4%)
Other	61 (13.2%)
LEVEL OF OPERATION	
Local level	113 (24.5%)
National level	215 (46.6%)
International level	133 (28.9%)
NUMBER OF STAFF	
Less than 5	210 (45.5%)
5-10	83 (18.0%)
11-20	57 (12.4%)
21-50	55 (11.9%)
More than 50	65 (14.1%)
NUMBER OF YEARS IN OPERATION	
Less than 2 years	43 (10.0%)
2-5 years	52 (11.3%)
5-10 years	73 (15.8%)
11-20 years	112 (24.3%)
More than 20 years	181 (39.3%)
ORGANIZATIONAL FOCUS	
Prevention	117 (25.4%)
Harm Reduction	87 (18.9%)
Treatment	35 (7.6%)
Rehabilitation	25 (5.4%)
Coordination	12 (2.6%)
Access to controlled medicines	8 (1.7%)
Criminal Justice Reform	11 (2.4%)
Drug Law Reform	39 (8.5%)
Human Rights	44 (9.5%)
Other	83 (18.0%)

2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action

Respondents were asked a series of questions to assess the progress made since 2009 on each goal of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action⁸, and whether each should be extended towards 2029. If a respondent indicated ‘no’ and that a goal should not be extended, they were then asked to suggest an alternative goal. Despite significant portions of the sample reporting some or significant regression towards accomplishing these goals, over half of respondents supported the extension of each of the current goals to 2029.

The first goal is: **“By 2019, eliminate or reduce significantly and measurably the illicit cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis plant.”** Almost half of the sample (49%) believed there had been some or significant regression over the past

Graph 1. Should goal 1 be extended?



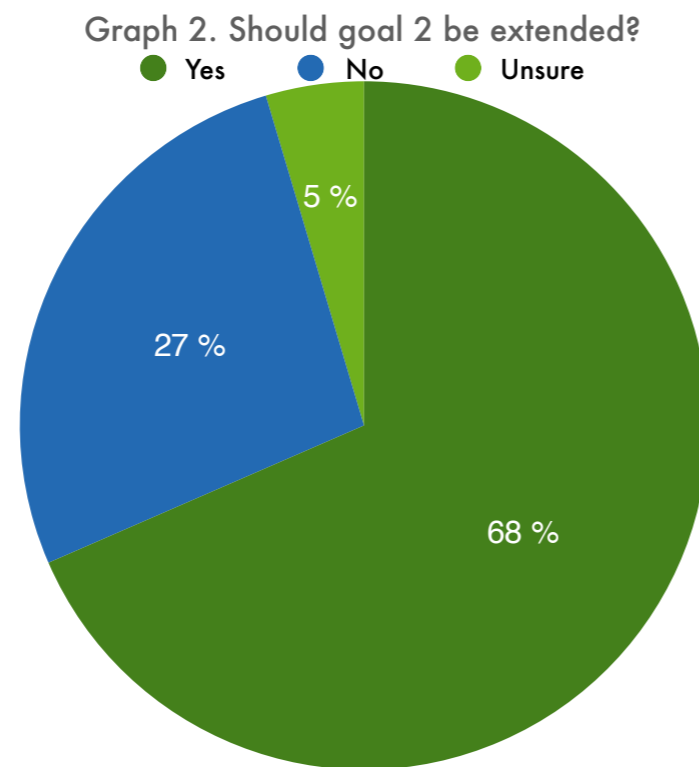
⁸ Available at https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/com-missions/CND/Political_Declarations/Political-Declarations_2009-Declaration.html

decade with regards to illicit crop cultivation. However, the sample was most divided on whether this goal should be extended through to 2029 in comparison to the other four goals. As shown in Graph 1, the majority (53%) agreed that Goal 1 should be extended through 2029, 41% said that it should not be continued, and 6% were unsure. Notably, almost 40% of the respondents who felt there had been some or significant regression in illicit crop cultivation still indicated that they believed the goal should be extended to 2029. This both demonstrates the range of opinions within the sample and also a general feeling that this remains a worthy goal.

A follow-up question was asked to the 41% of respondents who stated that this goal should not be extended. Respondents proposed to reduce or eliminate illicit cultivation through legalization and regulation of these crops, providing greater incentives to farmers to grow alternative crops, greater investment in economic development and efforts to fight poverty in cultivation regions, decriminalization of cultivation to protect farmers, and that any policies in this area should first uphold the human rights of farmers.

An examination of regional trends reveals several key distinctions: respondents from Oceania, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe were more likely to respond that there had been regression in reducing illicit crop production than the overall sample. Meanwhile, respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia were the strongest voices saying that they believed that progress had been made in this area. These responses likely reflect very different experiences of crop production in their respective regions.

The second goal is: **“By 2019, to eliminate or reduce significantly and measurably the illicit demand for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and drug-related health and social risks.”** Half of all respondents believed there had been some or significant regression in regards to demand reduction over the past decade, 28% believed that there had been some or significant progress, and the remaining respondents did not see a change, or were unsure. Interestingly, a significant portion (57%) of those who indicated that there had been some or significant regression in reducing demand still supported extending the goal to 2029 and 68% of the overall sample believed that the goal should be extended to 2029 as seen in Graph 2.



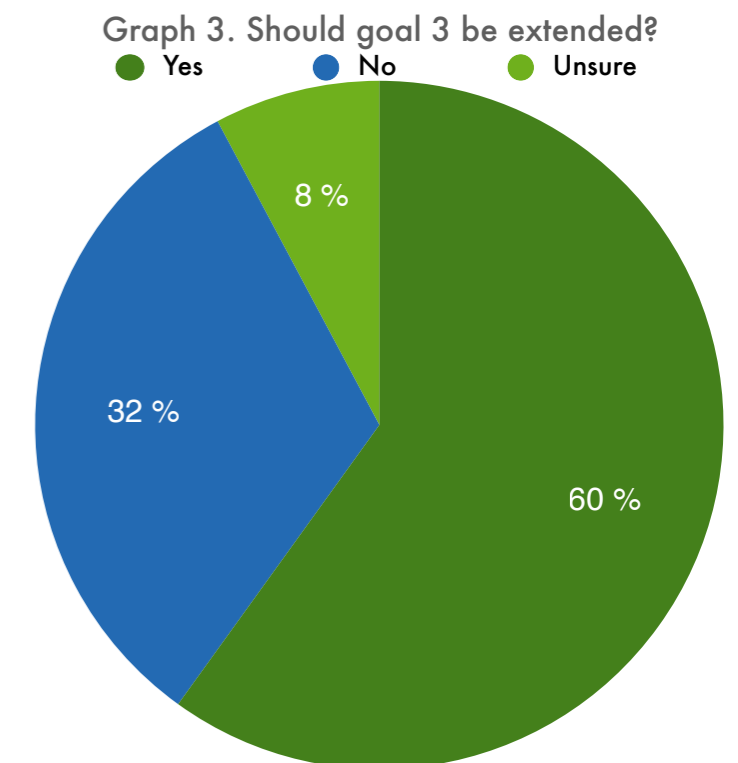
The 27% of the sample who believed the goal should not be extended recommended a range of alternative goals and revisions to eliminate or reduce the risks and harms associated with drug use, rather than focusing upon demand reduction. Some of the risks

and harms to address included: the criminalization of people who use drugs, blood borne disease and mortality, marginalization of people who use drugs, victimization and human rights violations of people who use drugs, organized crime, and illicit markets. Respondents also noted that vulnerable populations that face the most harms should be a focus for this goal- incarcerated people, women, low-income people, and others. Other respondents expressed that efforts should be expanded in the areas of education, prevention, and social and health services to improve the health of communities at large, including people who use drugs.

Upon further review of regional variations, respondents from Oceania, North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean were most likely to indicate that they observed regression in the area of demand reduction in their regions. However, respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa were most likely to indicate that they had seen progress in efforts towards demand reduction in their regions over the past decade. While some respondents may now see more resources devoted to prevention and treatment in their regions compared to the past, it is clear that others feel that are still facing challenges in access.

The third goal is: **“By 2019, eliminate or reduce significantly and measurably the illicit production, manufacture, marketing and distribution of, and trafficking in, psychotropic substances, including synthetic drugs.”** Half of the sample indicated that they believed there had been regression towards achieving this goal while similar portions of the sample (19% and 18% respectively) felt there had been progress or no change. As in the case of the first two goals, the majority

of the respondents (60%) still believed the goal should be extended to 2029 as shown in Graph 3. However, only 18% of those who indicated there had been regression towards this goal suggested extending the goal. Of the 32% of respondents that believed the goal should not be extended, most suggested alternatives and revisions such as a goal to eliminate or reduce the harms associated with the illicit supply and market of psychotropic substances and synthetic drugs (including through legalization and regulation of such substances).



The majority of respondents from Oceania (75%) indicated that they had seen regression in the area of psychoactive substance reduction. Many respondents from North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe shared this sentiment. A relatively high portion of respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa indicated that they had seen progress in this area, while similar

numbers of respondents from Asia saw both progress and regression.

The fourth goal is: **“By 2019, eliminate or reduce significantly and measurably the diversion of and illicit trafficking in precursors.”** While a slightly higher portion of respondents (35%) indicated that there had been some or significant regression in this

eliminating or reducing the harms associated with the diversion and illicit trafficking in precursors. Some of the harms and risks mentioned included: the criminalization of people involved in the illicit market, and the evolution of increasingly potent and novel precursors.

Compared to the first three goals, respondents from different regions had less consensus on whether there had been progress or regression in these areas: while higher numbers of respondents from Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa noted progress, they were not a clear majority of respondents from their regions. Similarly, a number of respondents from North America, Oceania, and Latin America and the Caribbean indicated that they had seen regression in this area, but respondents from these regions were often unsure how to answer this question or had seen no changes.

The fifth goal is: **“By 2019, eliminate or reduce significantly and measurably money-laundering related to illicit drugs.”**

Similar to the case of Goal 4, respondents were divided when answering this question. Thirty-seven percent of respondents felt that there had been some or significant regression in this area, and one quarter of the sample was unsure how to respond to this question. In spite of the lack of consensus on progress towards achieving this goal, there was actually a significant consensus that this goal should be extended- with 73% of respondents supporting its extension to 2029 (Graph 5). Just 13% of the respondents indicated that the goal should not be extended and these respondents supported efforts to regulate drug markets in an effort to bring these monies into the licit economy.

Just over half of all respondents from Oceania indicated that they had seen regression in this area, whereas the highest portion of respondents who had seen progress were from Asian and Sub-Saharan Africa. Meanwhile, almost 40% of respondents from North America and a third of respondents from Western Europe were unsure of how to respond to this question.

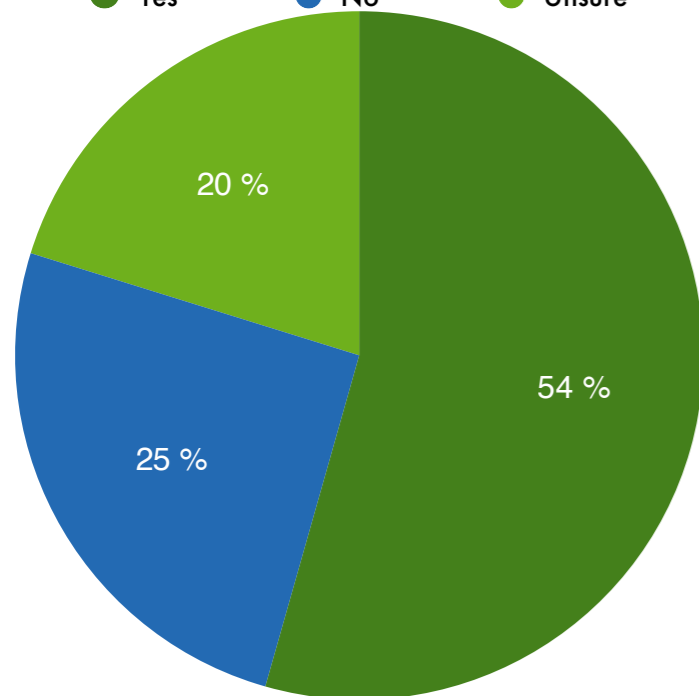
Civil society efforts towards the 2009-2019 goals

Respondents were asked whether their NGOs work towards achieving each of the five goals in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, and responses are summarized in Graph 6. The majority of respondents (75%) said that their NGOs worked towards at least one of these goals, either directly or indirectly, while 5% of respondents reported that their work contributes to all five goals.

Almost 20% of respondents indicated that they worked towards goal one in order to reduce illicit crop cultivation. Most of the groups that responded indicated that they believe that they indirectly impacted cultivation through demand reduction efforts with people who use drugs. Of the groups who worked directly on this issue with farmers and communities, most were located in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. They described their programs as those that promote alternative crops and greater investment in cultivating communities, many of which struggle with poverty and unemployment.

Graph 4. Should goal 4 be extended?

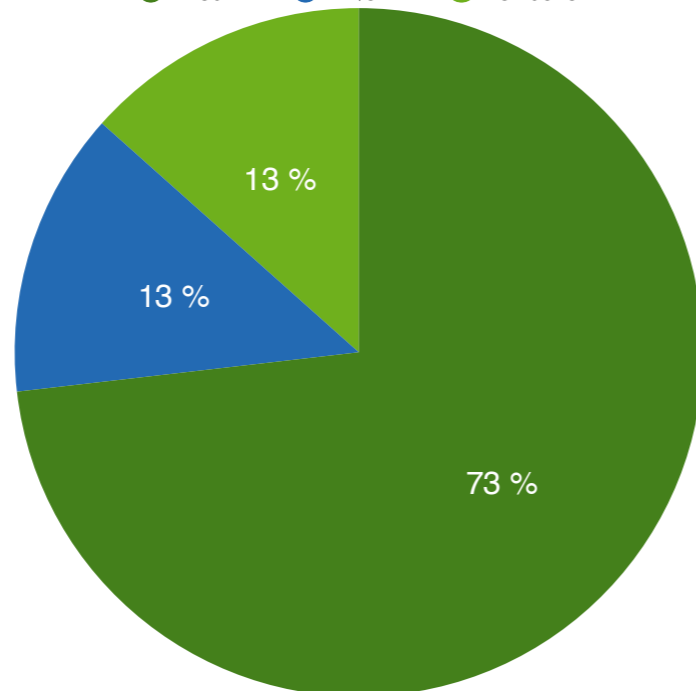
● Yes ● No ● Unsure



area, almost 25% of respondents were unsure how to answer this question, and there was no clear majority consensus on progress towards achieving this goal. Still, over half of the sample agreed that the goal should be extended to 2029, and only one quarter of the sample said the goal should not be extended (Graph 4). Several alternative goals were suggested by the minority of respondents who indicated that the goal should not be extended, including a focus upon eliminating or reducing the diversion of and illicit trafficking in precursors through regulation of these precursors, or a shift to focus upon

Graph 5. Should goal 5 be extended?

● Yes ● No ● Unsure



Graph 6. NGO Work Towards the 2009-2019 Goals

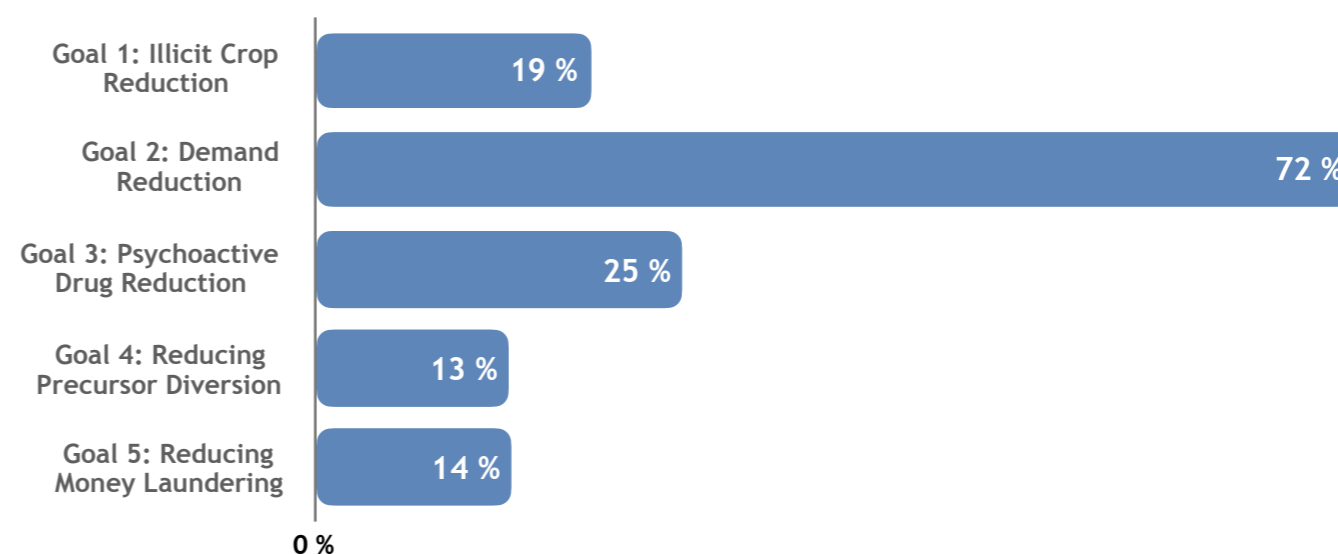


Table 2. NGO viewpoints regarding whether certain themes represent progress, trends or setbacks since 2009

Themes	Identified by some NGOs as an area of progress	Identified by some NGOs as a trend	Identified by some NGOs as a setback or challenge
Increased access to evidence-based prevention and treatment options	✓ (58)		
Expanded public health and harm reduction efforts	✓ (96)		
Increased discussions between and amongst international bodies	✓ (35)		
More awareness of the human rights of people who use drugs	✓ (32)		
More civil society groups have emerged to address the issue in some regions	✓ (13)		
Greater international/regional coordination and communication	✓ (20)		
More research on drug addiction and the use of controlled drugs for medicinal or therapeutic purposes	✓ (16)	✓ (17)	
Framing of drug use as a health issue rather than a criminal issue	✓ (66)	✓ (16)	
Increased awareness and willingness to discuss drugs and drug-related issues	✓ (25)	✓ (15)	
Increased cultivation of illicit crops and increased drug production		✓ (27)	✓ (67)
The emergence of new psychoactive substances, many of which are more harmful and dangerous		✓ (65)	✓ (25)
Ongoing or increased criminalization, policing, and incarceration of people who use drugs		✓ (56)	✓ (25)
The dark web as new market for drugs		✓ (21)	✓ (15)
Increased drug use and drug-related harms, including overdose		✓ (26)	✓ (45)
Increased human rights violations, including the use of the death penalty and extrajudicial killings of people who use drugs		✓ (15)	✓ (45)
Few resources devoted to prevention, harm reduction and treatment in some regions		✓ (15)	✓ (17)
Country-specific barriers, including corruption, lack of political will or inconsistent leadership			✓ (11)
Legalizing and normalizing cannabis use for recreational use	✓ (94)	✓ (62)	✓ (28)
More countries experimenting with decriminalization and regulatory models	✓ (142)	✓ (40)	✓ (32)

The majority of respondents (72%) reported working towards the second goal to reduce demand and harms associated with use. These NGOs were similarly represented in all regions that completed the survey and their efforts ranged from drug prevention education with youth to treatment and rehabilitation for those living with drug addiction. A number of respondents represented harm reduction organizations that work directly with people who use drugs to reduce their risk of blood-borne infections, overdose, and expand access to substitution treatments. Policy advocacy groups described their efforts to increase medical access to controlled substances, as well as advocacy for a public health approach to drug use. There were dozens of other responses in this area, reflecting a broad range of organization types and structures.

Fewer respondents articulated how they addressed goals three, four, and five. Instead, most indirectly worked to address these goals- particularly around psychoactive drug access and precursor diversion- whether it was through more general demand reduction for these substances, public awareness and education, and also through direct advocacy for various policies to address these issues.

Other progress, trends and challenges in the past decade

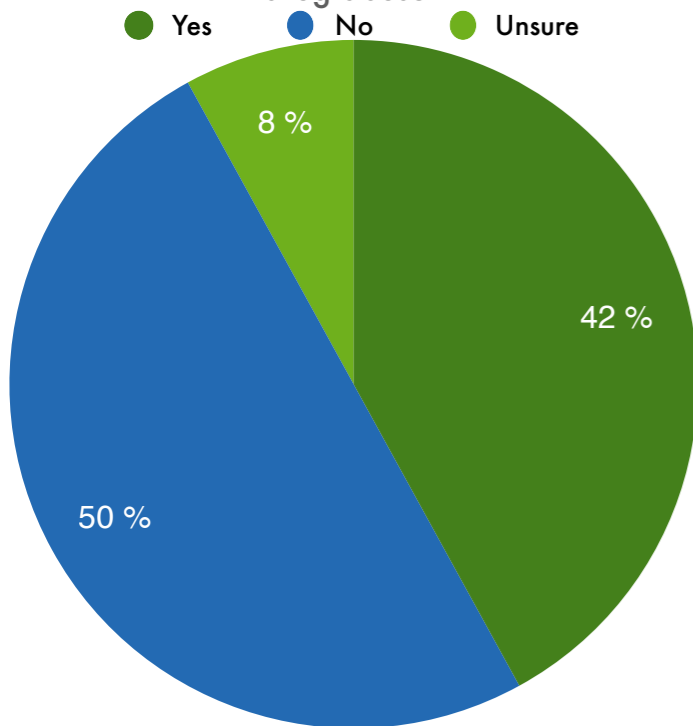
Respondents were asked three open-ended questions to identify any other drug or drug policy-related progress made in the past decade, any new trends with regards to drugs in the past decade, and any setbacks or challenges in the past decade. A diverse range of responses were provided for each with a notable amount of consensus around quite a few themes. At the same time, a number of other themes which were differently presented by respondents as ‘progress,’ a ‘trend,’ or as a ‘setback.’ depending on their own perspectives, and these are all presented in Table 2.

Respondents largely agreed that increased funds and support for prevention, treatment, and harm reduction programming was indicative of progress since 2009. In addition, increased efforts to frame drug use and addiction as a public health issue rather than a criminal issue was consistently noted as a sign of progress. Respondents also were consistent in expressing concerns about new trends and emerging issues including new psychoactive substances, the emergence of the dark web as a market for drugs, increasing rates of drug use and drug-related harms such as overdose. While respondents from across the sample recognized increased drug policy experimentation in the past decade including decriminalization, regulatory models, and medicalization of cannabis as recent trends, there was no consensus upon whether these are a sign of ‘progress’ or were in fact a ‘setback’ to overcome.

“A World Free of Drug Abuse”

Respondents were asked whether they believed that **“international drug policy efforts could be adequately implemented, tracked and advanced to achieve the goal of ‘world free of drug abuse’ [as contained in the 2009 Political Declaration] for the next decade (to 2029)?”** Respondents were divided on this question, as shown in Graph 7. Forty-two percent of the NGO respondents agreed with this statement, but most of the respondents felt that efforts could not be made, tracked, and advanced towards this aspiration.

Graph 7. NGO support for the a “world free of drug abuse”



Respondents were then asked follow-up questions to elaborate their views. Among those who believe that efforts could be made in this area, they explained that the following could be added to strengthen efforts:

“For international efforts to be effective they need to be revised and adapted to the characteristics of each region, once the approach has been decided, efforts should be combined to ensure robust actions and successful practices; our main failure is that initiatives are scattered, so resources become diluted and don’t reach the populations who need them.” (Youth services organization, Latin America and the Caribbean)

Encourage support and help for organisations that advocate for rehabilitation and reintegration to prevent recidivism. Prevention efforts should also be strengthened, especially among youths and at-risk youths. (Prevention and rehabilitation organization, Asia)

Diversion of farmers and manufacturers of abused substance to new profit making business lines, jobs creation and reduction in poverty in nations will adequately help to achieve the goal of world free of drug abuse. (Health organization, Sub-Saharan Africa)

Other respondents suggested alternative goals and language instead. Most of these respondents indicated that, rather than focusing upon a “world free of drug abuse”, a more feasible goal could be a “world free of drug-related harms.” Many of these respondents listed the harms that should be addressed, including criminalization, mortality, disease, violence, crime, social harms and marginalization. A number of respondents indicated that progress towards this new goal could be achieved by 2029 through an increased focus on public health and human rights.

“Not aspiring to a drug-free world but to more humane drug policies with a focus on development, human rights and health protection.” (Policy advocacy organization, Latin America & Caribbean)

“World free of drug abuse is not achievable. We can only make effort to track, reduce and manage drug abuse...The alternative goal is to drastically reduce the harm associated with drug abuse and associated diseases in 2029.” (Health service organization, Sub-Saharan Africa)

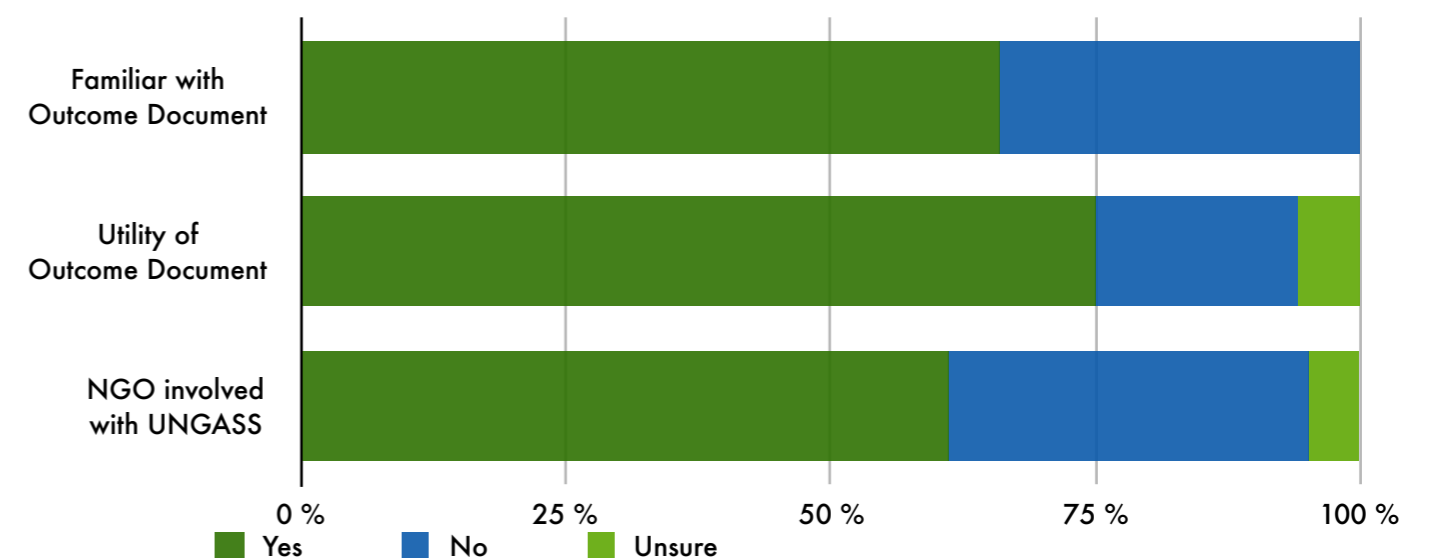
“Identifying a series of new goals and indicators that are better geared towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and the operational recommendations of the UNGASS outcome document would be more appropriate.”(Professional association, Western Europe)

Knowledge of the UNGASS and its outcome

The second section of the survey comprised a series of questions on the implementation and efforts since the 2016 UNGASS. Graph 8 illustrates that two-thirds of the respondents were familiar with the UNGASS Outcome Document⁹, while just one third of the sample was not (and were not therefore asked to answer the remaining questions in this section). Of those who were familiar with the UNGASS, a reassuring 61% indicated that their NGO was involved in the civil society preparations leading up to the UNGASS and 75% of these respondents also felt that it was useful for their work.

Responses were collected from respondents to understand how exactly the UNGASS Outcome Document was useful to their work. Some of the explanations provided included (in no particular order):

Graph 8. NGO views on the UNGASS Outcome Document



⁹ Available at <https://www.unodc.org/documents/postungass2016/outcome/V1603301-E.pdf>

➤ It informed their advocacy within their home countries so that they could hold their own government officials accountable to the operational recommendations, many of which were viewed as a significant improvement from the 2009 Declaration,

➤ Many noted the endorsement of public health and human rights as also being another improvement from the 2009 Declaration, and one which is aligned with much of their work, including language on gender, children, and the need for proportional punishment and sentencing,

➤ It is a tangible document that can be shared, translated, referenced and explained to their communities to justify policy changes and options that are now possible,

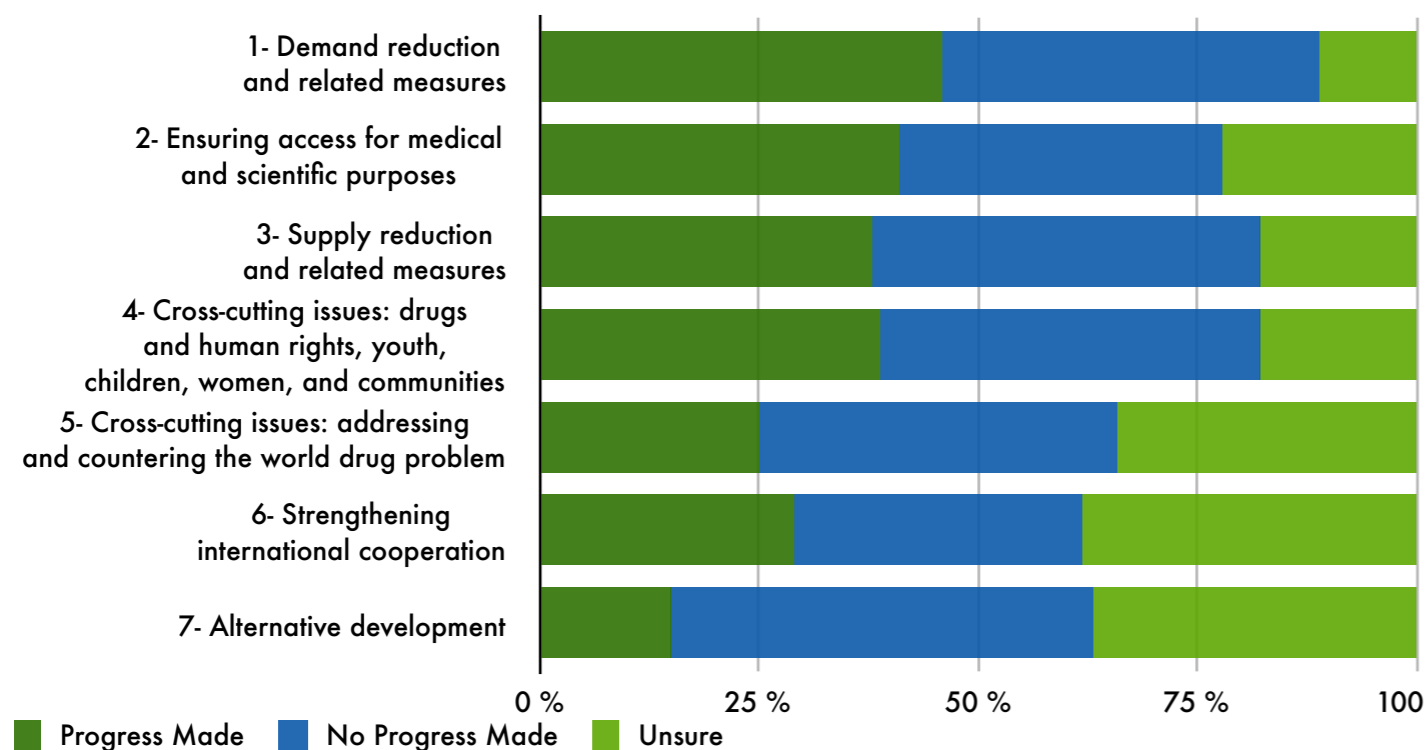
➤ Respondents found the document and recommendations to be validating of their work so that it can give them increased credibility in continuing their efforts at home and abroad, as civil society is explicitly mentioned, and

➤ Respondents noted that the acknowledgement of drug-related issues and policies as being cross-cutting and related to other international priority areas (i.e. Declaration of Human Rights, Sustainable Development Goals, etc.) has been extremely helpful in justifying their efforts.

Implementation Efforts since 2016 UNGASS

Respondents were then asked to comment upon their government’s implementation with respect to the seven thematic chapters from the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document. For each of the chapters, respondents were asked whether they had seen any new efforts by their government, and what they were. If they did not see any new efforts, they were asked why they believed there had been no changes. Graph 9 shows the spread of responses for each of the seven thematic chapters.

Graph 9. Progress towards the UNGASS Operational Chapters



The first thematic chapter addresses “**demand reduction and related measures, including prevention and treatment, as well as other health-related issues.**” Respondents appeared divided on whether their governments had made any efforts towards this recommendation. The list below summarizes some of the answers from the 46% of respondents who indicated that they saw changes:

➤ Increased support and resources for prevention, education, harm reduction, treatment and rehabilitation programs,

➤ Noticeable shifts away from punitive approaches towards public health approaches to address drug use and addiction,

➤ Improvements within national criminal justice system to increase access to treatments while incarcerated and alternatives to incarceration,

➤ Local and national drug policy reforms have taken place or discussions are now underway,

➤ Notable increase in the willingness of national and local governments to engage civil society in decision-making processes,

➤ Increased border security, increased penalties for sellers and traffickers, and increased monitoring of prescriptions for controlled substances,

➤ Some respondents noted that although governments have been discussing changes since UNGASS, they have yet to see tangible changes and results on the ground.

Some regional trends emerged in responses to the first chapter. Many respondents in Asia indicated that they saw increases in spending for treatment services and more policy conversations on addressing drug use. Many respondents from Africa, and Latin American and the Caribbean shared that they noticed that their governments have created new governmental bodies to address

drug use and addiction, and that NGOs were given opportunities to have input in policy conversations. Asian and African respondents described increased border security, more penalties for drug sellers and traffickers, as well as more regional conversations with neighbouring countries. While there were respondents from around the world who said they were seeing shifts towards a public health approach in their home countries, the highest portions of respondents reporting this shift were from Western Europe and North America.

The second thematic chapter focuses on “**ensuring the availability of and access to controlled substances exclusively for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing their diversion.**” Again, respondents had differing views on whether any changes had been made in their countries on this issue: while 41% of respondents reported seeing changes, 37% did not, and 22% were unsure. Among those who reported seeing changes, these included:

➤ Expanded access to medical cannabis or a willingness to explore medical access,

➤ National monitoring programs to track certain controlled medicines and prescriptions, particularly opioids,

➤ Expanded training of physicians about controlled medications, and

➤ More national guidelines and standards for prescribing controlled medications.

While respondents from around the world discussed increased conversations about medical cannabis, it appeared as though respondents in Western Europe, North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean were beginning to see policies that have increased access. Respondents from Asia discussed the development of new governmental

authorities on access to opioid medications for palliative care and pain, in addition to additional training and support for prescribers. Some respondents in Africa expressed concerns about illicit use of codeine and tramadol. Some respondents in North America and Western Europe, meanwhile, discussed the increased access to naloxone (the opioid overdose antidote) and trials for medicinal access to heroin and other injectable opioids for people with opioid dependence.

The third thematic chapter relates to **“supply reduction and related measures; effective law enforcement; responses to drug-related crime; and countering money-laundering and promoting judicial cooperation.”** A slightly higher portion (44%) reported that there had not been changes made by their governments, while 38% of respondents saw changes such as:

More enforcement and supply side efforts, including punitive approaches towards those involved in illicit sales and trafficking, border security, interdiction efforts, and stricter penalties,

- Increased national money laundering charges to target drug suppliers,
- More funding for national and local law enforcement and intelligence agencies,
- More cooperation by authorities within countries and with neighbouring countries.

There appeared to be more regional similarities in regards to this chapter, with few notable distinctions. As noted earlier, many Asian respondents described additional funding allocated to border enforcement and interdiction efforts. Several respondents from Latin America and the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa described additional

resources allocated towards addressing organized crime and money laundering.

The fourth thematic chapter relates to **“cross-cutting issues: drugs and human rights, youth, children, women and communities.”** Among the 39% who felt that changes had been made, they noted the following:

- Increased government efforts, initiatives, and programs targeting vulnerable populations, including youth, children, women, and other groups,
- Less punitive approaches towards youth,
- More national policies have language relating to human rights, gender, and other vulnerable populations.

Some respondents from Latin America and the Caribbean described increased gender-sensitive policies and programs that have been developed in recent years. Many respondents in Sub-Saharan Africa discussed greater programming targeting youth for prevention and treatment, as well as the view that their governments have been more open to take a health approach.

The fifth thematic chapter addresses **“cross-cutting issues in addressing and countering the world drug problem: evolving reality, trends and existing circumstances, emerging and persistent challenges and threats, including new psychoactive substances, in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments.”** Of all the seven UNGASS chapters, this one had the smallest portion of respondents indicating that they had seen changes (25%), while 41% had not. Some of those changes included:

- More governmental programs developed to identify and monitor new psychoactive substances,
- More funding for enforcement and interdiction of new psychoactive substances and precursors, and
- More penalties and laws criminalizing new psychoactive substances and precursors.

The sixth thematic chapter relates to **“strengthening international cooperation based on the principle of common and shared responsibility.”** One-third of the respondents felt that there had not been changes, while 38% were unable to determine whether changes had been made or not. However, the 29% of respondents who did see changes described a number of regional alliances and agreements that their governments have recently agreed to, as well as broader international efforts. A number of Asian and Sub-Saharan respondents described greater collaboration with neighbouring countries on interdiction efforts and border security.

The seventh thematic chapter focused upon **“alternative development; regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented balanced drug control policy; addressing socioeconomic issues.”** Almost half of the respondents indicated that they had not seen new changes, and the few respondents who provided examples of changes shared that they are seeing some efforts to address financial and economic issues driving cultivation.

Across all seven thematic chapters of the UNGASS Outcome Document, a number of respondents indicated that no notable changes have been made in their home countries (Graph 9). They listed a diverse range of explanations for why they believe

changes have not been made, many of which were generally consistent for each of the chapters:

- Lack of political will or interest to change punitive approaches due to a variety of reasons, including a belief that the status quo is acceptable and that shifts towards a public health approach may appear permissive,
- Lack of resources or capacity to make changes,
- Lack of communication with NGOs and communities to make necessary changes, and
- Some nations may feel as though their current policies are well-enough aligned with the Outcome Document, so changes were not necessary.

The UNGASS Outcome Document and the 2019 outcome

Next, respondents were asked whether they believed that the UNGASS Outcome Document, its thematic chapters and operational recommendations should be incorporated into whatever outcome comes from the 2019 Ministerial Segment. The vast majority (70%) of respondents said yes. Most respondents indicated that the entire UNGASS Outcome Document should be integrated into the next declaration or outcome, since it is the most recent consensus document. Of the respondents who specified individual chapters to incorporate, the most commonly noted were those on demand reduction and cross-cutting issues relating to human rights, children, youth and women.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The final section of the survey asked respondents to indicate whether or not their NGO's work aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and advances the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, as a "blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future". Although drugs are scarcely featured in the Goals themselves, the world drug problem clearly overlaps and interacts with most, if not all, of the Goals. The clear majority (95%) of respondents felt as though their NGOs work to address at least one of the SDGs, and 19% of respondents felt as though they work to advance all 17 goals. As Graph 10 shows, 92% of respondents felt as though their NGOs worked to address Goal 3, which focuses upon health and well-being. Other Goals most advanced and supported by the respondents were those on peaceful societies, gender equality, education for all, and poverty reduction. There was little regional variation in the top Goals most advanced by respondent efforts.

Respondents were invited to describe how their NGO works to advance and support various Goals, and below are some selected responses:

"All of the SDGs mentioned above are directly relevant... [we have] sought to identify key targets and indicators that could be used to measure the effectiveness of drug control going forward... We are working to encourage member states to include drug issues in their submissions on SDG achievements and working to encourage member states to

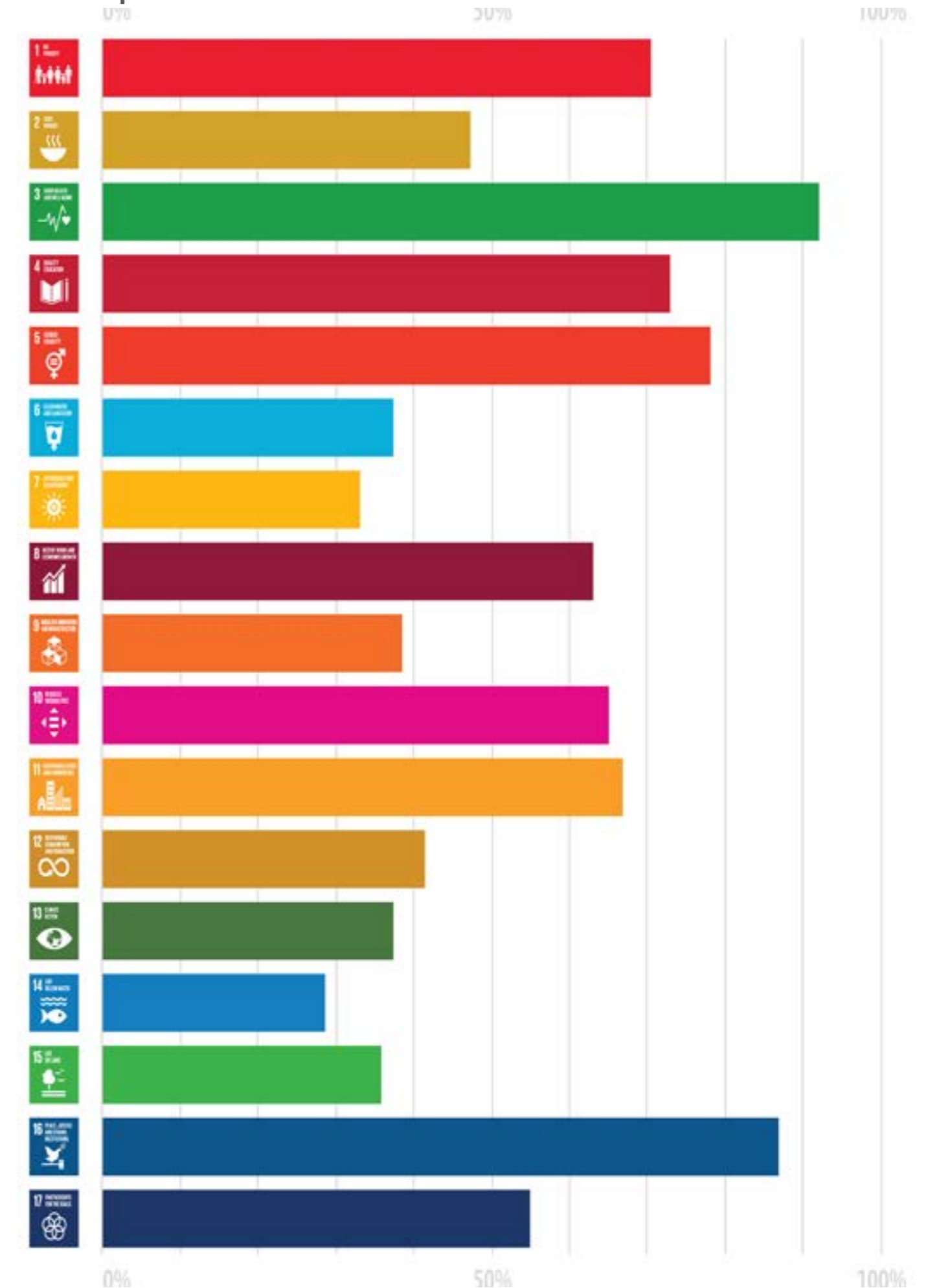
include the SDGs in their discussions around drug policy at the CND..." (Policy advocacy organization, North America)

"Our organization works in health promotion and the defence of drug users' rights. For humanitarian reasons, we support principles that guarantee equality, justice and human rights, and we promote issues related to sustainable development and environmental protection." (Network of people who use drugs, Middle East and North Africa)

"My NGO primarily believes in a multi-stakeholder contribution for successful prevention of substance abuse. Through the process, we ensure that teenagers of community strive towards financial stability, provide educational opportunity and live a healthy lifestyle. We also encourage communities to be more inclusive and harmonious. We strongly believe in global partnership and are an active part in [name redacted] for sustainable development." (Prevention organization, Asia)

"SDG 3.3 We provide support and information to recovered users with hepatitis and refer them to treatment SDG 3.5: We link people to drug-free, long-term and residential treatment with no costs for users, their families or taxpayers. Promote social reintegration of recovered users SDG 5.2: We promote gender sensitive rehabilitation programs for women SDG 16.1,16.4, 16.5: We raise awareness among youth on the links between drugs, crime, corruption, violence and death, promoting critical thinking and fostering healthy lifestyles and positive models." (Prevention organization, Eurasia)

Graph 10. Sustainable Development Goals Supported and Advanced through NGO Respondents' Work



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Diversity of Respondents

Survey respondents were diverse in their experiences and perspectives, as illustrated by the range and split of responses to most of the questions. This range is to be expected, given that respondents represented NGOs doing different types of work and with different philosophies guiding their work – ranging from advocacy to prevention, and rehabilitation to harm reduction. Respondents were also situated within very distinct contexts so they are representing different realities on the ground. It is clear that drug policies vary widely, and what is feasible, possible or desirable in one setting may not be in another.

However, despite the broad range of responses, there were also several areas where the clear majority of respondents held certain views. With regards to the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, although many believed that there had been regression against each of the five stated goals, taken together, the majority still believed that the goals should be extended to 2029. At the same time, most respondents felt that the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document and its operational recommendations should also be incorporated into the 2019 outcomes, because it was the most recent consensus document. Taken together, it is clear that respondents do concur with the prevailing feelings at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs that it is best to uphold (and modify) existing consensus documents rather than “reinventing the wheel” with an entirely new document. UN Member States are encouraged to factor in this feedback in their preparations and discussions.

Notably, the NGO respondents were divided about the value of the current goal of a ‘world free of drug abuse’. Most of the respondents felt that the goal was not useful – raising important questions about whether this language should be continued past 2019.

Another important and noteworthy trend is that most NGO respondents felt their work supported and advanced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well. Though some of the SDGs that were ranked highly were obvious (such as those dealing with health), there were other SDGs that may not be so clearly linked to drug and drug policy work by those on the outside – such as those on education or poverty reduction. As discussions move forward, it is important to recognize that much of the work of civil society organizations in the area of drugs can actually be defined as cross-cutting, and we should avoid creating artificial distinctions between drugs and other intersecting issues.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations associated with this survey and consultation – especially in comparison to previous surveys and consultations of civil society. Although the survey was available in six languages, it may have limited responses by individuals who felt more comfortable responding in other languages. In addition, the survey was quite lengthy and intensive, which could have limited the response rate. This survey ambitiously covered the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, progress since the 2016 UNGASS, and the Sustainable Development Goals. This broad scope,

and the many questions in the instrument, might have deterred responses from individuals who were unfamiliar with the various UN documents being referenced. Another limitation of this survey was that it often asked for respondent opinions on progress toward various UN goals, which may be beyond their organizational expertise so that it could introduce bias in response and limit reliability of their assessment.

Factors associated with the outreach and dissemination of the survey instrument should also be considered. The fact that it was a web-based instrument which needed to be completed in one sitting may have made it inaccessible to those with limited internet access. In addition, the survey was disseminated by CSTF members and NYNGOC and VNGOC members, which could have limited the response rate only to NGOs connected with those groups. Responses could have been limited due to the fact that the survey was available online for only two months. Like the 2016 UNGASS online consultation, this survey did not represent every nation in the world although it was completed by respondents from over 100 countries.

Nonetheless, exercises such as this to explore and document the views of civil society remain an important contribution to the UN drug control discussions. NGOs have a unique role to play, and are the ones working on the ground, at the ‘coal face’ of the world drug problem. This role is clearly acknowledged in the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document, and should be reiterated in 2019 and beyond.

Appendix: Countries and Territories by Region

Asia

1. Afghanistan
2. Bangladesh
3. India
4. Japan
5. Macau¹⁰
6. Malaysia
7. Maldives
8. Myanmar
9. Nepal
10. Pakistan
11. Singapore
12. Sri Lanka
13. Thailand

Eurasia

1. Albania
2. Azerbaijan
3. Belarus
4. Bosnia & Herzegovina
5. Bulgaria
6. Croatia
7. Estonia
8. Georgia
9. Kazakhstan
10. Kyrgyzstan
11. Lithuania
12. Moldova
13. Montenegro
14. Poland
15. Russian Federation
16. Slovakia
17. Slovenia
18. Tajikistan
19. Turkey
20. Ukraine
21. Uzbekistan

Latin America & Caribbean

1. Argentina
2. Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
3. Brazil
4. Chile
5. Colombia
6. Costa Rica
7. Dominican Republic
8. Ecuador
9. El Salvador
10. Guatemala
11. Honduras
12. Mexico
13. Nicaragua
14. Panama
15. Peru
16. Puerto Rico
17. Trinidad & Tobago
18. Uruguay
19. Venezuela

Middle East & North Africa

1. Algeria
2. Bahrain
3. Palestine
4. Iran (Islamic Republic of)
5. Iraq
6. Lebanon
7. Morocco
8. Tunisia
9. Yemen

North America

1. Canada
2. United States of America

Oceania

1. Australia
2. New Zealand

Sub-Saharan Africa

1. Benin
2. Burkina Faso
3. Burundi
4. Cameroon
5. Democratic Republic of the Congo
6. Ghana
7. Kenya
8. Malawi
9. Mali
10. Mauritius
11. Nigeria
12. Senegal
13. Seychelles
14. Somalia
15. South Africa
16. United Republic of Tanzania
17. Uganda
18. Zambia
19. Zimbabwe

Western Europe

1. Austria
2. Belgium
3. Finland
4. France
5. Germany
6. Greece
7. Ireland
8. Italy
9. Norway
10. Portugal
11. Spain
12. Sweden
13. Switzerland
14. Netherlands
15. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

¹⁰ Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China

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