

Open Letter to World Leaders and Parliaments

Introduction:

On **26th June 2023**, One Voice One Message, **OVOM**, made up of concerned citizens, including families and organisations around the globe, are launching an initiative promoting the right to grow up and live in a drug free environment and promote a drug free lifestyle.

The 26th day of June annually, is set aside by the United Nations as the International World Drug Day, as implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It is an opportunity for leaders, policy makers and administrators across the world to re-evaluate their country's stance on illicit drug use.

Underscoring the need for global synergy in addressing the drug problem, One Voice One Message (OVOM), the international drug prevention and education platform is using the opportunity of 2023's commemoration of June 26th to address the two greatest areas of international concern in 2023: support for a drug-free lifestyle; unite for the right of all to live - particularly children - and to grow up in a drug free environment.

OVOM has observed that across the world, some Governments are deserting their international obligations to the Drug Conventions (to wit: Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol; the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971, and the Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances of 1988) which directly leads to the desertion of their responsibilities to their citizens. The question is - who will benefit from discountenancing the Drug Conventions and liberalising use and availability of drugs? In short, nobody will in the long run. And who will lose? Everybody! Even the baby in utero.

The discountenancing of International Drug Conventions is unfortunately coming at the same time that new scientific studies published in globally acclaimed peer-review journals attest to the mutagenic and genotoxic nature of some drugs and the capacity of these substances to adversely affect genetic makeups, and their attendant consequences.

With more specifics:

We noticed that decriminalisation, (possession for personal use remains criminal but is never sanctioned), as is being formulated by advocates, particularly across Western Europe, North America and Oceania, is de facto legalisation and hence a violation of Article 3:2 in the 1988 Drugs Convention which explicitly obliges all ratifying states to criminalise unauthorised possession of illicit/controlled substances. State parties to the

Drug Conventions should realise that they cannot "decriminalise" something that Drug Conventions text obliges parties to criminalise. This violation of international conventions puts States in a precarious untenable position of contravening international law. OVOM requests State parties to the Drug Conventions which are thinking of 'decriminalising' or 'legalising' drugs to hold themselves to the minimal law-abiding standards to which States hold their citizens and residents.

International Commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We particularly wish to bring to your notice the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 33 thereof, which is ratified by all UN states, which obliges ratifying states to protect children from illicit use of drugs and involvement in production and trafficking. We urge your Government to use the auspicious occasion of the June 26th commemorations to strengthen your country's resolve to abide by the provisions of Article 33 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Commercialisation of controlled drugs under the Drug Conventions

Legalisation of drugs by some countries, in contravention of the International Drug Conventions, places an added legal burden on emerging economies in Africa, Latin America and Asia, which under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) protocols will be compelled to open their borders to such illicit products in contravention of the Drug Conventions.

Burden of diseases and consequences from discountenancing the Drug Conventions

OVOM is also concerned that the burden of conditions caused by illicit drug use such as cancers, psychoses and birth defects, and the effect of decriminalisation policies weighs more on emerging economies in Africa, Latin America and Asia which are least capable, ill-equipped and lack the requisite infrastructure to address problems of drug abuse. This will further widen global socio-economic gaps and health disparities.

Conclusion:

OVOM's mission is not only to make people aware of the negative impact of drugs in society, but to create a global awareness that the right to live in a drug-free society is a human right; that drug policies should be based on the Conventions and scientific facts and not influenced by drug cartels or political ideology; that the current careless international language on liberalisation, decriminalisation or legalisation of drugs is confusing and misleading, yet such drug policy approaches negate the fundamental spirit and intent of the Drug Conventions. It is illegal and a clear violation of all international agreements that protect society and especially children from harmful drugs.

We believe that every world leader and Parliament has as an uppermost objective the health, well-being and safety of young people.

As a world leader or Parliament, OVOM is requesting that you confirm with us in writing your commitment to the international Drug Conventions, and where possible nominate advisors within your sphere of influence with whom OVOM representatives could talk.

Again, working to keep our young people clear of the scourge of drugs, with the death and destruction they bring, is something close to all of our hearts.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Members of the Global Coordination Team (GCT)
OVOM - One Voice One Message, Global Support for a Drug-free Lifestyle
www.ovom.org, admin.ovom@protonmail.com