

# Towards a Harm Reduction Decade

## The Kuala Lumpur Declaration

### The Official Declaration of the 2015 International Harm Reduction Conference

In 1998, the international community gathered at the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs in New York under the slogan 'A Drug Free World – We Can Do It!' Since that time, rather than achieving a world without drugs, what we have witnessed instead is the increasing damage caused by punitive drug control in all corners of the world: a catalogue that includes human rights violations against people who use drugs, the spread of HIV and HCV epidemics driven by unsafe injecting, high levels of overdose in many countries, and mass incarceration as a direct result of punitive drug laws.

The world needs alternatives to these failed and counterproductive policies. In April 2016, leaders will again meet in New York at another UNGASS on drugs, an event that offers the opportunity to learn from the policies of the past, and build an alternative response to drug use that is rooted in science, public health, human rights and dignity. It offers the opportunity to make harm reduction a driving principle of national and international approaches to drug use, one that focusses on protecting and improving the health and wellbeing of people who use drugs, rather than maintaining a focus on punishment and prohibition in the name of drug suppression.

We, the undersigned, call on governments and international organisations to:

- **Endorse and adopt harm reduction as a key principle of drug policy throughout the next decade of the global response to drug use.**
- **Redirect just a small portion of funding from ineffective punitive drug control activities into health, human rights and harm reduction responses, and deliver a global target of a 10% shift in such funding by 2020 at the upcoming UNGASS.**
- **End the criminalisation of people who use drugs and the punitive legal frameworks that fuel HIV transmission, overdose, mass incarceration and human rights violations.**

The provision of harm reduction services can no longer be seen as a policy option at the discretion of governments, but must instead be understood as a core obligation of States to meet their international legal obligations under the right to health. Achieving the UN drug control regime's own stated objective of promoting the health and welfare of humankind also necessitates increased commitment to the core principles of harm reduction.

Harm reduction has been proven to save lives, promote health and increase the human rights and dignity of people who use drugs. It is time for the international community to embrace this success and ensure that the next ten years are the Harm Reduction Decade.

[www.harmreductiondecade.org](http://www.harmreductiondecade.org)