

APSAD 2025

# International Drug Policy *An Overview of Australia's Engagement*

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**Australian Government**

**Department of Health, Disability and Ageing**

# Overview

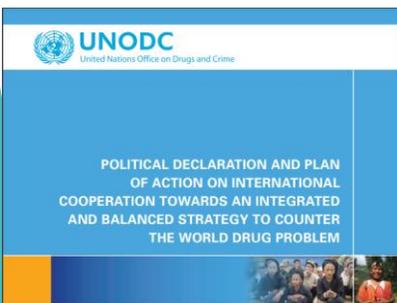
- ▶ The United Nations International Drug Control System
- ▶ Australia's engagement at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)
- ▶ Recent Developments
  - CND68 - March 2025
  - Independent Review into the Global Drug Framework
  - CND Intersessional
  - UNODC Policy Briefings
- ▶ Future Opportunities

# The United Nations International Drug Control System

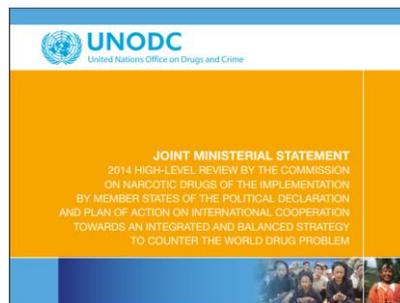
- ▶ Three United Nations Drug Control Conventions
  - **1961:** Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs
    - Natural occurring substances (e.g opiates, cannabis, cocaine) including synthetic drugs that mimic effects (e.g fentanyl, codeine)
  - **1971:** Convention on Psychotropic Substances
    - Synthetic psychotropic substances (e.g methamphetamine, LSD, benzos)
    - There are non-synthetic exceptions - e.g psilocybin
  - **1988:** Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances
    - Trafficking and precursors
- ▶ The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)
  - Principal policymaking body of the United Nations on drug related matters
  - 53 Member States (Australia has held consecutive membership since 1973)

# CND Political Documentation

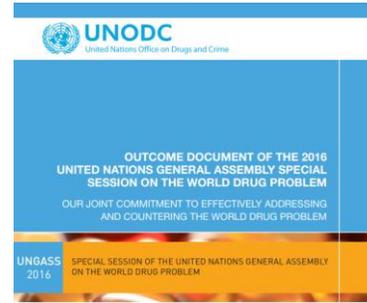
- ▶ Commitments outlined across these documents are considered to be complimentary and mutually reinforcing.
- ▶ The CND conducts a Review of these commitments every 10 years and a Mid-Term Review every 5 years. These reviews include the negotiation and adoption of an updated political document.
- ▶ Member States are encouraged to be represented at the ministerial-level during these reviews.
- ▶ The United Nations General Assembly can conduct special sessions on the Global Drug Situation which occurred in 2016, New York.



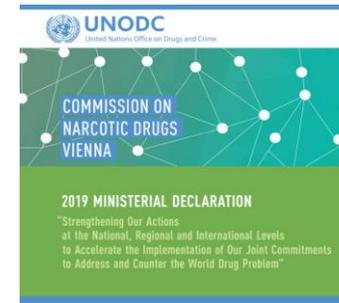
2009



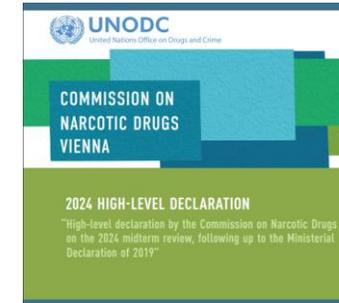
2014



2016



2019



2024



2029 Review

2029

# Five Public Health Challenges Identified in Political Documentation

- ▶ *Synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of prescription drugs pose increasing risks to public health and safety.*
- ▶ *Drug treatment and health services continue to fall short of meeting needs and deaths related to drug use have increased.*
- ▶ *The adverse health consequences of and risks associated with new psychoactive substances have reached alarming levels.*
- ▶ *The rate of transmission of HIV, the hepatitis C virus and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use, including injecting drug use in some countries, remains high.*
- ▶ *The availability of internationally controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and palliative care, remains low to non-existent in many parts of the world.*

# Commission on Narcotic Drugs - Plenary





# The United Nations System

## UN PRINCIPAL ORGANS



### Subsidiary Organs

- Disarmament Commission
- Human Rights Council
- International Law Commission
- Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)
- Main Committees
- Standing committees and ad hoc bodies

### Funds and Programmes<sup>1</sup>

- UNDP** United Nations Development Programme
  - UNCDF** United Nations Capital Development Fund
  - UNV** United Nations Volunteers
- UNEP**<sup>2</sup> United Nations Environment Programme
- UNFPA** United Nations Population Fund
- UN-HABITAT**<sup>3</sup> United Nations Human Settlements Programme
- UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund
- WFP** World Food Programme (UN/FAO)

### Other Entities

- ITC** International Trade Centre (UN/WTO)
- UNCTAD**<sup>1,2</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- UNHCR**<sup>3</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNOPS**<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office for Project Services
- UNRWA**<sup>1</sup> United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
- UN-WOMEN**<sup>3</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

### Subsidiary Organs

- Counter-Terrorism Committee

- International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
- Military Staff Committee

- Peacekeeping operations and political missions
- Sanctions committees (ad hoc)
- Standing committees and ad hoc bodies

### Functional Commissions

- Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
- Narcotic Drugs**
- Population and Development
- Science and Technology for Development
- Social Development
- Statistics
- Status of Women
- United Nations Forum on Forests

### Regional Commissions<sup>4</sup>

- ECA** Economic Commission for Africa
- ECE** Economic Commission for Europe
- ECLAC** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- ESCAP** Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- ESCWA** Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

### Other Bodies<sup>10</sup>

- Committee for Development Policy
- Committee of Experts on Public Administration
- Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- UNAIDS** Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
- UNEGN** United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
- UNGGIM** Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management
- UNICRI** United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
- UNRISD** United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

### Departments and Offices<sup>5</sup>

- EOSG** Executive Office of the Secretary-General
- DCO** Development Coordination Office
- DESA** Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- DGACH** Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
- DGC** Department of Global Communications
- DMSPC** Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance
- DOS** Department of Operational Support
- DPO** Department of Peace Operations
- DPPA** Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
- DSS** Department of Safety and Security
- OCHA** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

### Research and Training

- OCT** Office of Counter-Terrorism
- ODA** Office for Disarmament Affairs
- OHCHR** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- OIOS** Office of Internal Oversight Services
- OLA** Office of Legal Affairs
- OOSA** Office for Outer Space Affairs
- OSAA** Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
- SRSR/CAAC** Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
- SRSR/SVC** Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
- SRSR/VAC** Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children

### Research and Training

- UNDRR** United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- UNODC**<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- UNOG** United Nations Office at Geneva
- UN-OHRLS** Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
- UNON** United Nations Office at Nairobi
- UNOP**<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office for Partnerships
- UNOV** United Nations Office at Vienna

### Related Organizations

- CTBTO** Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
- IAEA**<sup>1,2</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency
- ICC** International Criminal Court
- IOM**<sup>1</sup> International Organization for Migration
- ISA** International Seabed Authority
- ITLOS** International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea
- OPCW**<sup>2</sup> Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
- WTO**<sup>1,4</sup> World Trade Organization

### Peacebuilding Commission

- HLPF** High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

### Specialized Agencies<sup>1,5</sup>

- FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- ICAO** International Civil Aviation Organization
- IFAD** International Fund for Agricultural Development
- ILO** International Labour Organization
- IMF** International Monetary Fund
- IMO** International Maritime Organization
- ITU** International Telecommunication Union
- UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNIDO** United Nations Industrial Development Organization
- UNWTO** World Tourism Organization
- UPU** Universal Postal Union
- WHO** World Health Organization
- WIPO** World Intellectual Property Organization
- WMO** World Meteorological Organization
- WORLD BANK GROUP**<sup>7</sup>
  - IBRD** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
  - IDA** International Development Association
  - IFC** International Finance Corporation

#### Notes:

- Members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).
- UN Office for Partnerships (UNOP) is the UN's focal point vis-a-vis the United Nations Foundation, Inc.
- IAEA and OPCW report to the Security Council and the General Assembly (GA).
- WTO has no reporting obligation to the GA, but contributes on an ad hoc basis to GA and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) work on, inter alia, finance and development issues.
- Specialized agencies are autonomous organizations whose work is coordinated through ECOSOC (intergovernmental level) and CEB (inter-secretariat level).
- The Trusteeship Council suspended operation on 1 November 1994, as on 1 October 1994 Palau, the last United Nations Trust Territory, became independent.
- International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) are not specialized agencies in accordance with Articles 57 and 63 of the Charter, but are part of the World Bank Group.
- The secretariats of these organs are part of the UN Secretariat.
- The Secretariat also includes the following offices: The Ethics Office, United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, and the Office of Administration of Justice.
- For a complete list of ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies see [un.org/ecosoc](http://un.org/ecosoc).

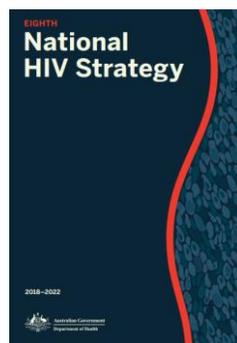
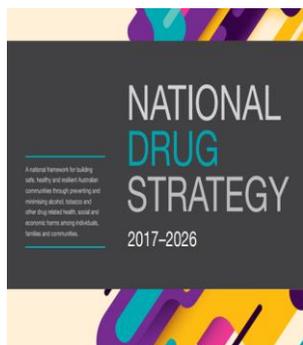
This Chart is a reflection of the functional organization of the United Nations System and for informational purposes only. It does not include all offices or entities of the United Nations System.

# Health leads Australia's Engagement at CND

- ▶ The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing leads Australia's engagement at the CND
  - Reiterates the important role of public health in addressing the global drug situation
  - Offsets other Member State delegations that are led by law enforcement and state departments
- ▶ Supporting agencies include:
  - Office of Drug Control (within Health)
  - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,
  - Home Affairs
  - Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission
- ▶ Execution of Australia's priorities occurs through a range of instruments including resolutions, national statements, bilateral engagement, side events and contributions to international capacity building programs.
- ▶ Australia is the only member of the CND from the Pacific

# National Strategies provide the foundation for Australia's Engagement

- ▶ Australia's engagement is built on principles outlined in our National Strategies:
  - ▶ National Drug Strategy 2017-2026
    - Harm minimisation (supply, demand, harm reduction), priority populations, evidence-informed responses
  - ▶ National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030
    - Health equity, person-centred approach, empowerment and health literacy
  - ▶ National Hepatitis and HIV Strategies
    - Harm reduction, peer-based support, priority populations, human rights



# Civil Society play an important role in Australia's Engagement

- ▶ Australia engages with Civil Society throughout the year, primarily through its partnership with the Australian Civil Society Committee on UN Drug Policy (formally established in 2019).
- ▶ The Committee consists of a range of expertise as well as First Nations, lived experience and youth representation.
- ▶ This ensures the views of community and the non-government sector are considered in Australia's international positions.
- ▶ The upcoming 2025 Civil Society and Australian Government Workshop will focus on identifying shared goals across Australia's 2026-29 CND term.



## Key Achievements across the 2022-2025 CND Term

- ▶ At CND66, Australia successfully ran a resolution on the safe handling and disposal of drugs which paved the way for several projects in Southeast Asia as well as two resolutions at CND68.
- ▶ Australia partnered with Kenya and South Africa at the CND67 High-Level Event on HIV and Viral Hepatitis.
- ▶ In 2024, Australia worked closely with the United States and partners in the historic adoption of ‘harm reduction’ into CND language.
- ▶ Australia introduced *the impact of the social determinants of health on drug use* as an other substantive matter at the 2024 CND Intersessional.
- ▶ Australia joined the UNODC/WHO Informal Scientific Network for the first time to ensure Australian-led research and approaches are captured in the Network’s publications.
- ▶ At CND68, Australia co-hosted a side event with ASEAN nations to showcase and strengthen our collaboration with the region in addressing drug-related challenges.
- ▶ Australia has continued supporting the UNODC/WHO/UICC Joint Global Programme on increasing access to and availability of controlled medicines in Indonesia, Fiji and Timor-Leste.

# Recent Developments - CND68 (March 2025)

- ▶ CND68 saw all resolutions **adopted by vote** for the first time.
- ▶ Topics of contention shifted from technical to geopolitical, particularly around issues relating to sustainable development, gender, human rights, the WHO, and multilateralism.
- ▶ Australia collaborated closely with like-minded countries to present a united front, protecting previously agreed language on these issues.
- ▶ The dynamics observed at CND68 and across other multilateral forums are expected to continue.
- ▶ Future for resolution adoption?
  - consensus vs vote

**CND****UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS**

POLICYMAKING BODY OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM WITH PRIME RESPONSIBILITY FOR DRUG-RELATED MATTERS



# Independent Review into the Global Drug Control Framework

- ▶ At CND68, Colombia led a resolution calling for a historic independent review into the global drug control framework.
- ▶ The call for this review was in response to growing concerns regarding the effectiveness of the current system, and the failure to align with core UN pillars such as human rights, peace and security, and development.
- ▶ The independent review panel will be composed of **19 independent experts**, selected through a multi-stakeholder process to ensure diversity, credibility, and independence.
  - UNSG (5), Member States (10 - 2 *per regional group*), INCB (3) and WHO (1)
  - The panel will consult with **Member States** and relevant stakeholders, including **Civil Society**, the scientific community, academia, youth groups and the private sector
  - The panel's findings will inform discussions at CND70 in 2027 where Member States have been encouraged to be represented at the highest possible level.
- ▶ **Current Status** - Nomination processes underway for panel members, as well as ongoing calls for extrabudgetary resources to support the work of the panel.

# UNODC Policy Briefings

- ▶ In response to ongoing inconsistencies in Member State interpretation of contentious concepts (harm reduction, decriminalisation), the UNODC released a series of policy notes
- ▶ Policy notes are based on the latest scientific evidence as well as consultation with the International Narcotics Control Board and the WHO



**Legal and Policy Considerations on Decriminalization of Drug Use and Possession for Personal Use: International legal framework and the UN system common position on drug-related matters (July 2025)**



**Availability of and access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes (April, 2025)**



**Alternative measures to conviction or punishment in drug-related cases (January, 2025)**



**Harm Reduction (November, 2024)**

# CND Intersessional September 2025 - Thematic Discussions

- ▶ Agenda focused on the public health challenges identified in the CND Political Documentation.
- ▶ Australia's involvement included:
  - The delivery of an intervention against each public health challenge that showcased examples of Australian best practice.
  - Update on Australia's blood borne virus pledge made at the 2024 High-Level Segment of the CND.
  - Australian experts
    - ▶ Dr Penny Hill (Harm Reduction Australia) panel member for NPS discussions
    - ▶ Professor Gregory Dore (Kirby Institute) panel member for BBV discussions
- ▶ Consistent with previous years, the agenda included a session dedicated to other substantive matters.



# Opportunities 2026-2029 CND Term

- ▶ Promote the public health applications of Early Warning Systems
  - Resolution or Side Event
- ▶ Increase collaboration with Pacific Island Nations
  - Side Event, Joint Statement, pre session consultations
- ▶ Positively influence the Independent Review into the Global Drug Framework
  - Member State consultations
- ▶ Expand the global community's understanding and acceptance of Harm Reduction
- ▶ Increase awareness of the global drug situation's impact on Indigenous People, beyond the context of Alternative Development.
- ▶ Amplify the voices of Indigenous People within International Drug Policy fora.
  - The International Indigenous Drug Policy Network

# Thank you

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**Australian Government**

**Department of Health, Disability and Ageing**