

X. Conclusions

128. The analysis presented above shows that, despite a number of challenges, the system of monitoring and control designed by the international community 50 and 60 years ago has performed relatively successfully over the years. However, there are still major challenges that need to be addressed and new developments that require Member States to take action.

129. States parties have made important strides towards a more cohesive and coherent drug control strategy as envisioned in the conventions. However, the evolving nature of this complex social problem requires that States be cognizant of the challenges and opportunities they face. The outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem held in 2016 reaffirmed the commitment of States parties to drug control policies and practices grounded in evidence and science and provided further guidance in the operational recommendations on the important areas that require further concerted action. Member States further stated that tackling the world drug problem was a common and shared responsibility that should be addressed through greater and more effective international cooperation and that the drug issue demanded an integrated, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing and scientific evidence-based approach.

130. The international drug control system, as established by the conventions and built upon by the relevant political declarations, provides a comprehensive and cohesive framework that can be effective only if States fulfil their treaty obligations, taking into account their domestic situation, including the realities of drug supply and demand, the capacity of State institutions, social considerations and the scientific evidence of the effectiveness of existing and future policy options.

131. The normative drug control framework as it has been developed during the past 60 years is a complex system. It is part of the larger context of the international human rights instruments because it strives to promote health and welfare of humankind. It cannot be considered – as some critics claim – simply a prohibitionist system. Rather, it is a comprehensive, multisectoral, integrated and balanced system, focusing on health and welfare and grounded on respect for human rights and the principle of proportionality.

132. During the past 20 years, policies addressing the drug problem have changed the world over: historically, drug control and treaty implementation efforts focused on supply reduction. But more recently, there has been growing recognition of the importance of implementing the treaties in a comprehensive, integrated and balanced manner and of putting public health at the centre of policy.

133. It is a fact that policies in some countries often disregard the goals and principles of the drug control framework. Policies which are associated with militarized law enforcement, disregard for human rights, overincarceration, the denial of medically appropriate treatment and inhumane or disproportionate approaches are not in accordance with the principles of the conventions and the political declarations.

134. There are new challenges arising, such as new psychoactive substances and those posed by the Internet, and other challenges as mentioned above, which were not yet known when the 1961 Convention and the 1971 Convention were adopted. The international community must find the responses to tackle those challenges within the present normative drug control system and/or by creating new normative tools and instruments and possible additional voluntary ways of international collaboration.