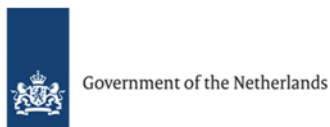
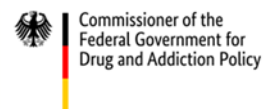




On behalf of



This report summarises the discussions and conclusions of the meeting, but does not reflect the institutional positions of the co-hosting parties.

9TH BRANDENBURG FORUM ON DRUGS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

“Boosting Transformative Change in Global Drug Policies: Promoting Human-Centered Approaches to Cocaine Markets and Beyond”

MEETING REPORT

The 9th Brandenburg Forum on Drugs and Development Policies (BBF) took place from 19th to 21st November 2024 at Schloss Lübbenau in Brandenburg, Germany. The Forum was organised by the Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development (GPDPD)¹, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented under political patronage of the Commissioner of the Federal Government for Drug and Addiction Policy. The meeting was co-hosted by the Government of the Netherlands, the Transnational Institute (TNI) and the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC).

The Forum was attended by 52 participants from around the world – including government representatives from Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Switzerland, Thailand and the USA. Also in attendance were officials from the European Union (EU), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), as well as leading non-governmental organisations. In order to promote open dialogue, discussions were conducted under the ‘Chatham House Rule’ whereby the content of discussions can be shared but neither the identity nor the affiliation of any participants should be revealed.² For the first time, the BBF dedicated its first day to a thematic focus: the global cocaine situation and approaches for transformative change with a view towards cocaine markets.

¹ For more information on the Partnership, please visit www.gpdpd.org

² <https://www.chathamhouse.org/about/chatham-house-rule>

OPENING SESSION

The Forum was opened by the Head of the GPPDP programme, the German Commissioner of the Federal Government for Drug and Addiction Policy and representatives of IDPC, BMZ and the Government of the Netherlands.

It was underlined that the BBF is a unique platform for international networking and cooperation in the drug policy area. Spaces like the BBF were described as crucial in times with growing drug-related corruption, violence and vulnerabilities, posing major challenges to the international community that can only be tackled jointly. Further highlighted were the socioeconomic dimensions related to illicit drug economies, such as poverty, inequality, and insufficient access to markets and licit incomes.

Participants were encouraged to be bold in terms of introducing more human rights-oriented drug policy approaches into the international framework and developing transformative approaches to effectively address the underlying causes of drug use and related illicit activities. Even though some participants and governments may have differing positions, constructive exchange on the various positions was considered to be very important. This set the stage for another three-day Brandenburg Forum with the objective of strengthening development-, health- and human rights-oriented drug policy strategies and enhancing cooperation across sectors and continents.



Photo: Participants at the 9th Brandenburg Forum, November 2024. Credit: GPPDP.

PLENARY: HIGHLIGHTING THE GLOBAL COCAINE MARKET

For the first time, the Brandenburg Forum included a thematic session focused on the global increase in cocaine production, trafficking and seizures as well as globally mounting levels of cocaine (and cocaine derivatives) use. The session included inputs from government agencies, civil society and international organisations.

It was stated that production and trafficking in cocaine have increased drastically, as outlined in the special chapter of the 2024 World Drug Report³ as well as a standalone UNODC 2023 Cocaine Report⁴. These publications show that cocaine trafficking methods have grown more complex, with maritime routes accounting for 90% of all seized cocaine and seizures happening closer to production sites, with countries like Ecuador and Brazil reporting high volumes. It was further highlighted that the cultivation of coca crops, as well as punitive policy responses, have both direct and indirect impacts on deforestation in the Amazon region and that often small, remote communities and extremely biodiverse and fragile ecosystems were affected by these phenomena. However, it was also stated that the environmental and community-related consequences of production and especially trafficking of cocaine remain under-researched.

Furthermore, findings of the 2023 Global Organized Crime Index⁵ with a focus on cocaine-related crime were presented. The Index was developed to serve as a catalyst for improved policymaking. It evaluates key components of criminality, such as the structure and influence of criminal organizations, and resilience, which includes the capacity of societies to respond to organized crime. The Index has shown significant changes in criminal activity from 2021 to 2023, particularly in Europe. Cocaine trafficking, historically routed through Spain and Italy, has shifted to Belgium and the Netherlands, with these countries now being the preferred entry points. Additionally, there has been a shift in trafficking flows and concealment methods, with organized criminal groups targeting smaller, less protected ports in Southern and Eastern Europe. Pointing to the development dimension of illicit economies it was stated that cocaine use often occurs in regions that are economically rather well off, and that transit regions have suffered a steeper increase in criminality and drug-related violence.

The closing input expanded on the drugs-development nexus. It was based on a soon-to-be-published UNDP discussion paper outlining the intersection of human rights, drug policy and sustainable development. It was stated that drug policy is likely to remain an under-addressed issue in the broader discussion around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) although it is highly relevant, e.g., in achieving global health, social justice, inclusive economic development and environmental protection. Another aspect mentioned was the growing trend of regulating formerly illicit substances in jurisdictions around the globe and the risk of so-called “corporate capture” of emerging licit markets, thus depriving actors involved in or most impacted by illicit economies of the economic benefits of licit markets. Without political attention to this topic, benefits might be reaped by transnational corporations while communities in drug crop cultivation regions are even further impoverished. The input ended with a call to use the SDGs to shape drug policies, including the potential regulation of controlled substances.

In the following Q&A session, a question was posed about the impact of cocaine seizures on recent market dynamics. While law enforcement efforts have led to significantly more seizures, it was stated that these interdiction efforts had not reduced consumption but had led to increased production, shifting patterns of trafficking and related consequences for the environment and communities.

³ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2024.html>

⁴ https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/cocaine/Global_cocaine_report_2023.pdf

⁵ <https://ocindex.net/report/2023/0-3-contents.html>

Additionally, indirect environmental impacts of illicit cocaine production and trafficking, such as deforestation, land grabbing and illegal mining, were mentioned as a key concern.

PLENARY: APPROACHES TOWARDS TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

The second thematic panel focused on solution-oriented approaches. It shed light on various policies and programmes for tackling problems related to illicit cocaine economies. The session's chair underlined that the discussions needed to turn more towards the Global South and the perspective of people who grow illicit drug crops and people who use drugs.

The first speaker presented the current Brazilian drug policy approach, characterized by a strong orientation towards human rights and social participation. Brazil grapples with the third largest prison population in the world, with over 200,000 people imprisoned for drug-related offenses. The Brazilian youth was characterized to be highly vulnerable to illicit economies, which manifests in high numbers of school dropouts and fatalities in connection with police interventions. The launch of the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy⁶ – endorsed by UNDP, UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation (WHO) and translated into Portuguese in 2023 – was identified as the starting point for a new national strategy on drug policy which takes into account the most vulnerable, such as youth, women and Indigenous communities. It was reported that Brazil is also exploring how to adapt alternative development programmes to respond to drug-related challenges in frontier zones and the Amazon. In addition, progressive approaches such as harm reduction, addressing stigma related to drug use and the decriminalization of cannabis possession for personal use were highlighted to be gaining traction in Brazil.

This intervention was followed by an input on harm reduction approaches for the use of stimulants, including cocaine. The speaker presented MAINline's "Speed Limits" report⁷, commissioned by GPPDP in 2018, and pointed out that most of its findings and policy recommendations still apply today. It recommends evidence-based practices, such as safer smoking kits, drug checking services, online interventions and psychosocial services to reduce the negative effects of stimulant use. The concept of an innovative pilot project being developed in the City of Amsterdam was also presented, including exploring the medical prescription of smokable cocaine for dependent and marginalized groups. Another option outlined included the substitution of crack cocaine with dexamphetamine for highly vulnerable individuals, an approach similar to opioid substitution with e.g. buprenorphine, although less researched. Both approaches are currently in the design stage but hold potential for more effective harm reduction strategies in connection with high-risk stimulant use.

The next input presented evidence-based prevention interventions specifically developed for people who use cocaine. As a starting point, it was stated that the motives for using cocaine are very diverse. Some engage in cocaine use socially, others use it to cope with stress or mental health issues, and some experience addictive and harmful behaviours. It was stated that prevention strategies should take these motives into account and instead of generally targeting the whole population they should focus on specific groups that are at higher risk or those who are beginning to experience problems with cocaine use. The presented interventions included targeted information campaigns on social media, awareness-raising efforts, strategies to counteract the glamorous image of drug use, and measures to bridge the gap between identifying the first signs of problematic use and offering effective solutions.

The fourth speaker presented the work of an Italian NGO that mainly works in the field of social reuse of assets confiscated from organized crime. The input underlined that the main goal in fighting

⁶ <https://www.undp.org/publications/international-guidelines-human-rights-and-drug-policy>

⁷ https://mainline.nl/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SPEED-LIMITS_HARM-REDUCTION-FOR-PEOPLE-WHO-USE-STIMULANTS.pdf

organized crime should not only be capturing criminal leaders but rather benefitting communities that have been impacted by crime, intimidation, and violence. Italy passed the first law on public and social re-use of confiscated assets in 1996, which allows to reassign assets such as properties, buildings or even businesses to non-profit associations. The presentation included some best practise examples, such as the *Pizzeria fiore* in the North of Italy, whose former owner was a mafia boss. Nowadays, it has been transformed to a restaurant run by a non-profit association offering job opportunities for people with disabilities.

Reflections from a subsequent world café exchange with the panellists included the nexus between the lack of licit employment for youth in urban areas and the recruitment of youngsters into organized crime groups, which was recommended to be urgently prioritized by governments through specialized outreach and job creation programmes. Further mentioned was the need to discuss racial bias in drug policy. Other topics that were discussed amongst participants included: the feasibility of cocaine prescription in therapeutic settings; the connection between stimulant harm reduction and mental health services; the inclusion of migrants in targeted prevention strategies; how to de-normalize the use of cocaine without demonizing it and thus creating further stigma; and the necessity for new storytelling to shape the future of communities after the strong presence of organized crime, including the promotion of licit income, the fight against corruption and the importance of community leadership throughout the process.

PLENARY: THE MIDTERM REVIEW, RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL DRUG POLICY

The second day of the Forum focused on the international drug policy framework, starting with a review of recent developments and their implications in Vienna and beyond. Representatives from governments and civil society organizations shared their views on the Midterm Review of the 2019 Political Declaration and Plan of Action held at the 67th Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in March 2024, recent negotiations of drug policy documents in Vienna and New York, the WHO-led coca review process, and the current state of implementation of the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy.

The first speaker presented the IDPC Shadow Report on the Midterm Review 2024⁸. Its findings were described as troubling: no reduction in the size of the illegal drug market, but increased drug-related violence and health harms, as well as a shrinking space for civil society. It was noted that some Member States used the Midterm Review to push for transformative change, but this did not materialize in the adopted outcome document⁹. However, some of the developments in 2024 have been described as groundbreaking, such as the statement led by Colombia and signed by 62 Member States calling for a thorough reevaluation of the international drug control system¹⁰, and speeches delivered by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasizing the importance of undoing decades of harm to indigenous communities.¹¹ It was further reported that in June 2024, the Human Rights Council adopted a new resolution on HIV/AIDS by consensus, which, after several amendments, explicitly recognized harm reduction¹², and that two reports on harm reduction released in 2024 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health strongly advocate for decriminalization, responsible regulatory frameworks and addressing colonial legacies. The input concluded with thoughts for the

⁸ <https://idpc.net/publications/2023/12/idpc-shadow-report-2024>

⁹ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/ltid/v24/014/40/pdf/v2401440.pdf>

¹⁰ https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/iupq00f7cajltu9usz1ep/Joint_Statement_High-Level-Segment.pdf?rlkey=u003741thqee5zju2d98mptfs&e=1&d=0

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/turk-urges-transformative-change-global-drug-policy> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkNdUvVxQ8I>

¹² https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4050327/files/A_HRC_56_20-EN.pdf

future: how can the international community build on the progress of the 67th CND session where harm reduction was explicitly included in an adopted resolution for the first time?

The second speaker focused her input on recent proceedings in Vienna, referring to the breaking of the “Vienna consensus” in 2024 and stating clearly that some Member States will not accept “business as usual” anymore. A group of Member States that are meeting regularly was characterized as the “motor of change” behind the inclusion of harm reduction in CND resolution 67/4.¹³ It was proclaimed that some Member States will no longer accept “consensus just for the sake of consensus” in Vienna and that the call for a vote in 2024 was neither an accident nor an exception. A recent briefing on harm reduction that UNODC convened in Vienna was welcomed by the speaker, but it was also characterized as overdue. The intervention ended with a call to try to find issues of mutual interest amongst a group of progressive countries and advance together on these issues.

Turning to New York, and negotiations of the biennial omnibus resolution of the UN General Assembly, the next panellist described the preparation process that had taken place before tabling the resolution in late 2024. The pen-holding State met with representatives from 83 missions with the aim to reduce the number of abstentions and focused on outreach to Member States considered as neutral. The outlined key learnings included the importance of coordinated efforts, particularly with Geneva missions, which helped to incorporate human rights language into the resolution. It was further reported that there remained a persistent misconception that harm reduction was inherently linked to legalization – and that this misunderstanding continued to complicate negotiations.

An update followed on the current state of implementation of the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy¹⁴ that were launched in 2019. The Guidelines were described as both a normative and an operational tool that has helped to build new drug policy narratives and brought about legal changes as well as interministerial dialogue opportunities on drug policy reform. It was reported that the Guidelines have been recognized in resolutions, e.g., in the UN Human Rights Council, and mainstreamed into the UN human rights framework. One could observe a heightened engagement from UN entities on drug policy issues, e.g., through the presence of the High Commissioner on Human Rights at the CND, and an increased interest from Member States in legal counsel based on the document. As examples, Colombia and Brazil were mentioned as countries where the Guidelines have been used as a key framework for drug policy assessment and implementation. It was also underlined that they have been applied in different contexts (both progressive as well as traditional), supporting a general shift away from purely punitive approaches.

Finally, the discussions turned to the ongoing coca review process led by WHO, which started in 2024 and is expected to conclude in 2026. A timeline was presented, according to which by June or July 2025 a draft report will be prepared, followed by a questionnaire to Member States to gather further input. The final report, incorporating these responses, will then be discussed during a meeting of the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD). Recommendations will be developed for, and likely voted on by, the CND members in March 2026. In terms of potential outcomes, it was predicted that any decision that challenges the integrity of the treaty system risks becoming a highly politicized issue in Vienna, pointing out the tensions between scientific recommendations, treaty obligations, Indigenous rights, and political considerations. Concerns were also raised about corporate interests and it was reported that industries were already positioning themselves to capitalize on potential outcomes of the coca review. In that respect the importance of protecting coca as an Indigenous resource was underscored, using geographical indications or the Nagoya Protocol to reduce the risk of corporate capture of a potential future legal market for natural coca products. The speaker concluded that the outcome will be a pivotal test for the ability of the UN drug control system to repair historical

¹³ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Drug_Resolutions/2020-2029/2024/Res_67_4.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.undp.org/publications/international-guidelines-human-rights-and-drug-policy>

injustices, to correct inherent inconsistencies and to respect human rights principles, especially Indigenous rights.

The discussion afterwards mainly circulated around harm reduction, UN system-wide coherence and the political consequences of the coca review process. Questions were raised on the generation of robust data on the medical benefits of coca leaf, as well as on the political outlook for a follow-up resolution on harm reduction at next year's CND. It was pointed out that UNAIDS was currently working on a report that looks at best practices relating to the decriminalisation of drug use and that UNDP was trying to strengthen coherent positioning on drugs and human rights within the UN system. Some participants also highlighted the fact that Colombia has eradicated coca crops in an area about the size of Belgium since the mid-1990s, but that cultivation still stands at record highs today. This brought up the question on how and if industrial uses of coca leaf could replace, at least in part, illicit income.

TALK SHOW: TOWARDS 2025 and 2026 AT THE UN COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

The second session on day two was conducted in a talk show format with a host and five discussants that dedicated their inputs to a short- and mid-term outlook on drug policy developments, looking particularly at the 68th session of the CND in March 2025, and the 10-year anniversary of the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs, as well as opportunities and challenges in this context.

It was noted that the atmosphere in Vienna mirrored the general global political landscape, which was characterized as polarized and fragmented, with some States aiming at transforming the international order. With a view towards 2025, participants discussed the possibility of another voting procedure at the CND, and posed the question if the Vienna spirit was still fit for purpose in a highly fragmented environment. Some discussants agreed that a transactional approach to international relations was gaining traction.

A central challenge of preserving a group of like-minded and progressive Member States in drug policy was diagnosed by one discussant, who also stressed the importance of coordinating priorities systematically between country delegations at the UN in Vienna, Geneva and New York. Outreach to other States that may lack the resources to follow all drug policy discussions, but who are generally open to less punitive approaches, was identified as a promising way forward – although it requires both energy and strategy from the existing group.

It was also mentioned that different regions might have profoundly different (or even competing) needs in the complex world drug situation. The ongoing climate negotiations were identified as promising entry points for an integral debate on drug policy and environmental concerns, especially as the upcoming COP30 will take place in the Amazon region which is a coca cultivation and trafficking hotspot. Participants agreed that environmental organizations should be included in the drug policy debates more meaningfully. Regarding the 10-year anniversary of the UNGASS in 2026, it was noted that it was hard to find one unifying vision for all Member States, but that resources should be strategically dedicated to certain topics, e.g., harm reduction and/or alternative development. Countries that have regulated certain controlled substances were also encouraged to share their learnings at the international level.

Concerning drug policy language, it was stated that “words do matter”, especially in overcoming stigma and giving a voice to communities that have not been heard before. Concerns were raised that the climate crisis and dealing with conflicts and wars is impacting advancements in drug policy and human rights, also reflected in the ongoing funding crisis for health- and development-oriented policies.

Decolonization, social justice and giving more space to civil society to share lived experiences were mentioned as tools to counteract a perceived authoritarian shift at the international level.

WORKING GROUPS: THEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO MOVE FORWARD

For the remainder of the second day, participants were invited to join two out of four thematic working groups: 1) development, 2) public health, 3) human rights and 4) “10 years after UNGASS – now what?” (the latter replacing the category “new trends” for this Forum). Each group was tasked with exploring upcoming issues and opportunities in their thematic area related to drug policy as well as outlining key recommendations and concrete initiatives for the future. After engaging discussions, these recommendations were presented in the plenary on the final day of the Forum. All participants were then invited to ‘vote’ by placing coloured stickers on the recommendations which they felt were the most important. As in previous years, the results of these ‘votes’ provide a useful indication of the group’s sense of priorities over the coming years. After rich discussions, the following recommendations were elaborated for the plenary voting exercise, with the most voted entries highlighted in bold:

A: DEVELOPMENT

1. Member States and civil society to engage in side events on the drug policy – environment nexus in the framework of the COP30 in Belém, Brazil, 2025. (30 votes)

=2. Involvement of specialized UN Agencies (e.g. FAO, UNIDO, UNWOMEN, UNDP, UNODC) in the process of updating the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development. (28 votes)

=2. UNDP regional offices (and co-sponsoring Member States) to convene regional dialogues on the UNDP discussion paper on the development dimensions of drug policy. (28 votes)

4. Member States to include Indigenous Peoples Representatives more meaningfully in Drug Policy processes, e.g. the coca review process. (21 votes)

5. Interested Member States and UN agencies, with the support of civil society actors and affected communities, to develop human-rights based indicators for alternative development. (18 votes)

6. In the framework of COPOLAD III¹⁵, develop a discussion paper on the social reuse of confiscated assets in drug producing countries and potential opportunities for alternative development. (17 votes)

7. A public information campaign by Bolivia and Colombia, supported by civil society and academia, to explain in detail the aims of the coca review. (4 votes)

8. Convene an expert group meeting on the development of a protection mechanism for the genetic properties of the coca leaf with the goal to benefit Andean communities. (3 votes)

B: PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Ensuring harm reduction remains central to the CND's agenda, by promoting harm reduction through upcoming resolutions. (40 votes)

¹⁵ <https://copolad.eu/en/>

2. UN agencies to collaborate to develop a more comprehensive and holistic definition of harm reduction, extending beyond the HIV package and current WHO guidelines, to include drug consumption rooms, overdose prevention sites and drug checking. (26 votes)

3. Elevate the focus on prisons at the CND and other drug policy discussions (e.g., through a high-level side event) and advocate for UNAIDS to re-include prisoners as a key population in their strategy. (20 votes)

4. Promote evidence-based and targeted prevention programmes through continued learning, collaboration and data collection on prevention, with a focus on behavioural insights and evidence reviews. (17 votes)

5. Member States to coordinate messaging across all relevant multilateral fora, issuing a strong call to action to prioritize access to medicines globally to heighten visibility for this critical issue. (17 votes)

6. Member States, UN agencies and civil society should bring harm reduction to the agenda of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). (16 votes)

7. Member States to exchange experiences in responding to synthetic drug epidemics and understanding their drivers. (6 votes)

8. Operationalize a harm reduction coalition connecting Member States across Vienna, Geneva, New York and national capitals, as well as with city-level involvement, to foster collaboration, share best practices and implement effective harm reduction strategies globally. (5 votes)

9. WHO to update their 2009 Guidelines for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence. (4 votes)

C: HUMAN RIGHTS

=1. Adopt a resolution at the Human Rights Council to mandate OHCHR to report periodically on the human rights impact on drug policy. (33 votes)

=1. Create a briefing document to harmonize narratives across the UN headquarters in Geneva, New York and Vienna. (33 votes)

3. Expand funding for continued national implementation of the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy through capacity building, research, events, the development of assessment tools, and a high-level side event on the Guidelines at the CND to share progress. (27 votes)

4. Adopt a new CND resolution on human rights, as a follow up to the 2008 CND resolution on this topic. (23 votes)

5. Continue to engage the International Narcotics Control Board on human rights issues, including facilitating dialogues between INCB and human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms. (19 votes)

6. Mobilize resources to support the Global Drugs Policy Index, focusing on a human rights matrix to ensure the connection between various agendas, including human rights, environment, public health and development. (8 votes)

7. Continue to promote the 2023 OHCHR report on drug policy¹⁶, including the implementation of its national level recommendations. (4 votes)

8. Expand the regional representation at the Core Group on Human Rights and Drug Policy in Geneva. (3 votes)

D: 10 YEARS AFTER UNGASS – NOW WHAT?

1. Hold a high-level event in the UN General Assembly with the attendance of heads of UN agencies, the UN Secretary General and Member States on the occasion of the 10-year anniversary of the UNGASS. (31 votes)

=2. Adopt a UN General Assembly resolution commemorating the 10-year anniversary of the UNGASS and secure the support of as many Member States as possible through targeted outreach. (26 votes)

=2. Request the UN Secretary General to convene an expert group on treaty tensions and make recommendations on the ways forward. (26 votes)

=4. Hold an international drug policy conference in Bogota for Heads of State of like-minded countries in 2026. (23 votes)

=4. Convene a Brandenburg Forum in New York in 2026. (23 votes)

6. Produce a UN Task Team report on lessons learned in drug policy since the UNGASS in 2016. (17 votes)

7. Draft a new IDPC Shadow Report on challenges and progress in the post-UNGASS decade. (3 votes)

¹⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session56/A-HRC-54-53-summary.pdf>

CLOSING

After the 'voting' exercise, the results were shared with the participants and the 9th BBF ended with a brief closing panel.

The closing words, delivered on behalf of all co-hosts, stated that although worries about polarization prevail, progress has been made in the past, for example on harm reduction and the growing importance of human rights in drug policy, constituting valuable learnings for future progress.

Critical reflections included the absence of targeted discussions on gender-responsive drug policy, and the need for more Global-South representation at the BBF. Representatives of affected communities, e.g., from drug cultivation regions or people who use drugs, should also be invited in future editions to provide a reality check for the often highly political debates. At the very end, the co-hosts thanked all participants and the speakers for their active contributions – as they were the ones that continue to shape and further develop the Brandenburg Forum and its outreach.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Evaluation forms were completed by 32 participants, excluding the organizing team of the BBF. The collected feedback was, once again, overwhelmingly positive.

The overall satisfaction with the logistics and venue was very high, and satisfaction with general structure and time allocation was high – although some more time for discussions was requested by some. A vast majority of participants said that the Forum helped them identify potential new drug policy approaches which were relevant to their work.

When asked what aspects were missing, the most frequent answers included a gender-specific focus, and the expansion of regional representation, e.g., from Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. Some participants would have liked to work specifically on cocaine-related recommendations to make better use of the thematic focus on day one.