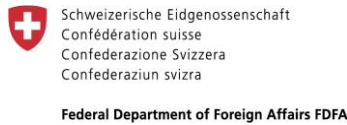




On behalf of



Government of the Netherlands



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

10TH BRANDENBURG FORUM ON DRUGS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

“From Crisis to Coherence: Next Steps in Aligning Drug Policy with Development, Human Rights and the UN Reform”

MEETING REPORT

The 10th Brandenburg Forum on Drugs and Development Policies (BBF) took place from 24th to 26th November 2025 at Schloss Lübbenau in Brandenburg, Germany. The Forum was organised by the Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development (GPDP),¹ commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented under political patronage of the Commissioner of the German Federal Government for Drug and Addiction Policy. The meeting was co-hosted by the Government of the Netherlands, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), 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 Armenia, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. Also in attendance were officials from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe, as well as a number of 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 This meeting report also reflects the Rule, with the exception of specifying the designated speakers in the Forum agenda.

The Forum was opened by the Head of the GPDP programme, with welcome remarks provided by Prof. Dr. Hendrik Streeck, Commissioner of the German Federal Government for Drug and Addiction Policy and Ms. Ina von Frantzius, Head of the Agriculture, Rural Development Division in the BMZ, as well as representatives of the TNI and the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. This opening session highlighted the instrumental role that the BBF has played in shaping, promoting and strengthening international drug policy aligned with development policy, human rights and health-

¹ For more information on the Partnership, please visit <http://www.gdpdp.org>

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

related objectives – including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – and emphasized that current geopolitical tensions, the impact of drug economies on the environment and biodiversity, as well as the multilateral funding crisis require this type of Forums to exchange ideas and develop coordinated responses.



Participants at the 10th Brandenburg Forum, November 2025. Photo credit: GIZ/Photothek Media Lab.

DAY 1: SETTING THE SCENE

Acknowledging that more than half of the participants were attending their first Brandenburg Forum, the remainder of the first day was comprised of a series of plenary sessions aimed at setting the scene, capturing the history of the Forum itself, and reflecting on modern-day global developments and complexities affecting drug policies and development.

10 Years of the Brandenburg Forum

Firstly, the IDPC Executive Director presented on the key highlights and achievements from the long-running series of Brandenburg Forums – which began in July 2016 as an opportunity for interested Member States to ‘take stock’ of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs that had taken place a few months prior. Since then, the ten annual meetings have brought together more than 500 participants from 43 countries around the world. Across the previous nine Forums, a total of 238 recommendations have been proposed by working groups through a unique methodology that has evolved over time. Of these, 85 recommendations were prioritised by participants over the nine Forums as being in the ‘top three’ within the various working groups’ categories – and IDPC’s initial analysis found that 42 percent of these can be said to have been achieved or actioned. This, it was proposed, shows the value in the Forums discussions and the important contribution they can make by promoting international exchange and coordination, identify common areas and ideas, and “planting seeds” for future actions. Notable examples of this include: the agreement of the United Nations (UN) *common position supporting the implementation of the international drug control policy through effective inter-agency collaboration*³ in 2018; annual resolutions at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) on Alternative Development, as well as more recent resolutions on overdose and on ‘strengthening the international drug control system’; periodic Human Rights Council resolutions on drug policies and human rights⁴; and the development and dissemination of the *International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy*.⁵ A more detailed report documenting the ten years of the Brandenburg Forum is planned for publication in 2026.

³ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/un-common-position-drugs/index.html>

⁴ The latest is Human Rights Council resolution 60/26 from 2025: <https://docs.un.org/A/HRC/RES/60/26>

⁵ <https://www.undp.org/publications/international-guidelines-human-rights-and-drug-policy>

Panel Discussion

This was followed by an interactive panel, conducted in a ‘talk show’ format with a host and five expert discussants from Brazil, Canada, UNODC, the International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) and the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC). Questions covered a wide range of developments and issues from 2025 so far, starting with discussion on the ‘UN80 Initiative’ which was launched by UN Secretary General António Guterres in March as an “ambitious, system-wide reform effort” across the whole UN system.⁶ Panellists acknowledged that this was a challenging time for the multilateral system, but, as one panellist stated, “crisis can also be an opportunity for change”. While the UN-wide liquidity crisis has led to reduced staffing and capacity, the impact has been felt unevenly between UN agencies. It was highlighted that the risks related to drug policy include interagency coordination being affected, civil society spaces within the system being squeezed, and cross-cutting issues such as gender being sidelined. At the same time, a better geographical spread of UN staff was seen as a positive by some panellists, as was the possibility of creating a more coherent, human rights-based UN drug policy.

The panel was then asked to reflect on the broader fragmentation of global politics and multilateralism, and what challenges this may pose for drug policies. They reflected that geopolitical tensions and funding ‘crises’ were the norm at the multilateral level, with some panellists reflecting on their own long-term experience to say that the risk is not that Member States don’t agree on everything, but that they stop working together to try and find common ground. To prevent this, the focus should be on technical aspects, on the rule of law, on the evidence of contemporary drug markets, and on emphasizing the positive outcomes of health- and rights-based responses at the national level, as opposed to more punitive strategies to combat so-called ‘narcoterrorism’.

Attention then turned to the issue of drugs and the environment, with one panellist having just attended the UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) just days before. Drug policy issues were said to be present at the Conference, especially in discussions on an ‘Amazon treaty’, but more work is needed to link these two agendas together, including in the framework of Alternative Development. Finally, the panel was asked about the follow-up to 2024 CND resolution on overdose.⁷ Panellists highlighted how no one country, even those most impacted by toxic drug supplies, can solve this issue on their own. Alongside criminalisation and the lack of harm reduction services, the overdose crisis was said to be one of the main issues facing people who use drugs, who continue to be politically ‘invisible’ in many countries. It was emphasised that the issue remains on the agenda for the CND and UNODC.



A graphic recording from Day 1 of the 10th Brandenburg Forum, captured and created by Anne Lehmann (<https://annelehmann.de>). Photo credit: GIZ/Photothek Media Lab.

⁶ <https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/>

⁷ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Drug_Resolutions/2020-2029/2024/Res_67_4.pdf

'Open Processes Shaping Tomorrow'

The final session of the day focused more on relevant and ongoing processes. The first speaker provided an update on progress made since the adoption of CND resolution 68/6 in March 2025, which mandated the creation of a “multidisciplinary panel of 19 independent experts” to make recommendations on the implementation of existing treaties and commitments on drug policy.⁸ They began by emphasising the need to treat CND resolutions in the same way whether they were adopted by consensus or by votes, to avoid creating a ‘two-tier system’ of commitments. Since March, around USD 458,000 has been pledged by Member States, with most funds provided by Colombia as the original resolution sponsor and other contributions coming from Austria, Canada, the Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland and Uruguay. This will fund two in-person meetings with no translation, so additional fundraising is ongoing. Nominations for the panel have been received, as requested, from the UN Secretary General, from the INCB and from the World Health Organisation (WHO) – as well as from three of the five regional groups of Member States in Vienna. It is anticipated that voting to select the remaining panellists will now take place at the CND in March 2026, after which the panel will begin its work.

The next speaker focused on another of the CND resolutions from 2025: 68/3 on the process to ‘complement’ the UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development.⁹ The speaker described this as an important moment for the evolution of Alternative Development, which he described as “more than a technical intervention – it is a promise”. The original UN Guiding Principles were adopted 12 years ago by the CND¹⁰ and remain the core of the framework, but additional considerations now include environmental sustainability, inclusivity, innovative market integrations, and economic empowerment (especially for women), as well as a strengthened recognition of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and their meaningful engagement. It was also highlighted that Alternative Development needs long-term political commitments and financing, with outcomes measured in years rather than months. The 10th Expert Group Meeting on Alternative Development was held in Lima, Peru earlier in November 2025, the result of ongoing and shared leadership on the issue between Germany, Peru and Thailand in collaboration with UNODC. The new addition to the UN Guiding Principles will be shared at the CND in March 2026.

Attention then turned to another recent development which had been previously recommended and discussed at Brandenburg Forums – the Human Rights Council resolution 60/26 on “The human rights implications of drug policy”, which was adopted by consensus in October 2025.¹¹ This was the fourth Council resolution on the topic (the others being adopted in 2015, 2018 and 2023), and mandated a new report on “the impact of drug policies on the rights of women and girls” to be produced by OHCHR, based on a call for inputs from Member States and others. There will also be an intersessional panel on the topic in 2027. It was highlighted that the resolution also mentions the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Indigenous Peoples and their traditional uses, the importance of CND and UNODC, the role of civil society, the *International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy*,¹² and “the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment”. The speaker closed by emphasising that the successful implementation of the resolution requires the cooperation of Member States, civil society and people who use drugs.

The next speaker highlighted the forthcoming report from the Global Commission on Drug Policy - a foundation composed of 27 Commissioners who include former heads of states and UN leaders – on the politically controversial issue of drug policies with a focus on children. However, the sensitivity of the topic was said to underline the importance of breaking the taboos – from the drug-related health harms experienced by young people, to the stigma and isolation experienced by young people who

⁸ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Drug_Resolutions/2020-2029/2025/Res_68_6.pdf

⁹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Drug_Resolutions/2020-2029/2025/Res_68_3.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Drug_Resolutions/2010-2019/2013/A_RES_68_196.pdf

¹¹ <https://docs.un.org/A/HRC/RES/60/26>

¹² <https://www.undp.org/publications/international-guidelines-human-rights-and-drug-policy>

use drugs, to the impacts of drug use and drug policies on families, to the widespread incarceration of young people that is driven by drug offences. The Commission has been working with youth-led organisations and in consultation with children during 2025 to ensure their voices are heard. The emerging report will highlight insights on a rights-based approach for children that encompasses evidence-based drug prevention measures; age-appropriate, confidential and voluntary treatment and harm reduction services; support for children affected by parental drug use; and protection and resilience against exploitation by drug markets and organised crime.

The final speaker of the session presented on the ‘critical review’ of the coca leaf being conducted by the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD), as requested by Bolivia and Colombia – with the outcome and recommendation announced in December 2025. The speaker explained that the coca leaf was not added to the UN conventions as the result of a scientific review, but rather a 1950s recommendation from WHO based on a colonial conflation of coca use and so-called “cocainism”. After a further (unpublished) review in the 1990s, coca was retained in the conventions based on an argument that cocaine can be “readily extracted” from the leaf. It was explained that scheduling criteria for the 1961 Single Convention include *similarity* to other substances, and *convertibility* into another scheduled substance. In the ECDD’s *Critical Review Report*, it states that “research reviewed for this report did not reveal evidence of clinically meaningful public health harms associated with coca leaf use and the contemporary scientific literature on the public health impact of coca leaf remains consistent with the 1995 WHO Cocaine Report (WHO & UNICRI, 1995). The research record does, however, robustly document the substantial public health harms associated with coca control strategies at all scales”¹³ – essentially weakening the *similarity* argumentation around “cocainism” in the 1950s. On the issue of *convertibility*, it was suggested that 700,000 coca tea bags – costing around USD 90,000 – would be needed to produce 1kg of cocaine, challenging the notions of ‘practicable and profitable’ extraction. The speaker also highlighted other existing examples where psychoactive substances are scheduled in the UN conventions while the natural plant containing these compounds is not – i.e. khat and cathinone, kratom and mitragynine, and the ephedra plant and ephedrine. Finally, it was also noted that the WHO ‘critical review’ process does not formally take into account Indigenous Peoples and their rights, which was cited as a major oversight in the case of the coca leaf and the impact of prohibition on the Andean peoples.

DAY 2: TOWARDS THE 2026 UN COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

The second day of the Forum began with a recorded keynote speech from Her Excellency Helen Clark, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand and current Chair of the Global Commission on Drug Policy. Ms Clark acknowledged that some progress that had been made since the 2016 UNGASS, and noted the ongoing human, social, and economic costs of punitive drug laws and the importance of persistent advocacy for reform. She concluded that “The very worst approach would be to continue to respond to current and emerging challenges with strategies and approaches which decades of evidence show us are both ineffective and harmful”.

Continuing from successful experiences at previous Brandenburg Forums, the following plenary session focused specifically on the forthcoming CND session, to be held from 9-13 March 2026. The first speaker proposed that consensus remains the goal for Member States at the CND, as it is across all UN fora. Attempts to return to consensus in 2026 could focus on common ground areas such as access to controlled medicines, drug prevention and treatment, social media and online drug markets, and important concept of proportionality – which was suggested as an important lever as it is mentioned in the UN conventions. On the other hand, topics such as human rights, the death penalty and harm reduction were cited as facing continued disagreement at CND.

These points were then built upon by the next speaker, who acknowledged the “highly politicised” nature of the CND and the lack of a regular, routine review mechanism built into the system as it is for

¹³ https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/controlled-substances/48th-ecdd/3.1.1_-coca-leaf.pdf

other Vienna-based treaties. It was also emphasised that budgetary concerns are affecting the work of UNODC and CND, as with the rest of the UN system. For example, this has raised questions about whether there can be further thematic intersessional meetings in 2026 and beyond. Key priorities for 2026 were suggested to include the human rights approach, sustainable development, a focus on more effective law enforcement, and resisting efforts to limit CND discussions to a narrow interpretation of its “core mandate”. The speaker noted the importance of the ten-year anniversary of the UNGASS on drugs but posed the question about how best to revitalise discussions on this as there is no on-going follow-up to the 2016 recommendations.

The next speaker emphasized that the aim for the CND should be to mainstream efforts on human rights and sustainable development priorities, focusing on actions and navigating the UN-wide reforms towards a more coherent and effective system. He emphasized that both harm reduction and Alternative Development approaches were central to this, as well as the role of the independent panel in helping to pave the way. When asked about the CND consensus faltering in recent years, he highlighted that the methodology has not changed, and voting remains the last resort in Vienna to strive for a collective sense of ownership. Participants also then cautioned about losing too much in the quest for consensus, especially at a time when certain Member States were so rigidly opposing any language related to the SDGs, gender, diversity, climate change, etc. The speaker closed by highlighting that one crucial aspect was to “walk the talk” and ensure sufficient funding and resources to enact any resolutions in the future.

The final speaker, from civil society in Colombia, emphasized the way that ongoing international tensions alongside national election processes across Latin America could shape the political landscape, including at CND. They told participants of the importance of the coca leaf review as an opportunity to address the conflicts between Indigenous rights and current drug policies, and how the independent panel can also play an important role – but must also work to address any gaps in its collective expertise around Indigenous rights, human rights and communities. Both processes, it was stated, “will test to which degree the apparatus works and is coherent when being faced with challenges”. She also highlighted the ongoing military action against Venezuelan boats in open waters in the Caribbean, performed in the name of drug control, and the importance of strong UN and Member State condemnation of these actions. This point was also picked up by participants in the subsequent discussions, with the attacks described as being outside of international law and wholly disproportionate – but also part of a wider political shift across the world back to extreme supply reduction measures and narco-trafficking, narco-terrorism rhetoric.

WORKING GROUPS: ‘OPPORTUNITIES AND CONCRETE ACTIONS’

For the remainder of the second day, each participant was invited to join two out of four thematic working groups – focused on a) development, b) public health, c) human rights and gender, and d) UN system review and reform. Each working group had an assigned moderator and rapporteur, and was tasked with exploring upcoming issues and opportunities in their thematic area related to drug policy, before refining a series of key recommendations for concrete initiatives over the next 12-24 months. After rich discussions, all of these recommendations were then presented in the plenary at the end of Day 2. As has become a key part of the Brandenburg Forum methodology, all participants were then invited to help prioritise recommendations by placing coloured stickers on the ones which they felt were the most important, impactful, relevant and/or feasible.

The following recommendations were elaborated by the four working groups, listed from the most to least prioritised amongst the participants:

A) DEVELOPMENT

1st: Enable the exchange of best practices between interested Member States on the social re-use of confiscated assets and strengthen capacity building.

2nd: Bring Indigenous Peoples and youth to CND and meaningfully engage them, and table a resolution that includes the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

3rd: Develop Alternative Development indicators, and a practical guide on their use, to better measure the impact on people and communities.

4th: Establish continuous exchange between Member States, UN partners and the private sector on Alternative Development and its long-term funding.

5th: Explore the possibility of an 'UNGASS Anniversary Day' at CND, and convene a high-level side event on the UNGASS Outcome Document's development chapter.

6th: Convene a consultative meeting or process with Indigenous Peoples and local communities on the issue of drug policies.

7th: National governments and UN country teams to embed the mandates of UN partners within national development cooperation frameworks.

8th: Organise a CND side event and report on the 'territorial approach' (i.e. a holistic development-oriented concept for regions affected by illicit drug economies), alongside other UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UN Habitat.

=9th: Member States to provide inputs to the forthcoming OHCHR report on human rights and drug policy, highlighting the contribution of drug policies to SDG 5 on gender equality.

=9th: Promote preferential access for traditional farmers to emerging legal cannabis and/or coca leaf markets.

B) PUBLIC HEALTH

1st: Key UN agencies to carry out dissemination events in Geneva, Vienna and New York about the decriminalisation of drugs – presenting new guidance and positions.

2nd: The incoming CND Chair to promote the issue of public health through a high-level event during CND in March 2026.

3rd: CND resolution on a comprehensive public health response, e.g. including prevention, treatment, harm reduction, recovery and access to medicines.

4th: Organise a meeting with like-minded countries at the CND to discuss the forthcoming UN General Assembly omnibus resolution in 2026.

5th: The UN system coordination task team on drugs to deliver a series of events about public health to show common understandings alongside the existing evidence and guidance.

6th: Use existing interministerial meetings at the World Health Assembly to promote public health issues relating to drug policies.

C) HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER

1st: Introduce a new, nuanced resolution at the CND on women and gender, possibly in light of the 15th anniversary of the Bangkok Rules¹⁴ in 2026.

2nd: Socialise Human Rights Council Resolution 60/26 on ‘The human rights implications of drug policy’¹⁵ at the CND in Vienna.

3rd: Use the next Brandenburg Forums to secure high-level political support for human rights and gender narratives.

=4th: Showcase best practices and implementation experiences related to the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy,¹⁶ including on gender issues.

=4th: Reconvene informal group on the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy, e.g. through a luncheon event during the CND.

6th: A civil society-led initiative or campaign for relevant actors, including international bodies, organizations, agencies and programmes, to pronounce themselves on military interventions in Caribbean and Pacific waters.

7th: Submit the new guidance note from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) on the decriminalisation of drug use as a CND Conference Room Paper.

D) UN REFORM AND REVIEW

1st: Undertake an assessment of the critical functions provided by UNAIDS that are at risk, and make recommendations for where these functions could best be housed after UNAIDS’ closure.

2nd: Request the ‘multidisciplinary panel of independent experts’ (from CND resolution 68/6) to assess how the UN system is currently coordinating on drug policy work, and to make recommendations for improvement.

=3rd: Use the opportunity of the new incoming UNODC Executive Director to request stronger engagement with civil society and communities, and on the ongoing UN80 process.

=3rd: Request the ‘multidisciplinary panel of independent experts’ (from CND resolution 68/6) to ensure a robust and inclusive consultation process with civil society, youth and affected communities to inform their recommendations.

5th: Member States to commit to improving working methods and use resources more efficiently, in line with the UN80 recommendations.

6th: Member States to reflect drug-related issues in Vienna’s crime meetings and processes through political commitments (such as at the UN Crime Congress in April 2026).

7th: Advocate with Member States – in capitals and New York missions – to enable more coordinated inputs from Vienna missions into the UN80 reform processes.

¹⁴ https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Bangkok_Rules_ENG_22032015.pdf

¹⁵ <https://docs.un.org/A/HRC/RES/60/26>

¹⁶ <https://www.undp.org/publications/international-guidelines-human-rights-and-drug-policy>

DAY 3: 'IMPLEMENTATION DIAGRAM EXERCISE'

In an evolution of the Brandenburg Forum methodology, the third day of the meeting began with a second set of working group discussions – again framed around the four pillars described above. Participants were asked to focus on the top priority recommendation for each pillar, and consider in greater detail how it could be operationalised in the coming months. To guide these discussions, each working group was requested to discuss six steps towards the ultimate goal of the recommendation, capturing: key and lead actors; current allies; potential allies; key obstacles; 'red lines' that cannot be compromised; and which specific actions should the lead actors undertake, and when? The findings of each group were captured on a large 'implementation diagram' poster and then presented back by the group moderators in a final plenary session.

For **DEVELOPMENT**, the working group focused on the recommendation around the social re-use of confiscated assets from crime, which had received 51 "votes" in the prioritisation exercise on Day 2. Key actors identified included Member States, UNODC and civil society partners, and especially those from countries with existing experience in this area of policy. Participants recognised synergies between UN forums such as the CND and those related to the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. Cooperation from financial institutions and the private sector was also identified as being important. Challenges and barriers included a lack of funding to develop this work, technical aspects around how to value and sell confiscated assets (such as cryptocurrencies), and variances between legislation and capacity between countries. The crucial 'red line' for participants was that proceeds from confiscated assets must be used for social good. Accordingly, one of the intermediate actions identified was to develop a common understanding of what is meant by social re-use (possibly through an expert group meeting). Other suggested actions were to collect experiences and data, to present the concept and examples through side events at UN forums, to provide study visits and technical assistance for Member States, to engage civil society more on this issue, and to work towards UN resolutions and guidance on the topic.

For **PUBLIC HEALTH**, the most prioritised recommendation was for events to disseminate UN guidance and positions on the decriminalisation of drugs – which had received 60 "votes" from participants on Day 2. Key actors for this included the UN agencies with such guidance and positions in place, including UNODC, UNDP, OHCHR and UNAIDS (whose new guidance note on decriminalisation will be launched in 2026). The allies identified included Member States with decriminalisation policies in place at the national level, although barriers included a lack of funds and coordination. Proposed 'red lines' included the importance of including the perspectives and experiences of people who use drugs in any events. Building on the original recommendation for events at the UN (in Geneva, Vienna and New York), other potential opportunities for dissemination included the UN Crime Congress (April 2026), and the International AIDS Conference (July 2026). Other suggested actions were to include these events into the workplan of the UN system coordination task team on drugs, and to develop a consistent narrative and communication strategy across the UN system.

For **HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER**, the leading recommendation – for a CND resolution on women and gender – had received 44 "votes" during the prioritisation exercise on Day 2. Potential lead Member States for this were discussed, with a wide range of current and potential allies also identified – including those who worked on Resolution 34/2 at the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2025, entitled "Celebrating the Bangkok Rules and the Nelson Mandela Rules".¹⁷ 'Red lines' included the engagement of civil society and the explicit inclusion of the Sustainable Development Goals in the final text, alongside references to relevant Human Rights Council resolutions and OHCHR reports. Some participants questioned whether such a resolution was best to be tabled in 2026, or whether it would be better to 'socialise' the idea ahead of a resolution in 2027 – by which time a new OHCHR report on the topic will be finalised.

¹⁷ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/2020-2029/2025/Res_34_2_CCPCJ_E2025_30_e.pdf

Finally, the working group on the **UN SYSTEM REVIEW AND REFORM** focused on the recommendation for an assessment of the critical functions provided by UNAIDS and how these functions could be delivered after UNAIDS is 'sunset' (as recommended by the 'UN80 Initiative'). This recommendation had received 46 "votes". UNAIDS was, naturally, identified as a key actor in this process, alongside civil society and the other UN agencies that are part of the Joint Programme. A wide range of other current and potential allies were identified including Member States, academic institutions, the UN Secretary General, and the media. Primary among the considerations was a question about where the harm reduction mandate and work could be assigned within the UN system. 'Red lines' included keeping harm reduction on the CND agenda, engaging with civil society and communities, and the importance of protecting and maintaining dedicated harm reduction capacity within the UN system. Proposed actions included consultations with stakeholders (including at the country level), coordinated media engagement, and feeding this issue into the work of the 'multidisciplinary panel of independent experts' (from CND resolution 68/6).

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Evaluation forms were completed by 32 participants. The collected feedback was, once again, overwhelmingly positive. The overall satisfaction with logistics, venue, meeting structure and time allocation were extremely high, with most participants agreeing that the Forum provided the space to strategize on current developments and topics according to national and international priorities. The importance of more thematic discussions and exchange with a diverse group of participants, including civil society, was also highlighted.

When asked what aspects were missing, participants mentioned that a longer event would be needed to cover a broader scope of specific challenges. More frequent follow-up was also requested, including through online or regional meetings, to maintain momentum on the goals and strategies proposed.

CLOSING

After a busy three days, the 10th Brandenburg Forum was formally closed with remarks and thanks from GPPD and IDPC, on behalf of all the co-hosts. Great appreciation was voiced regarding the energy and engagement of the participants – especially considering the increasingly complex geopolitical and financial context in which the Forum took place.



Photo credit: GIZ/Photothek Media Lab.