

Welcome to the third edition of the Geneva Platform on Human Rights, Health and Psychoactive Substances' Newsletter! You will find news about the latest developments related to drug-policy that have taken place in Geneva; as well as news about important upcoming events in Geneva. Visit our website: <http://www.genevaplatform.ch> for more information, including how to become a member.

NEWS FROM GENEVA

What has been going on

March 2018

- **26 February to 23 March 2018: Human Rights Council, 37th session, Palais des Nations, Room XX.** Of most relevance to issues related to human rights, health and psychoactive substances was the Resolution entitled “Contribution of the Human Rights Council to the implementation of the joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem” put forward by a core group made up of the governments of Albania, Brazil, Colombia, Greece, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Portugal, Switzerland and Uruguay. After a number of informal consultations held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva (on the 1st, 7th, 9th, 12th and 14th of March 2018), the Resolution was adopted as orally revised and amended by a recorded vote on Friday the 23rd of March 2018. The Geneva Platform’s statement at the 3rd informal can be viewed [here](#).

The main outcome of this Resolution, which among other things reaffirms the outcome document “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem” of the 30th session of the General Assembly, of April 2016, is a **request to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on the implementation of the joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem with regard to human rights**, and to present it to the Human Rights Council at its 39th session session (in September 2018, dates tbc). While there remain important challenges to overcome in the discussions on international drug policy, **this resolution represents a key**

milestone for ensuring drug policies comply with human rights obligations.

The official text is not yet available but will no doubt be so shortly. **The Resolution was adopted 26 to 10, with 11 abstentions.** The following States voted for the Resolution: Angola, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Ecuador, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Panama, Peru, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America. The following States abstained: Afghanistan; Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Qatar, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia; and the following States: Burundi, China, Cuba, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela voted against the adoption of the Resolution.

The vote can be viewed on [Webtv](http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/). Please note more generally that UN treaty body sessions may be watched here: <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/>.

- **9 March 2018** and **16 March 2018**: The Geneva Platform Executive Coordinator attended the annual meeting of NGOs with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, held on the 9th of March 2018, 13:00- 14:30, Room XXIV, Palais des Nations, Room XXIV, Geneva; as well as the meeting of the President of the Human Rights Council with NGOs and civil society organisations on Friday the 16th of March 2018 at the Palais des Nations. The discussions were mostly focused on general administrative issues and/or specific thematic questions relating to a particular country and/or region. For more information, contact the Geneva Platform : genevaplatfom@grea.ch

ECHOES FROM VIENNA

- **The 61st session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)** was held between the **12th to the 16th of March 2018** at the Vienna International Conference Centre in Vienna. A number of civil society actors held [side-events](#). The [Resolutions](#) covered a wide range of topics such as: “Protecting children from illicit drug threats”; “Enhancing cooperation to combat the synthetic opioid crisis”; “strengthening efforts to prevent drug use in educational settings”; “Addressing the specific needs of vulnerable members of society in response to the world drug problem”; “Removing stigma as a barrier to the availability and delivery of health, care and social services for people who use drugs”; and of course included one on the “Preparations for the 62nd session of the CND in 2019”.

Member States did not manage to reach consensus on the format, agenda,

content, specific outcomes and organizational arrangements for next year's session, which means that a certain level of uncertainty remains with regard to what CND 2019 will look like.

The Vienna and New York NGO Committees on Drugs **signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing the new Civil Society Task Force (CSTF)**, to ensure meaningful civil society participation in the process leading up to and during the CND High-Level Ministerial Segment in March 2019.

- A new [Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs \(VNGOC\) Board](#) was elected in Vienna on the 15th of March 2018.

COMING UP IN GENEVA

April 2018

- **7 April: World Health Day:** The WHO is calling on world leaders to live up to the pledges they made when they agreed to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, and to commit to concrete steps to advancing #HealthForAll. This means ensuring that everyone, everywhere can access essential quality health services without facing financial hardship. For information on how you can get involved see [here](#).
- **17-26 April: Human Rights Council, Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, 81st session,** Palais des Nations, Room IX. May be of interest with regard to arbitrary arrest and detention of people who use drugs in several countries around the world.
- **23 April-18 May: Committee Against Torture, 63rd session,** Palais Wilson. Of relevance to several aspects of repressive drug policies around the world.

May 2018

- **7-18 May: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group, 30th Session.** The following countries will be up for review: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Colombia, Cuba, Djibouti, Germany, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uzbekistan. The detailed calendar of countries and review dates, as part of the 3rd cycle (2017-2021) of the Human Rights Council UPR can be found [here](#). The deadlines for the submission of written contributions to both May and October-November 2018 UPR sessions have now passed, but it may be a good idea to check out this link not to miss deadlines for future sessions. For more information, contact the Geneva Platform at: genevaplatform@grea.ch.

- **21-26 May: The 71st World Health Assembly (WHA)** will be held in Geneva, at the Palais des Nations, between 21-26 May 2018. See <http://apps.who.int/gb/index.html> for further information. **Civil society meetings** ahead of the WHA will take place on **18-19 May 2018**. To see what the civil society meetings looked like last year, see [here](#). The WHO Executive Board (which last met in January 2018) will hold its 143rd session on 28-29 May 2018.

June 2018

- **4-8 June: 40th Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD)**, will be held from 4-8 June 2018 at the WHO Headquarters in Geneva. The session is a specially convened session dedicated to carrying out pre-reviews of cannabis and cannabis-related substances: Cannabis plant and cannabis resin; Extracts and tinctures of cannabis; Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC); Isomers of THC. Questionnaires designed gather information on the legitimate use, harmful use, status of national control and potential impact of international control for each substance under evaluation have been sent directly to focal points nominated by Member States. For more information contact the ECDD Secretariat at: ecddsecretariat@who.int.
- **4-8 June:** Meetings of the special rapporteurs, special representatives, independent experts and chairs of the working groups of the Human Rights Council, Twenty-fifth session. We will share potentially relevant material with you as it appears.
- **18 June -6 July: Human Rights Council, 38th Session**, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

MEMBERS' CORNER

- The Geneva Platform will be hosting a series of “**Drug Policy Encounters**” on different topics in Geneva in the next six months. Check out the [Geneva Platform website](#) for more information in the coming weeks.
- **Launch of Harm Reduction International (HRI)’s report *The Death Penalty for Drug Offences*.**
HRI officially launched its report *The Death Penalty for Drug Offences: Global Overview 2017* in Vienna on the 15th of March 2018. HRI has been monitoring the death penalty for drugs in law and practice since 2007. HRI’s analysis of the period 2015-2017 indicates the situation is at once improving and deteriorating. Some of the key findings of the report include: at least 33 countries and territories prescribe the death penalty for drug offences in law; at least nine countries still have the death penalty for drug offences as a mandatory sanction, although three of these (Brunei Darussalam, Laos and Myanmar) are abolitionist in practice; and between 2015 and 2017, executions for drug offences took place in at least five countries:

China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Singapore.



We welcome your ideas and want to hear how the Geneva Platform can best support the work you do! Please do not hesitate to contact the Executive Coordinator at: genevaplatfom@grea.ch

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