

Opening remarks 23 June 2021

Rome Consensus - Support, Don't Punish!

Hello everybody,

it's such a pleasure for me to welcome you to this online event.

The Rome Consensus 2.0 initiative is starting to grow and to circulate more and more all around the world. And this is good news. But much more needs to be done to be heard by governments to inspire them for a new humanitarian drug policy. This advocacy tool has the purpose to inspire everyone that works in the field of drugs in order to create a stronger partnership that can unify the voice and the will of many professionals, activists and people suffering, under the protective and neutral emblem of the Red Cross/Red Crescent.

Humanity has done a lot of mistakes in the fight against drugs. The big illusion that led the approach of many governments, supported by public opinion, has been mostly punitive, with a wide use of prisons and tribunals.

The great illusion behind this still dominant strategy is that if the person who use drug realizes that drug use carries punitive consequences, this is the best way to let him/her to stop.

This apparently logical prejudice, however, is contradicted by reality. Those who suffer from the consequences of drug use will suffer even more from a punitive policy against them, and drugs will still appear to be the only viable solution.

We believe that treatment and punishment can't work together. Treating people with drug disorders is a common interest for all

humanity, for all the government and for each community in order to have healthier, peaceful and secure communities. This is the common basic mission of Rome Consensus supporters. We invited today leaders of different organizations from the 5 corners of the globe, the 5 Continents, to dialogue, know better each other, learn and combat together all the obstacles that impede people with drug problems to get cured and safe in their communities!

Those countries and policy makers that keep ignoring the contradiction between punishment and treatment go against their own interest.

The humanitarian perspective is the milestone of our daily work, and we will make all the noise and action needed to be heard and supported in this common challenge!

One of the founders and co-chair of the Rome Consensus, Ben Levenson, from Levenson Foundation, is the moderator of our meeting, and I am happy and honoured to give him the floor.