

CND intersessional meeting

4 December 2023 Vienna

IFRC Speech

Thank you Chair,

I speak on behalf of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

As we've heard this morning, it's a matter of fact that still the majority of people who suffer for drug disorders all over the world, are not yet treated or receiving inappropriate treatment, despite many declaration of good will and the very clear scientific evidence.

This remains one of the biggest challenges, the huge inequalities where a few thousands people of wealthy countries have universal access to treatment and several million people are without access and persecuted because they have drug disorders, mental health problems or are positive to Hiv, TB, Hepatitis.

Probably the key indicator that tell us that the road ahead is still long, is that only 1 out of 5 people with drug disorder have access to treatment. If we consider this and the increasing number of deaths or people neglected and punished, we have to admit we are in front of a global and increasing humanitarian emergency.

From our experience on the ground we known that most people with substance use disorders do not seek treatment on their own, because they are afraid to be punished, sometimes they do not believe they need it or they are not ready for it, or because they are not aware that treatment exists or how to access it.

We need to work on that. To know, meet and treat all people with drug disorders in a community should be our priority.

Long waiting lists, dogmatic approach, stigma and criminalization of people with drug disorders are huge barriers that make health services hard to reach.

Drug Treatment should be based on universal, welcoming, ethical healthcare standards, including respect for human rights and the patient's dignity.

Treatment should not be forced or against the will of the patient. And should not be cash and carry, fast and focused only on detoxification.

And above all should not be punitive, humiliating or degrading, because this increase the need of using drugs and it's against human rights.

On the contrary, implementing harm reduction and pre-arrest deflection strategies can be a smart and effective way to engage people in treatment path and avoid any law charges.

We invite you to join our humanitarian drug policy Manifesto: the Rome Consensus 2.0, that can favorize an effective improvement of the people health conditions and contribute to build safer communities.

Thank you.

Massimo Barra
Chairman of the RCRC Partnership on Substance Abuse