

CND 2023
SIDE EVENT

**HUMANITARIAN DRUG POLICY: THE ROME CONSENSUS
2.0 AS A PRAGMATIC TOOL OF ADVOCACY TO
IMPLEMENT UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE**

16th of March 2023
Room (M3) Vienna

Thank you chair,

the Rome Consensus was established in 2005 when the international Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, deeply concerned about the growing abuse of substances worldwide, decided that drug issues should have been considered a health priority equal to other epidemics, emergencies and disasters that need our intervention and support.

121 National Societies defined a health-based approach that puts the individual and its universal right to care at the centre, by advocating and encouraging humanitarian programmes to address drug pandemics to national and local governments.

After that, we understood that the impact of our action to assist people with drug disorders needed a further step. We needed alliances in humanity to improve results. For this reason in 2019 we updated our statement together with Civil Society, NGOs, professionals, activists, academics and beneficiaries from all over the world who work every day in support of the people with drug disorders.

It was a bottom-up initiative that started from our local communities that together built a common ground where everybody can feel represented, if its daily action is inspired by the light of science and humanity.

We are open to realities which promote therapeutic programmes at all levels, including those who involve the law enforcement that can divert and deflect people from punishment to treatment, as it was stressed in our previous side event on Deflection.

Considering that human brain is not particularly interested if the substances are legal or illegal, we don't take part in any political conflicts that involve prohibitionist and anti-prohibitionist. We are in favour of science and human wellbeing.

The urgency to intervene in the field is moved by the fact that still today, the vast majority of people with drug problems are discriminated against, marginalized, even tortured, and hindered in accessing social services and treatment. The primary objective of the humanitarian approach is to save lives, alleviate suffering and preserve the dignity of the person.

The goals of the Rome Consensus 2.0 alliance are to:

- explore and offer effective and evidence based solutions to address drug problems;
- remove barriers to accessing treatments and harm reduction;
- meet and treat all people in need, especially the most marginalized;
- make sure that treatment offered are evidence-based and human;

- unify the voices of different stakeholders to build a dialogue between public authorities and civil society;
- promote humanitarian diplomacy to advocate for the health of people with drug disorders at all levels.

Opening of our initiative has given good results. More than 7.000 people and 600 among NGOs, international organizations, clinics, universities signed the Rome Consensus so far. We received positive endorsement from UNODC, WHO, Pompidou Group, and now also Governments are providing their support and closeness to our strategy. And this tells us that it is the right path and that we must continue to follow it together.

Indeed, it is in the interest of all governments to meet and treat all people with drug disorders to save lives and build safer communities. The more people you treat the more you build a safer community. If you take people out of harm's way you can decrease violence, conflicts, social tensions and at the same time you can fulfill the goal of universal health coverage without any discrimination and build more just and peaceful communities.

Massimo Barra

Chairman of the RCRC Partnership on Substance Abuse
Founder of the Rome Consensus 2.0