

Speech for the CND Intersessional Meeting 1 October 2025

Delivered by Dr. Massimo Barra, on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

The rates of transmission of HIV, the Hepatitis C virus and other blood-borne diseases associated with drug use, including injecting drug use in some countries, remain high.

Thank you Chair,

Humanity has made extraordinary progress in the response to communicable infections related to drug use. A cure for hepatitis C now exists, and the best cure is to kill the virus, and HIV is a chronic, manageable condition through treatment and prevention. These are historic achievements of modern medicine, and they demonstrate what is possible when science, political will, and human rights work together.

But and yet, despite these remarkable advances, transmission rates remain high in some countries. As we heard before HIV and hepatitis C continues to spread wherever harm reduction and treatment are not sufficiently available.

This paradox should concern us all. At a moment when we should be consolidating progress and moving closer to elimination, there are worrying signs of declining investment and reduced attention to these epidemics. Lowering our guard risks reversing decades of progress, with consequences not only for people who use drugs but for public health and the general population.

We must remember: infectious diseases do not remain confined to one group. Protecting the health and dignity of people who use drugs protects the health and dignity of the entire society.

We therefore wish to emphasize the importance of sustaining our collective efforts. We must ensure continued access to evidence-

based harm reduction, universal treatment coverage, and the protection of human rights. These are not optional measures, they are the basis of effective public health practices.

The world cannot afford to lose the progress it has achieved so far. Let us safeguard the progress reached and recommit to building a future where **science and compassion guide our common response.**

Thank you.