

STATEMENT

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**Chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
Donor conference in support of the Joint UNODC/WHO Programme on Drug Dependence
Treatment and Care.**

The Hague, the Netherlands.

February 10th , 2010

I speak on behalf of the International Movement of Red Cross and Red Crescent, concerned about substance abuse since the Twenties and actively involved in the issue through several Recommendations and Resolutions adopted by the statutory bodies.

I speak also as a doctor having experienced over 30.000 drug users and been profoundly involved in the treatment of drug users over the last 35 years.

I wish to congratulate the Netherlands Government, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) for the Joint Program on Drug Dependence Treatment and Care, whose we appreciate the spirit.

I am very impressed by the commitment of leaders, dedicated to launch programs in the right direction for a fair and humanitarian treatment of drug users.

Several important statements have been made. I wish to recall some of them.

- addiction as a brain disease;
- the needs of patients should be at the core of any intervention;
- the need of nothing less than what it is expected for the treatment and care of any other disease;
- just detoxification is no treatment and can be even dangerous;
- need of pragmatic, evidence-based, ethical treatment, respecting human rights of patients;
- health-oriented treatments;
- cost-effectiveness of substitutive treatments and other harm reduction practices;
- the need to inform and mobilise public opinion and local authorities in order to overcome several prejudices and false opinions than bring stigma and discrimination to drug users and launch well-known effective programs of intervention all over the world.

The International Movement of Red Cross and Red Crescent is neither a part of the Governments nor the UN system. Nor is it only an expression of civil societies, unlike millions NGOs throughout the world. It is the third pillar of humanity, bridging the gap between Governments and civil society, thanks to its auxiliary role towards public authorities.

The principle of auxiliary provides the Red Cross with a peculiar role of special relationship with public authorities on a multiple level basis. In consideration of that, we are able to act in those shadow areas where Governments find it difficult to touch. Substance abuse is one of them.

Over the last few years, the International Movement has been creating the "*Rome Consensus for Humanitarian Policy on Drugs*" Manifesto, already signed by representatives of 119 National Societies.

We are concerned that service supply covers only 10% of the actual needs of drug users worldwide. We are confident that Governments will take the step to implement the supply on the basis of scientific evidence shown by WHO and UNODC, discarding those treatments which are disrespectful of basic human rights of drug users, treated with violence as they were second class citizens. As far as drug users are concerned, it is unacceptable in the third Millennium that some forms of treatment are much more torture alike.

We, as Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, provide the international community with the commitment to implement the ambitious WHO - UNODC Joint Program.

I hope you will touch base with your National Societies to take an active part in this initiative.