

**Sub Sahara Africa Regional Consultations
Report on Rwanda Country Consultations**

Venue: Nobleza Hotel, Kigali, Rwanda

Date: 25th January, 2016

Number of participants: 23

Prior to the Consultations, a copy of the CSTF Zero Draft Document had been sent to all invited participants and they had been enjoined to study same as it would form the basis of discussions during the Consultations.

An introductory presentation was done, by the CSTF Regional Representative for Sub-Saharan Africa {Eze Eluchie} to acquaint and enlighten the participants with the following issues:

1. History of UNGASS 2016
2. The Creation, origin and intendments of the CSTF
3. The CSTF Global Online Survey and the CSTF Zero Draft Document.

Thereafter the participants were voluntarily divided into sub-groups to discuss, in the Rwandan context, each of the identified 5 thematic areas. Each of the groups nominated a Rapportuer who presented the views of the members of the group to all participants at the Consultation, who thereafter had an opportunity to make inputs to the views of the group prior to final collation.

Below is the summation of the views of the participants at the Consultations regarding the thematic areas, which participants at the Rwanda Consultations feel should be incorporated in the CSTF Final recommendations to the UNGASS processes:

Drugs and Crime:

- There should be screening of drug suspects to distinguish between addicts/users and the dealers/traffickers in drugs with a view to sending those who require treatment and rehabilitation to appropriate centres and effectively punishing dealers/traffickers.
- Penalties for drug offences should be consistent and fair. The present disparities in sentencing, between national jurisdictions, should be avoided.
- Law enforcement on drug related offences should be prioritized particularly in view of its linkage with global human and sex trafficking.
- Drug abuse is a major contributing element to Gender based Violence and Child abuse in Rwanda and as such ought to be tackled aggressively in the interest of the State.

Drugs and Health:

- There is need for a global fund to support economically challenged States to build capacity to improve their ability to effectively address the health component of addressing drug abuse.
- Support should be provided for national Drug abuse Prevention, Care and Treatment services by the United Nations and or other appropriate international organizations.
- Though we support drug abuse prevention and harm reduction services, there needs to be strong governmental control of medical use of drugs to check abuse of such processes.
- We do not support a situation of easy availability and access of illicit drugs to the public.
- Populations must be mobilized to avoid discriminating against peoples, particularly vulnerable segments of the population, such as drug abusers, addicts or persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Human Rights, Women, Children and Communities:

- Though the death penalty is not applicable for drug related offences in Rwanda, the death sentences/penalties for Drug abuse is an infringement of individuals' fundamental rights and should be stopped globally.
- Advocacy efforts should be intensified to ensure that Service providers working with drug users should be made aware of the need not to violate the rights of drug users/addicts in their care and or custody.
- Need to establish more rehabilitation and reform centres for persons using drugs.
- Health and Reproductive Health education, taking into account the special needs of drug users and addicts, should be incorporated into the curriculum and practices of Rehabilitation Centres.
- The rights of the community supersedes individual rights – and as such whilst it is important to ensure the rights of the individual is protected, protecting the integrity of the community from negatives and or excesses caused by individual, takes priority.
- Regarding the question posed on State responsibilities to children under Article 33 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there is need for all countries to ensure that Children are protected from illicit drug use, cultivation and trafficking.

New Challenges:

- We recommend measures that eliminate drug related harm by criminalizing the production, sale and distribution of illicit drugs.
- Due to poor enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, production, sale and distribution of illicit synthetic analogues should be likewise criminalized and adequately penalized.
- We support the conventions that criminalize marijuana use but recognize that there are some drugs that are necessary under strict medical supervision.
- Alternative punishment, distinct from custodial sentences, can decongest jail houses.
- Illicit drug transactions introduce 'hot money' into any economy exposing such societies to dangerous security situations.
- Stricter global checks on illicit drug-related financial transactions will serve to curtail other forms of criminality, including but not restricted to terrorism, sex and human trafficking and other vices.

Drugs and (Alternative) Development:

- Communities and individuals dependent on cultivation of illicit drug crops should through 'soft means', be empowered to live and be dependent on alternative lives and means.
- Use of force to ensure a shift in producing illicit drugs should be a last resort, advocacy and more education should be the prime approach.
- Civil society and grassroots based organizations should be strengthened and equipped to educate and empower the population on the inherent and allied dangers of abuse of illicit drugs.