

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE BECKLEY FOUNDATION DRUG POLICY PROGRAMME

- That the current global drug control mechanism, (as enshrined in the three United Nations Conventions of 1961, 1971 and 1988), is not achieving the core objective of significantly reducing the scale of the market for controlled substances, such as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and cannabis.
- That the negative side-effects of the implementation of this system may themselves be creating significant social problems.
- That reducing the harm faced by the many individuals who use drugs, including the risk of infections, such as Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS, is not a sufficiently high priority in international policies and programmes.
- That there is a growing body of evidence regarding which policies and activities are (and are not) effective in reducing drug use and associated health and social problems, and that this evidence is not sufficiently taken into account in current policy discussions, which continue to be dominated by ideological considerations.
- That the current dilemmas in international drug policy can only be resolved through an honest review of progress so far, a better understanding of the complex factors that create widespread drug use, and a commitment to pursue policies that are effective.
- That analysis of future policy options is unlikely to produce a clear 'correct' policy - what may be appropriate in one setting or culture may be less so in another. In addition, there are likely to be trade-offs between policy objectives (i.e. to reduce overall drug use or to reduce drug-related crime) that may be viewed differently in different countries.
- That future policy should be grounded on a scientifically based scale of harm for all social drugs. This should involve a continuous review of scientific and sociological evidence of the biological harm, toxicity, mortality and dependency; the relation to violent behaviour; the relation to crime; the costs to the health services; the general impact on others; and the total economic impact of the use of each individual drug on society.

The aim of this programme is to assemble and disseminate information and analysis that supports the rational consideration of these sensitive issues, and leads to the more effective management of the widespread use of psychoactive substances.