

PRESS RELEASE



British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union

BGIPU CONVENING INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON DRUG POLICY REFORM, LONDON, 28-30 OCTOBER 2013

The British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU) will be hosting an international Drug Policy Reform Seminar in the UK Parliament from the 28-30 October 2013. The seminar seeks to encourage inter-parliamentary exchanges on global drugs policy reform issues among interested European, Latin American and West African legislators from a diverse range of countries affected by the illicit supply, transit or demand for drugs.

Against a background of increasing international debate on drug policy reform, including in the lead-up to the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS 2016) on the World Drug Problem, BGIPU is keen to enable parliamentarians to share perspectives and discuss national, regional and international reforms taking place to address the global challenges of drug usage, drugs trafficking and associated transnational crime. Around 50 parliamentary delegates from 30 countries will participate in addition to international experts and observers from both the inter-governmental and non-government sectors.

The main themes to be addressed include: addiction and the health-based approach to drug policy; money-laundering and trafficking of illicit drugs; drugs in prisons and the risk of disproportionality in drug trafficking laws; decriminalization versus the legalization of drugs; current drug laws on curbing transnational organized crime; and the effect of illicit natural resources as a source of violent conflict. The seminar will provide a unique opportunity for legislators to recognise common perspectives, explore innovative solutions and debate differing approaches.

Key speakers are expected to include: Baroness Meacher (Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Policy Reform), George Soros (Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations), Ruth Dreifuss (member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy), Dr Sandeep Chawla (Deputy Executive Director of UNODC), Luis Fernando Carrera (the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala), Maria Lucia Karam (a board member of LEAP from Brazil); General Lord Ramsbotham (Former HM Chief Inspector of Prisons), Alison Holcomb (Criminal Justice Director, American Civil Liberties Union) and Andrew Ball (WHO Senior Advisor).

*The **BGIPU** manages the UK Parliament's engagement in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) - the global body of 163 national parliaments. The BGIPU also seeks to expand awareness and understanding of international relations and promote the UK Parliament's unique contribution to parliamentary governance and democracy worldwide. The BGIPU serves the interests of the United Kingdom through advancing the Parliamentary dimension of Britain's foreign relations.*

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