

Global 'war on drugs' a failure, future in regulation, prevention: experts

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The Global Commission on Drug Policy (GCDP), a new international lobby group for liberalisation, called Wednesday for what it termed the failed war on drugs to be replaced by policies oriented to regulation and prevention.

Studies by the commission since it was convened in 2010 claim that rather than stemming the global drug trade the costly war on drugs has seen it thrive in recent decades, with tragic consequences for public health and security.

"The global war on drugs is driving the HIV/AIDS pandemic among people who use drugs" and are reluctant to seek medical help for fear of incarceration, a commission statement said as it launched debate in Warsaw.

"Vast expenditures on criminalisation and repressive measures directed at producers, traffickers and consumers of [illegal drugs](#) have clearly failed to effectively curtail supply or consumption," it added.

According to the commission, the worldwide supply of illicit opiates like heroin has ballooned by more than 380 percent in recent decades "from 1,000 metric tons in 1980 to more than 4,800 metric tons in 2010," despite massive hikes in funds aimed at fighting [drug trafficking](#).

Former Colombian president Cesar Gaviria said part of the solution lies in "moving the (anti-narcotics) budget of countries from jails and the

police to prevention."

"The way we are working in Colombia—for example in Medellin and in Bogota—it's through prevention campaigns () with families, with teachers who are also really in favour of prevention," he told reporters, highlighting progress made in cities dominated by notorious cartels.

Commission members include ex-presidents from Brazil, Colombia and Mexico struggling to cope with the violence spawned by cartels as well as notables like Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa and Virgin Group billionaire Richard Branson.

Gaviria also insisted on the need to lobby the [US Congress](#) "to say we need you to debate and to change your laws, otherwise the violence in Latin America, Mexico and Central America will be out of hand and we will lose."

GCDP chair and former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso called on governments to "experiment with different models of legal regulation of drugs, such as marijuana, similar to what we already have with tobacco and alcohol."

Stressing that regulation was not the same as legalisation, he urged "all kinds of restrictions and limitations on the production, trade, advertising and consumption of a given substance in order to deglamourise, discourage and control its use."

"[Drug](#) abusers may harm themselves and their families, but locking them up is not going to help them," he added.

According to Gaviria these kinds of changes could come sooner than expected: "Almost all presidents think the (existing) policy should be changed. There is no support for prohibition anymore, not even in the

US."

"No US official talks about defending prohibition as a policy. I haven't heard of anyone. They've just stopped talking about it," he revealed.

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