



Dialogue between the Heads of Delegation, the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General with the Heads of Delegation of the Permanent Observers on the theme of the General Assembly “For a Comprehensive Policy against the World Drug Problem in the Americas”

June 4, 2013 - Antigua, Guatemala

Permanent Observer Mission of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

Remarks delivered by:

Kate Smith, Director for the Americas, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The United Kingdom warmly welcomes the initiative of the Government of Guatemala in making global drugs policy the focus of this year’s General Assembly. This is undoubtedly an issue of particular relevance to this region and to the wider international community. It is vitally important for the international community to work together to address the significant harm drugs cause to individuals, families and communities. We must continue to listen and learn from each other, taking note of emerging trends, new evidence and best international practice.

The UK therefore fully agrees that policies should be discussed, challenged and reviewed, and above all be driven by clear evidence and analysis. In that context, we would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the OAS for its important work to inform the future of drugs policy, including through the publication of the groundbreaking report *“The Drug Problem in the Americas”* on which there has been so much discussion this week and which will be studied carefully in the UK. For our own part, my government is building on the commitment in its 2010 UK Drug Strategy to *“review new evidence on what works in other countries and what we can learn from it”* and has been conducting a study on international comparators to learn more from the approaches taken in other countries. We believe this will be an important contribution to the future drugs policy debate.

The UK acknowledges its shared responsibility to tackle the drugs trade. We are committed to a balanced approach that seeks to:

- Prevent and reduce the demand for drugs, with a particular emphasis on improved information, education and early intervention with young people, and other at-risk groups;
- Restrict the supply of illicit drugs by applying robust sanctions for supply and possession; and
- Build a recovery system which diverts individuals into appropriately tailored treatment to support, encourage and challenge their behaviour and enable their recovery.

The UK also remains committed to addressing the drug problem in the region through our active cooperation on counter-narcotics and money laundering with a number of governments and agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The UK welcomes international debate on how we can work together to ensure the global approach to drugs is as effective as it can be. The convening of a UN General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem in 2016 is a welcome development in that regard; and the OAS Review contributes valuable evidence to the wider debate.