



Finding long-term solutions to reduce an ever-increasing demand for illicit drugs amongst young people through improved co-operation and co-ordination between law enforcement agencies and civil society is the goal of an experts meeting at the OSCE today.

The two-day conference brings together over 150 representatives of the OSCE's 57 participating States with government authorities and experts from youth initiatives, drug agencies, international, regional and civil society organizations and the private sector. They will study the latest trends in tackling the challenge of drug demand and supply amongst young people and draw up practical proposals for future co-operation and new regional activities in the OSCE area.

State Secretary of the Serbian Interior Ministry Aleksandar Nikolic told the conference that effective action demanded mutual respect and co-operation between a wide range of public and private bodies both inside national jurisdictions and across borders. "Responses require co-ordinated policies, more effective legal systems, and skilled law enforcement services that are better connected to health and social structures," he said.

Deputy Executive Director and Director of the Division for Operations from UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Aldo Lale-Demoz said: "The increasing spread of illicit drugs amongst young people can and must be addressed through education, human-centered policies, and evidence-based prevention, treatment, care and rehabilitation services and we are keen in strengthening and expanding the collaboration on that front."

Afghanistan's Counter Narcotics Minister Salamat Azimi said that success depended on balanced, integrated and long-term efforts on both the supply and demand sides. "Let us ensure that the gains we achieved this far became entrenched and let us produce new ideas and new mechanisms to nourish our partnership and enhance our efforts to tackle the menace of narcotics," she said.

There was a collective responsibility to invest in young people as the leaders of tomorrow said Ambassador Khaled Shama, Egyptian Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Vienna. "Drug control policies and measures should be implemented in line with the best interests of the child, including measures to prevent drug abuse and involvement in drug offences by children, and appropriate responses by health-care and child protection services."

OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats Alexey Lyzhenkov stressed that the world drug problem undermines development, threatens stability, and provides funding for organized crime and terrorism. "We must explore ways to enhance dialogue between law enforcement and non-law enforcement, develop a strategic approach to reducing youth drug demand and supply and improve information sharing."

The meeting is organized by the Serbian 2015 OSCE Chairmanship and the Strategic Police Matters Unit of the OSCE Transnational Threats Department.

*Photo by: OSCE/Micky Kroell*