



Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

2024 Thematic Discussions on the Implementation of All International Drug Policy
Commitments

12 November 2024

Excellencies, dear friends,

It is a pleasure to be speaking with you today, though I deeply regret not being able to join you in person. The discussions you'll undertake over the coming days are as timely as ever.

As policymakers, we are tasked with finding solutions to problems that are complex and interconnected. The root causes of drug production, trafficking, and dependence are many, and each of these issues crosses borders and affects countless communities. This is precisely why the work of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs is so essential within the Economic and Social Council. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort—one that brings together health ministries, education ministries, law enforcement, community organizations, and other dedicated stakeholders.

Drug dependence, as we all know, carries a deeply human cost. Too many lives have been lost, and countless people continue to suffer—often marginalized and criminalized when they should be receiving care and compassion. And this issue,



of course, has a gender component. While men make up the majority of people who use drugs, women face greater harms and encounter more barriers to accessing treatment.

On the side of production and trafficking, we have seen a troubling rise in violence linked to the increased supply and demand for drugs. This violence often goes hand-in-hand with other illegal economic activities that harm local communities and set back progress on development.

The data provided in the 2024 World Drug Report offers an invaluable snapshot of the current state of drugs and is a crucial resource for guiding our public policy decisions. But reliable data is challenging to produce, and I commend the 2019 commitments that focused on strengthening capacity-building for data collection. In my role as ECOSOC President, I have identified Artificial Intelligence as a key priority, and I hope that AI can play a role in enhancing the collection and analysis of this vital data.

Finally, as we work together to implement the 2019 Ministerial Declaration, let us stay committed to drug policies that are not only effective but also rooted in dignity, equity, and respect for human rights.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.