Activists Denounce Renewed U.N. Anti-Drug Strategy

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As the United Nations plans to officially extend its “war on drugs” policy for another 10 years this week, critics of the organization’s anti-narcotics initiative say it feeds organized crime, boosts HIV infection rates and undermines governments, Reuters reports.

According to the article, the U.N. drug strategy declaration is the result of a yearlong effort to agree on a unified counter-narcotics policy during the next decade. The previous campaign launched in 1998 under the slogan “A drug free world—we can do it,” calling on governments to take aim at all narcotics around the globe, from cannabis to heroin.

In the United States—where illegal drug use is highest—the government spends about $70 billion a year on anti-drug measures. However, illegal drug use has risen over the past decade, with a fifth of the prison population incarcerated because of drug offenses.

Critics of the U.N. drug policy also note that the organization fails to focus on harm-reduction strategies, such as needle-exchange programs for intravenous drug users, and that this failure promotes the spread of HIV and other disease.

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