

Statement of R. Gil Kerlikowske
Director, National Drug Control Policy
Remarks at Release of the 2009 *World Drug Report*
June 24, 2009

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with UNODC Executive Director Antonio Costa for the release of the 2009 *World Drug Report*. I am also pleased that we can be joined today by Michele Leonhart, Acting Administrator of DEA, and William McGlynn, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Congratulations to Antonio and his team in Vienna for putting together this very comprehensive document. As the report shows, every nation is affected by the drug problem.

As we approach June 26th, International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking, it is a good time to reflect on what we can do better. In the United States, we are moving away from divisive “drug war” rhetoric and focusing on employing all the tools at our disposal to get help to those who need it. We recognize that addiction is a disease and are seeking public health solutions. My top priority is to intensify efforts to reduce the demand for drugs which fuels crime and violence around the world.

As a long time police chief, I have seen up-close the terrible impact drugs have on individuals, families, and communities. The earlier we can intervene to get people help, the better – that’s why prevention through schools and the media, and screening for substance abuse problems in a wide variety of health care settings is so vital. We will be expanding these existing efforts and working to ensure drug abuse treatment services are incorporated into our national health care reform process. These efforts will include expanded work to address the abuse of pharmaceutical drugs, a problem of increasing concern within the United States.

Further, we will make sure those caught up in our criminal justice system due to their involvement in drugs get the help they need. Many of those with the underlying disease of addiction commit crimes and thus, frequently come into contact with the criminal justice system. We can no longer afford to simply incarcerate them, while leaving their addiction untreated and their problems unaddressed. We must seize the opportunity to provide evidence-based treatment – either out of jail through diversionary programs like drug courts, or while in jail – to set them on a path to recovery. The Obama Administration is focused on providing treatment for Americans in need so they can permanently break the cycle of addiction and crime.

Our new Fiscal Year 2010 Budget proposes doubling funding for adult, juvenile, and family drug court, tripling Federal support for treatment in state prisons, almost tripling prisoner re-entry funding, as well as \$30 million to fund the recently enacted Second Chance Act to address drug-abuse related recidivism.

Internationally, the United States also recognizes its responsibilities. We will continue to provide assistance to partners in Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Afghanistan and elsewhere to reduce the flow of drugs and to bring violent drug traffickers to justice. The United States will work with our partners around the world to stop the flow of weapons associated with drug trafficking,

the corrupting impact of the large illicit profits, and to curb the flow of precursor chemicals used to produce drugs.

We will also dedicate ourselves to assisting countries and regions, especially in the developing world, grappling with the terrible impact of the drug trade. West Africa is an example. UNODC has been instrumental in calling international attention to the dramatic rise in narco-trafficking through West African nations. Already, this increased trafficking has been harmful to stability and good governance. Though domestic consumption in West African nations is not significant yet, we know from experience elsewhere that transit states develop domestic markets. There are signs this is beginning to happen in West Africa. I am gratified that the EU has been taking steps to assist African nations. Let me make it very clear that the Obama Administration will be a strong partner in this effort. In fact, we are increasing our counternarcotics assistance to West Africa. The President's FY 2010 Budget Request includes \$6.7 million for counternarcotics efforts in West Africa.

We are eager to collaborate with the UNODC and to share with treatment providers from around the world the latest information on effective treatment and prevention modalities. Our National Institute of Drug Abuse sponsors over \$1 billion in research each year, both in the United States and abroad, and we have a responsibility to get those findings out to the field, where it can be put to use.

There is much to be done, but I believe we are on the right track with current and new initiatives to make the drug problem smaller for the United States and the world. Thank you very much.