



## Position Paper on Drugs Abuse

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council of Religions (hereinafter COR) notes, with concern, the spread and proliferation of drugs in the Republic of Mauritius, especially among the youths.
- 1.2 The COR takes notes of the efforts deployed by the authorities to stem the proliferation of drugs abuse in the country.
- 1.3 The COR observes that Mauritian law on drugs (namely the Dangerous Drugs Act 2000) is framed in a repressive language and due consideration for rehabilitation and reinsertion for drugs addiction are still lacking.
- 1.4 The stance of COR on the issue of drugs is inspired by the common teachings of the main religious communities of Mauritius namely the Baha'is, the Buddhists, the Christians, the Hindus and the Muslims.
- 1.5 COR's position on the issue of drugs is in line with the resolution of the 37<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly (1984) calling upon WHO member states to include a spiritual dimension in their health strategies based on their social and cultural patterns (Resolution WHA 37,13, Geneva: WHO, 1984, WHO Document WHA 37/1984/REC/1:6).

### 2.0 State of Affairs

- 2.1 The COR notes with concern the rise in drugs offences. Heroin related offences rose from 488 in 2012 to 746 in 2015, a rise of 152%.
- 2.2 The number of person arrested by ADSU for drugs offences is also rising; from 1600 in 2012 to 1771 in 2015 representing a rise of 110%.
- 2.3 Of serious concern for the COR, is the vast disparity between official statistics and field reality. While statistics for the amount of Heroin seized between 2012 and 2015 varies between 13kg to 18 kg, the seizure of March 2017 alone amounted to 135 kg, i.e. 1038% of the total Heroin seized in 2015.
- 2.4 The COR also notes the rise in 'other drugs' offences (especially synthetic drugs) from 96 in 2012 to 246 in 2015, a rise of 256%.

### **3.0 Position**

- 3.1 The common teachings of our faiths concur on the sanctity of the human body. It is a sacred trust given to us by God and hence we have the responsibility to take proper care of it and not to destroy it or harm it.
- 3.2 Drugs and psychoactive substances change brain function, alter perception and impair behavioral control. They undermine the sense of responsibility, lead to addiction and cause one to be a slave of his cravings.
- 3.3 Our respective faiths unanimously prohibit the use drugs and psychoactive substances for recreational and spiritual purposes.
- 3.4 The prohibition of drugs and psychoactive substances is underpinned by the duty to care for body and the duty to purify our souls. Hence, the injection of toxic substances and drugs into our bodies ran counter to the common notion of bodily care and soul purity.
- 3.5 Drugs, with proven beneficial effects, may however be used for research and medical purposes and treatments. Our respective faiths unanimously agree that drugs, used for medical purposes and prescribed by qualified medical professional, are lawful means of treatment.
- 3.6 Drugs addicts must -for all intents and purposes- be treated with utmost compassion and empathy. Addicts are often victims of life circumstances and deserve to be given proper treatment and adequate rehabilitation opportunities by the healthcare system and not by the criminal justice system.
- 3.7 Drugs dealers however must be dealt with the full force of the law. Their accomplices in several public institutions must be dealt with equal severity.
- 3.8 Our faiths unanimously stressed on the preventive approach to drugs and substance abuse problem. We urge the authorities to enlist the support of credible faith leaders in the design and implementation of rehabilitation programmes and awareness campaigns in line with the WHO resolution mentioned in paragraph 1.5 above.
- 3.9 We also make an appeal to the Mauritian people to change their look on drug addicts. We urge them to show empathy and compassion to our fellow countrymen and to advocate for a change of approach and policy toward those who have fallen in the vicious trap of addiction.

**The Council of Religions**

**Dated this 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2017**

**Port Louis**