



4th International Symposium on Drug-Related Studies - 2026

“One Nation, One Response: Advancing Collective Action and Scientific Evidence to Address Drug Challenges”

National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (NDDCB)

November 2026

Concept Note

1. Introduction

The National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (NDDCB) of Sri Lanka serves as the national focal point for drug prevention, control, and treatment efforts. In line with its mandate, the NDDCB is dedicated to promoting research and evidence-based policymaking to enhance the effectiveness of national and community-level responses. Recognizing the critical role of academic and professional communities, the NDDCB prioritizes the creation of inclusive platforms that facilitate dialogue, collaboration, and innovation. Through its international symposiums, the NDDCB brings together scholars, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to share cutting-edge research, successful interventions, and emerging practices.

Building on the success of the previous three symposiums, the 4th International Symposium, under the theme “*One Nation, One Response: Advancing Collective Action and Scientific Evidence to Address Drug Challenges*,” reaffirms the commitment to fostering a united national response to drug-related challenges. The symposium emphasizes the importance of strengthening partnerships across government institutions, academia, civil society, communities, and international stakeholders, while promoting the use of scientific evidence to guide policy and practice. It highlights the need for coordinated, inclusive, and multi-sectoral action to build resilient communities and advance sustainable solutions that contribute to a healthier, safer, and more united nation.

2. Background

The First International Symposium on Drug-Related Studies, organized by the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (NDDCB) in December 2022, marked a historic milestone in Sri Lanka's drug demand and supply reduction efforts. Under the theme "Joint Commitment for Creating a Drug-Free Society through Best Evidence-Based Practices and Innovative Approaches," the symposium was supported by esteemed partners such as JICA and the Colombo Plan. It brought together over 200 national and international scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, providing a dynamic forum for the exchange of knowledge, research, and experiences. The event's success and the overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants underscored the importance of continued collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and innovation in the field of drug prevention and control.

Building on the momentum of the first, the Second International Symposium, held in 2024, continued this journey under the theme "Balanced and Coordinated Strategy for Building a Drug-Free Community: with Active Citizen Engagement." This symposium was successfully organized with the generous support of JICA and the Colombo Plan, bringing together a wide range of experts, researchers, and professionals from both national and international backgrounds. The event provided a platform to showcase innovative community models, integrated strategies, and citizen-led approaches to drug demand and supply reduction. The success of the second symposium further strengthened the NDDCB's commitment to institutionalizing the symposium as a recurring platform for thought leadership and evidence-based policymaking in drug control.

The Third International Symposium on Drug-Related Studies, held in 2025 under the theme "Advancing a Whole-of-Society Response to Emerging Drug Challenges: Equitable Investment and Integrated Action from Policy to People," represented the largest and most comprehensive symposium to date. Conducted over three days, the symposium was organized with the support of key partner organizations, including JICA, FISD, KIU, and IDS Laboratories. The event brought together researchers, academics, policymakers, law enforcement officials, healthcare professionals, community practitioners, and development partners from Sri Lanka and abroad with participants representing more than 11 countries. Through scientific paper presentations, panel discussions, keynote addresses, and technical sessions, the symposium highlighted the importance of inclusive and coordinated responses to emerging drug challenges. The successful completion of the third symposium further

demonstrated the growing recognition of the symposium as a premier regional platform for advancing evidence-based practices, fostering multidisciplinary collaboration, and promoting innovative solutions to drug-related issues.

Building on the remarkable achievements of the previous three symposiums, the Fourth International Symposium on Drug-Related Studies (2026) is proposed under the theme “One Nation, One Response: Advancing Collective Action and Scientific Evidence to Address Drug Challenges.” The symposium aligns with the national vision of fostering a united nation through shared responsibility, social cohesion, and collaborative action. As drug-related challenges continue to evolve in complexity, there is an increasing need to strengthen partnerships among government institutions, academia, healthcare professionals, law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations, community leaders, and international partners. The fourth symposium will serve as a strategic platform to promote scientific evidence, facilitate knowledge exchange, and advance coordinated responses that bridge policy and practice. By bringing together diverse stakeholders around a common national purpose, the symposium aims to advance resilient communities, effective interventions, and sustainable solutions that support a healthier, safer, and more united Sri Lanka.

3. Objectives of the Symposium

- To facilitate the exchange of knowledge, research, and best practices related to integrated and multidisciplinary approaches for both drug demand and supply reduction.
- To strengthen integrated action by promoting dialogue between health, social, and justice sectors, particularly enhancing the role of law enforcement and the judiciary in balanced, rights-based drug control strategies.
- To strengthen international and regional collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners for building evidence-informed, coordinated responses to complex drug issues.
- To provide a platform for presenting innovative, evidence-based research that informs policy and programmatic decision-making at all levels.

- To support national policy implementation by aligning symposium discussions with ongoing global initiatives and frameworks, including those led by the UNODC, WHO, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. Themes of the Symposium

The theme “One Nation, One Response: Advancing Collective Action and Scientific Evidence to Address Drug Challenges” has been selected in recognition of the Government’s ongoing “A Nation United” national mission, which promotes unity, shared responsibility, and coordinated action in addressing key national priorities. The year 2026 marks a significant milestone in Sri Lanka’s efforts to strengthen both drug demand and supply reduction initiatives through enhanced collaboration among government institutions, law enforcement agencies, healthcare providers, academia, civil society organizations, community leaders, and international partners. The chosen theme reflects the understanding that drug-related challenges cannot be addressed by a single institution or sector alone, but require a united national response guided by scientific evidence and collective commitment. Through this symposium, the NDDCB seeks to highlight, support, and strengthen the objectives of the “Nation United” programme by providing a platform for stakeholders to share knowledge, showcase best practices, foster partnerships, and advance integrated solutions that contribute to a safer, healthier, and more resilient Sri Lanka.

5. Symposium Tracks

The symposium will feature key tracks focusing on both supply reduction and demand reduction, ensuring a comprehensive approach to drug control.

Track 1: Strengthening Prevention through Community Engagement and Evidence-Based and Innovative Strategies

This track focuses on advancing comprehensive, evidence-based, and culturally responsive drug prevention approaches under a unified national framework. It will explore effective models of school-based prevention, family strengthening, youth empowerment, and community-led interventions, with special emphasis on the role of digital platforms, social media, and peer-led initiatives. The track will also highlight the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration and equitable resource allocation to scale up prevention efforts, in line with the “Nation United” approach to building resilient and drug-free communities.

6. Partnership and Collaboration

The success of the 4th International Symposium on Drug-Related Studies depends significantly on the strength of its partnerships and the spirit of collaboration among key stakeholders. Building on the momentum of the last three symposiums supported by respected partners such as JICA, the Colombo Plan, and UNODC, FISC and other partner organizations, this year's event aims to further expand its collaborative platform to promote shared responsibility and mutual learning in addressing the evolving drug problem. This year, NDDCB hopes to receive support from other international and local partners to ensure the effective implementation and wider impact of the symposium.

The National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (NDDCB) recognizes that addressing drug-related issues requires an integrated, multi-sectoral approach. Therefore, the symposium will actively engage a wide range of national and international partners, including:

- Government agencies in health, education, justice, and law enforcement
- Research institutions and universities
- International organizations and development partners
- Civil society organizations and community networks
- Professional associations in the fields of medicine, psychology, social work, and forensic science

The symposium offers a unique platform for these diverse actors to come together to:

- Share scientific knowledge, field experiences, and best practices
- Strengthen networks for joint research, policy development, and technical cooperation
- Foster innovation through interdisciplinary collaboration
- Align national efforts with regional and global frameworks

By promoting collaborative dialogue and cross-border partnerships, the 3rd International Symposium will contribute to the advancement of a comprehensive, inclusive, and well-resourced response to drug-related challenges, fully aligned with both national policy directions and global commitments under the UN drug control conventions and the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Important Dates –

Open for abstract submission – 15th June 2026

Deadline for Abstracts submission – 30th September 2026

Notification of acceptance – 15th October 2026

Conference date – November 2026

8. Presentation mode

Local Participants: Physical Presentations

- On-site Presentations: Local participants will present their research and findings in person at the symposium venue.

Foreign Participants: Online or Physical Presentations

- Online Presentations: Foreign participants who cannot attend in person will present their work via virtual platforms. This can include live-streamed presentations, virtual panels, and interactive sessions through video conferencing tools.
- Hybrid Presentations: For those who prefer or can attend physically, foreign participants can present their research in person, contributing to a hybrid symposium experience that combines both physical and online elements.