

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to present our statement during this period of preparation for the UNGA Special Session. Seeing that the main goal is to achieve “A better tomorrow for the World’s Youth”, we, as a group of the World’s Youth coming from 27 countries, would like to share our experiences. Also, for the past two days we have been envisioning solutions to a problem that markedly affects our peers and we urge you to take these into consideration.

Our experiences tell us that factors such as abuse, bad parenting, media influences, poverty, and negative role models can lead our peers to start using drugs, and increase the likelihood of subsequent drug use disorders. Additionally, science tells us that influences such as one’s genes and mental disorders are risk factors. We strongly believe that since people suffering from drug use disorders have no control over the aforementioned factors, they must not be stigmatized by their family, friends, and society as a whole. Instead, only treatment and then reintegration through social support is in line with the worldwide evidence, sizeable scientific data, and our moral conscience.

Our experiences show us that the consequences of substance use are dire. Indeed, most of us do not think that drugs are harmless or fun. For instance, we know that substance use causes a restriction on the educational, career and life paths of affected individuals. We know that substance use disorders mean a compulsion to. Not to mention the higher risk of overdose and infectious diseases. Unfortunately, over and above of that, people who use drugs still have to face punishment, discrimination and isolation. We therefore ask you to keep the humanity of these people in mind, and to make decisions that defend the wellbeing and dignity of your citizens.

Our experiences tell us that prevention measures in early childhood and later years work. Evidence from research agrees. For the sake of protecting public health, it is vital that we implement these measures. Also, it is vital that we implement the measures that have proven to be effective. Solely distributing scare-mongering information on the dangers of drugs is not effective. We have jointly agreed that other measures, such as supporting families by providing training programs for parents and would-be parents, are more valuable.

We strongly believe that offering counselling in schools and providing extra support to the most vulnerable children is of the utmost importance. On top of that, we have identified the media as playing a significant role in the formation of positive attitudes towards drugs. We are confident that messages promoting the use of drugs should not be spread. We want the facts, not fiction. Additionally, in accordance with the recognition that youth consume the majority of their media online, it is only reasonable for policy makers to invest in credible advocates who utilise these new forms of media to spread scientifically accurate information.

Our experiences show that our dedication and efforts can yield positive outcomes. We are committed to providing information and education to our peers. We are committed to equipping youth with the social skills they need to resist social pressures. We are committed to helping our peers in finding their own talents and passions. We are committed to empowering them to believe in themselves. Supporting human connection instead of isolation. We are engaged and enthusiastic and we want to positively shape our future. Please, don't only see us as victims, but rather see us as a rich source of information, and most importantly, **as drivers of change.**

We believe in you, **do you believe in us?**