

**Video Message**  
**63rd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**2 March 2020**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am really sorry that I cannot be there in person to participate in your discussion today.

The increase in the harmful use of psychoactive drugs is a public health crisis. It claims hundreds of thousands of lives every year.

At the same time, the majority of people in the world lack access to approved medicines that could relieve their pain and suffering.

The harm to health caused by illicit drug use, and the increasing availability and diversity of synthetic psychoactive drugs, requires a proportionate response that protects public health and human rights.

WHO's vision is that everyone, regardless of who they are or where they live, should be able to access the quality prevention, treatment and care they need to live a healthy and productive life.

The WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence issues evidence-based recommendations both to prevent the harmful use of psychoactive substances, and also to provide access to drugs with proven medical use.

WHO is committed to implementing the international drug control conventions and the recommendations of the UNGASS 2016.

None of us can address these complex challenges alone. We must enhance international collaboration to ensure a response that is balanced, integrated and multi-disciplinary.

I thank you.