

YOUTH STATEMENT 2021 AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE 64TH SESSION OF THE CND

Excellencies, influential representatives, ladies and gentlemen, a pleasant day to all.

In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, we call on Member States to continue to implement evidence-based substance prevention, especially for children and youth that include safe spaces, effective caregiving and continuous support.

Prevention strategies must be multifaceted with many factors. No one single, stand-alone program will be effective in isolation. Prevention should be inclusive. No matter the age, situation, thoughts or abilities everyone in our society deserves the chance to benefit from science-based prevention programs. Prevention should also follow a humanitarian approach, not stigmatizing or labeling people based on their circumstances.

We call on Member States to focus on community based multi-component initiatives that address prevention at the micro and macro levels, especially concerning the lasting impact COVID-19 will have at local and international levels. We need Member States to devote adequate attention toward solving the problems of poverty, lack of access to healthcare or education, and issues of inequality and discrimination at the largest scale at the same time as supporting programs that train caregivers, support social services, retain young people in schools and enhance skill development and positive mental health.

Effective substance use prevention strategically meets the needs of all people based on developmental stages, delivered across various settings. It must be voluntary. It should be interactive and fun for the participants. It should create safe environments for children in schools, homes and in the community. It must include effective

communication campaigns and the development of strong support networks and friendships.

We ask Member States to pay attention to health literacy. In particular it is critical to analyze the impact of social media, how it may be harmful to young people by promoting risky behaviors and how it might be used to increase effective substance use prevention messages.

Increased funding and political support are crucial for prevention worldwide because even when considerable funding is spent on treatment, only one in eight people worldwide have access to this treatment. If we invest more diligently in prevention, we can save as much as 10 dollars for every dollar spent and reduce substance use worldwide.

Youth empowerment is the key, we call on Member States to include at least 2 youth members on a national level committee that decides how prevention initiatives are researched, developed, implemented and evaluated. We believe that everyone has a role in drug prevention, and that for us to succeed in this goal, we must do it together by creating opportunities for success and empowering youth in a meaningful way. You must include youth as part of the process, raise youth voices and provide more platforms, opportunities, and positions for youth to actively contribute to policy-making decisions, supportive services, and drug prevention strategies. Using our shared effort and passion, we will create a drug-free environment for children and the generations to come.

The COVID-19 pandemic shall not affect our progress. We implore Member States to support effective, evidence-based prevention. We can all work together to build safe, compassionate communities not only for us, but also for future generations to come.

Our voices are strong, and we must be heard in the present and remain impactful in the future.