



2024 UNODC-WHO Informal Scientific Network Statement

CND High-level Segment, 14 March 2024

Prevention, treatment and care of substance use disorders among adolescents

In today's session, the UNODC/WHO Informal Scientific Network brings attention to the: **Prevention, treatment and care of substance use disorders among adolescents.**

Adolescence is a period of growth and transitions and one of high risk for experimenting with substances. Early substance use increases risk for substance use disorders and can interfere with an individual's neurodevelopment and educational achievement, which emphasizes the importance of prevention. However, despite the existence of evidence-based prevention interventions, as summarized in **UNODC/WHO International Standards for the Prevention of Drug Use**, there is very limited implementation. This highlights the need to expand their use and to commit the resources and funding to sustain their implementation.

Among the important factors that increase the risk for substance use and substance use disorders are **untreated mental health conditions**. Thus, screening for co-morbid mental health conditions among adolescents, so they can be treated early on, can help prevent substance use disorders and improves their outcomes.

For adolescents with substance use disorders, effective, evidence-based treatment interventions, in line with the **UNODC-WHO International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders**, are available. These include behavioral and psychosocial interventions and pharmacological treatments if needed, as well as the treatment for co-morbid mental disorders.

More investments in adolescent-friendly and safe treatment and support services that are not discriminatory or punitive, equitable and accessible are needed, along with investments to expand a qualified **prevention and treatment workforce**.

The use of digital interventions for prevention and treatment may help us reach more adolescents but need to be closely monitored for their safety and effectiveness.

Finally **investing in data collection and research** is needed to increase our understanding of adolescent substance use and to monitor outcomes of policies and interventions.

Quoting CND resolution 58/2, **children and young people, including adolescents, are our most precious assets and must be protected. The ISN stands ready to support governments in their efforts to put policies, commitments and the economic support to sustain them into practice, so that no adolescent is left behind.**

