



Committee: UNODC

Topic A: Addressing drug use and drug use disorders like any other health condition

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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against international crime, illicit drugs, and terrorism. It was established in 1997 through a fusion of the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention. It is made up of 500 officials worldwide. Its headquarters are located in Vienna, while 20 extra offices are operating all around the world, these are located in more than 150 countries, their link offices are located in New York and Brussels.

UNODC is in charge of educating people all around the world about the dangers of drug abuse and strengthening the intervention against trafficking and production of drug-related crime and trafficking of illicit drugs. In the Millennium Declaration, Member States concluded that they needed to follow some alternatives to intensify efforts, they decided to fight transnational crime in all its dimensions, to strengthen the efforts of implementing the commitment to counter the world drug problem and to take action against terrorism. To achieve these objectives, UNODC has launched a series of initiatives, including alternatives for the cultivation of illicit drugs, the surveillance of illicit crops and the execution of anti-money

laundering projects.

UNODC also focuses on improving crime prevention and assists in the reform of criminal justice to strengthen the rule of law, it promotes stable and viable criminal justice systems and combats the growing threats of international organized crime and corruption. In 2002, the General Assembly approved a program of activities for the Terrorism Prevention Branch of UNODC. Those activities focus on assisting States that so request, for the ratification and application of the 19 universal legal instruments against terrorism, these instruments were created in the year 1963 to prevent terrorist attacks.

Why should drug use and drug disorders be considered as health conditions?

First, we have to clearly understand what drug use and addiction is; once a person starts voluntarily and repeatedly consuming drugs, a part of the brain called "Reward system" which usually has the function of reminding a person how to behave the way they would normally do, gets damaged and it starts creating irregular quantities of dopamine which leads the body to frequently crave these unhealthy substances that the person has been consuming.

The use of drugs has an extensive list of long term physical and mental consequences such as: affecting the learning process, judgment, decision-making problems, stress, memory loss and behavioral changes.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders has classified drug disorders into 3 groups to treat people differently according to their grade.

To identify them there is a list of 11 diagnostic criteria if a person can identify with 2 or 3 is considered a "mild" disorder, 4 or 5 as a "moderate", and 6 or more "severe".

1. The substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended.
2. Unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control the use of the substance.
3. A great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance, use the substance, or recover from its effects.
4. Craving, or a strong desire or urge to use the substance, occurs.
5. Recurrent use of the substance results in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home.
6. Use of the substance continues despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of its use.
7. Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of use of the substance.
8. Use of the substance is recurrent in situations in which it is physically hazardous.
9. Use of the substance is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance.
10. Tolerance, as defined by either of the following:
  - A need for markedly increased amounts of the substance to achieve intoxication or desired effect
  - A markedly diminished effect with continued use of the same amount of the substance.
11. Withdrawal, as manifested by either of the following:
  - The use of a substance to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms.

Two different points of view can be discussed, some people believe that addictions should not count as a disease because it is the consequence of a self-made decision, and this can not determine whether something is a disease or not, they also believe that it is not a chronic disease because a lot of people with severe addictions can recover and gain sobriety with therapy, medical treatment, AA groups, or with the help of friends and family.

According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), “addiction is a chronic brain disorder, and not merely a behavioral problem or simply the result of taking the wrong choices”. The second point of view is that at first, it may be a choice to consume drugs but once the brain has been affected, you lose control of it, and will power is not enough to stop a person from needing it again to feel normal.

Through the Annual Reports Questionnaires of the UNODC international standards for the treatment of drug disorders. “It is estimated that a total of 250 million people, or 1 out of 20 people between the ages of 15 and 64 years, used an illicit drug in 2014. Approximately one in ten people who use illicit drugs are suffering from a drug use disorder, including drug dependence. Almost half of the people with drug dependence inject drugs and of them, more than 10% are living with HIV, and the majority are infected with hepatitis C”.

There are several ways to avoid and prevent drug misuse and drug addictions, it starts since people are young, proper education can help people know the consequences of their actions and especially talking to parents about addictions.

Taking action into helping people with drug addictions and avoiding the use of these substances is crucial because it does not only affect the individual using the drugs but it also affects the families and the community close to them. Consequences of drug addiction can be

health-related, as well as socially related. For example, an unexpected pregnancy, HIV aids, STDs, domestic violence, child abuse, car accidents, fights, criminal activity, homicide and suicide.

UNODC and WHO (World Health Organization) are developing a “global integrated strategy on prevention and treatment of substance use disorders”.

If a person already suffers from drug addictions there are many options to get treated. There exist a few medical treatments like Methadone, Buprenorphine, and Naltrexone. Behavioral therapies that help to recognize and overcome the reasons that are leading to the consumption of drugs, motivational incentives find ways to reward a person every time they take a step forward into sobriety, and group therapies that help you listen to other people's problems and help each other.

### **References and helpful sites**

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