

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

--

**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY  
AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING  
26 June 2013**

This year I visited the San Patrignano drug rehabilitation centre in northern Italy where more than 1,200 young women and men from 28 countries are learning how to free themselves from the curse of addiction and enjoy dignified, productive lives. Their road is not easy. It demands courage, commitment and the compassion of dedicated mentors. But the members of this inspiring community understand that they are fortunate. All over the world, drugs threaten the health and welfare of youth and children, families and communities, and the billions of dollars generated by the drugs trade feed corruption, enhance the power of criminal networks and create fear and instability.

Illegal drug trafficking is a clear obstacle to development. This cross-border problem requires a robust and coordinated law enforcement response within and among countries. Tackling organized crime and the illicit drugs trade is a shared responsibility. But the rule of law is only part of the equation. For instance, farmers dependent on the cultivation of illicit drugs such as coca, marijuana and opium must be offered alternative livelihoods, while drug users and addicts need help not stigmatization.

A human rights and science-based public health approach is the only sound basis for preventing and treating addiction and related consequences such as HIV transmission through unsafe injecting practices. We must also address threats such as the emerging problem of new psychoactive substances, many of which are not under international control. Young people, in particular, must be made aware of the dangers of these drugs.

On this International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, I call on governments, the media and civil society to do everything possible to raise awareness of the harm caused by illicit drugs and to help prevent people profiting from their use.