

UNODC Executive Director's Message

International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2024

Drug use is a long and difficult road to nowhere.

It often ends in disorders, disease, and even death.

Around 64 million people worldwide suffer from drug use disorders, while hundreds of thousands lose their lives to drug use every year.

And roughly 14 million people around the world inject drugs, leaving them far more likely to contract HIV and Hepatitis C.

Yet despite the risks, global drug use has grown over the past decade.

Young people are hugely at risk, and the illicit drug market specifically targets them to engage with new drug trends and consumption methods.

Highly potent synthetic drugs are amplifying the dangers, while the cocaine trade is also growing.

And inequality continues to be a central theme, as women, the poor, and the vulnerable face greater challenges with dependency and greater barriers to treatment.

Meanwhile, drug trafficking continues to fuel violence and undermine the rule of law.

This year's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking focuses on the critical need to **invest in prevention**.

By investing more resources in prevention, we can guide people, especially young people, away from drug use.

We can reduce drug overdoses and the tragic loss of life they cause.

We can limit harms like disease transmission among people who use drugs, while providing them with treatment for drug use disorders.

And we can empower communities to live in safety and dignity.

Let us strive to invest much more in evidence-based and people-focused drug prevention, for the long-term health and prosperity of all.