

# 26 June 2017 International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking



"Listen first" is the theme for this year International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, which is observed each 26th June. The campaign includes the recommendation of "listening to children and young people" as "the first step to help them grow healthy and safe, decreasing risk behaviors and drug use".

"Listen first" is a campaign being developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), to promote evidence based universal prevention programmes, favoring communication in various contexts, such as family, school or health services.

In the region of the Americas, Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, are participating in this initiative.

The Pan American Health Organization, at the regional and country level, and through alliances with strategic partners, is strengthening national capacities for the development, implementation and evaluation of health and drugs policies, promoting the integration of care in health networks, to improve the access and quality of services. On the International Day against Drug Abuse and illicit Trafficking, PAHO ratifies its commitment to accompany and support Member States to achieve the UNGASS 2016 agreed health recommendations, in pursuit of a comprehensive and balanced approach on the drug problems in the region of the Americas.

## **Public health dimension of the world drug problem**

Drug use, drug use disorders and related health conditions are major public health concerns. Addressing the world drug problem is essential for promoting health, and peaceful and inclusive societies, and realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Member States of the region of the Americas must face enormous challenges in relation to the use of psychoactive substances, especially among the youth, such as the prevention of use, access to quality treatment, the management of emerging issues relating to new substances or the epidemic of adverse effects by the abuse of opiates, among others.

At the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations \_UNGASS, devoted to the world drug problem, it was stressed the importance of addressing this problem from a comprehensive and balanced approach. It was recognized that the respect for human rights is vital to protect the health and welfare of humankind. Everyone has the right to drug treatment and care. Not as an "addict", nor as a "drug user" - but as a human being.

The public health strategies and the health sector have an important role in mitigating drug-related harm at all levels. Health workers can have a positive influence on children and youth, identify risk behavior and intervene timely, simply and effectively. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have this year signed a memorandum of understanding, to assist countries in the implementation of the health related recommendations of the UNGASS.

The celebration of the International Day against Drug Abuse and illicit Trafficking was established by the UN in 1987, to emphasize the need for strengthening actions in support to an international community free of drugs, in all countries. This year, the celebration motto is "Listen first" recommended by "listening to children and young people" as "the first step to help them grow healthy and safe, decreasing risk behaviors and drug use".

For further information, please go to <http://www.paho.org>.