

Committee/Council: Youth Assembly

Issue: Action paper I on the world drug problem

Student Officer: Christina Gousi , Niki Katsara-Antonakea

Position: Head, Co-head

Introduction



They are the modern scourge of young people and the biggest nightmare of parents. Drugs and the rest of addictive substances have taken over the modern world at an alarming rate, acting like a plague. In fact, according to the UNODC, approximately 183.000 drug-related deaths occurred in 2012.

Many people are under the delusion that drugs cannot and will not anyhow become part of their everyday without realizing, how easily drugs can invade, and, consequently, impinge on their

lives. Any person at any age may give in to their use, and, therefore, everyone must be informed about drug abuse and drug addiction.

Brief history of drugs

Beginning from 3500 B.C. until today, drugs make up a large part of human history. Egyptians used to drink wine in 3500 B.C., the use of marijuana as medicine dates back to 2737 B.C. in China, and, in the 19th century A.D. active substances were inserted into drugs. By the early 1900s the USA consisted of an estimated 250.000 drug addicts and in the 1960s drugs had already become a symbol of rebellion by teenagers.

Earliest recorded historical account of brewing of alcohol in Egypt, 3500bc



Problems arose sooner than expected. Already in the mid-19th century, China had suffered from two separate armed conflicts, known as the Opium wars. The first Opium war (China against Britain) took place from 1839 to 1842 and the second one (China against Britain and France) from 1856 to 1860. Of course, more wars followed afterwards. Ever since the 1970s Colombia has been stigmatized by the activities of drug trafficking organizations. There is a war between the government of Colombia, paramilitary groups, crime syndicates and left-wing guerrillas fighting each other with the aim of expanding their influence, and, thus, their domination over Colombian territory.

Definition of Key-Terms

Drug

In medicine, it refers to any substance with the potential to prevent or cure a disease or enhance physical or mental welfare. In pharmacology, it means any chemical agent that alters the biochemical or physiological processes of tissues or organisms. In the context of international drug control, "drug" means any of the substances listed in Schedule I and II of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, whether natural or synthetic. (<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/illicit-drugs/definitions/>)

Licit/illicit drugs

According to the UNODC, the United Nations drug control conventions do not recognize a distinction between licit and illicit drug, they describe only use to be licit or illicit. Here, the term illicit drugs is used to describe drugs which are under international control (and which may or may not have licit medical purposes) but which are produced, trafficked and/or consumed illicitly. (<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/illicit-drugs/definitions/>)

Drug addiction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Addiction" refers to the extent that the user is periodically or chronically intoxicated, shows a compulsion to take the preferred substance (or substances), has great difficulty in voluntarily ceasing or modifying substance use, and exhibits determination to obtain psychoactive substances by almost any means. (<http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/9241544686.pdf?ua=1>)

Drug abuse

The definition published in 1969 by the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence was 'persistent or sporadic excessive drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice'. (http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/terminology/abuse/en/)

Background Information

Drug categories

According to scientists, drug substances can be divided into the three following categories, as they affect the human body and mind in different ways.

Stimulants:

Commonly known as 'party drugs', stimulants' main targets are people that want to remain active throughout the night and are therefore frequently used by young people in festivals, parties or dance clubs. By accelerating the transmission of commands from the brain to the body, they trigger more impulsive reactions. Even though stimulants' short term effects (e.g. anxiety and panic) are manageable, the long term effects can lead a drug user to suicide or death. For instance, the depression that follows, if a drug addict cannot get cocaine, is so intense that it can lead him/her to suicide. Apart from that, the high blood pressure in combination with permanent damages of the heart can result in heart attacks and death. Examples include amphetamines, cocaine or methamphetamines.

Depressants:

This type of drug decelerates the function of the central nervous system and therefore, the transmission of messages between the brain and the body. Out of the most common categories of depressants, alcoholic beverages can be legally consumed, as opposed to heroin, which dominates the illicit drug market. Other examples of depressants are cannabis and inhalants. Although depressants are not thought to be very dangerous in comparison to other types of drugs, human bodies develop easily tolerance to them and therefore, addicts to this drug category need to increase the dose in order for the depressants to have the same satisfactory result as before. As a result, the long term overdose, affecting the brain's as well as the heart's function, can lead one to coma or death.

Hallucinogens:

The use of hallucinogens results in a distorted image of reality. In other words, they induce hallucinations, whereby the user experiences non-existent images, sounds and sensations. After consuming hallucinogens for a long period, the user is faced with a variety of flashbacks –not always pleasant ones- that can occur weeks or even years after the drug use and

may lead to schizophrenia. Common hallucinogens include LSD, Phencyclidine and Ketamine.

Drug traffickers

Transnational criminal groups are the ones trafficking illicit drugs all around the world and intermediating between drug producers and drug processors. Although the drug trade business is one of the biggest and most profitable ones, little is known about drug traffickers. Cocaine is mainly trafficked from South America to either North America or Europe. More specifically it is typically transported from Colombia to Mexico or Central America by sea or by land to the United States and Canada through different trade routes. The cocaine that reaches Europe is mainly from Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, having arrived there by sea via West Africa or Venezuela, entering Europe and targeting Spain and Portugal in the south and the Netherlands and Belgium in the north. As far as heroin is concerned, it is mainly trafficked from Afghanistan to the Russian Federation and Europe.



Drug consumers

According to the 2013 World Drug Report around 16.5 million people use opiates (heroin and opium), mainly in South-West and Central Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and North America. Their use has been on the increase in Asia and Africa, whereas in Europe heroin use has significantly declined. Cannabis use, on the other hand, remains by far the most widespread among illicit drugs, counting 180.6 million users worldwide. Like cocaine, it is mainly consumed in West and Central Asia, North America and Western and Central Europe. Apart from that, 33.8 million people are reported to have at least once used amphetamine-type stimulants and another 19.4 million used specifically ecstasy.

Although it is difficult to determine how many users exist, one thing is for sure: Drug consumption has risen in recent years. Most drug consumers typically tend to be male-a great percentage of them uneducated or poorly educated-, unemployed and in their early twenties. In recent years, the number of teenagers who consume drugs has risen dramatically as well.

Drug driving factors

While the illicit drug market continues to grow, there are some specific driving factors that can lead one to consume drugs irrespective of the country he or she lives in or the year, in which the incident occurs.

Sociodemographic indicators

According to UNODC, statistically, illegal drug use is more extensive among people of certain ages and backgrounds. For instance, a young man in a big city is more liable to use illicit drugs in comparison to an old woman in the countryside, a pattern that frequently occurs in many countries. According to data, it is also evident that drug use is wider among males than females, even in countries where men and women are regarded as equal, such as the United States. Another major sociodemographic factor that plays a significant role is the level of urbanization. Irrespective of the living conditions in some of the countries that produce drugs, it has generally been observed that city dwellers are more susceptible to illicit drug use than rural residents.

Sociocultural indicators

Several sociocultural factors have also exacerbated the illicit drug problem, with the disposition towards a Western lifestyle, whereby illegal drug consumption is regarded as a rite of passage, being the most decisive one. Today, more than ever, celebrities –often with their attitude or extensive use of drugs- are idolizing drug consumption and act, in a way, like role models, whose choices adolescents should follow. Other sociocultural indicators, from stressful living conditions and mental health disorders, to negative childhood experiences and a turbulent adolescence further aggravate the problem.

Socioeconomic indicators

Although the level of social inequality in a society cannot clearly determine whether or not the level of use of illicit drugs in that society is



indeed high due to that, it surely leads to developing a drug problem. In fact, drug trafficking is more common in societies with significant differences in their members' annual income. According to surveys conducted throughout the world, unemployment also increases one's chances of developing a drug addiction. Especially in the case of young males, who are faced with the daunting prospect of seeking employment despite the current financial crisis, drug use seems like the optimal solution to the disappointment they experience on a daily basis. This is particularly true for financially-challenged people who come from a poor background.

Drug availability and control system

Apart from the aforementioned indicators, drug availability and the control system in each state clearly have a significant impact on the development of drug problems. If potential users have easy access to certain drugs, that, increases their levels of exposure and therefore, their chances of developing a drug addiction. The "control system" defines the measures imposing restrictions on the use of drugs, so that it is strictly applied for medical and scientific purposes, as well as the supply of and demand for illegal substances. Drug control is vital in combating drug abuse, as its effectiveness will eventually lead to the apprehension of drug traffickers and the elimination of their activity.

Health consequences and treatment

Chronic drug addicts are faced with a number of medical conditions, ranging from stroke and cancer to HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C to mental disorders, which drug abuse can either precede or follow. For some people consuming drugs can mean suffering from HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis B or C, which may lead to death, in most of the cases. It is also often the case that apart from the devastating impact that drug addiction can have on the individual, it may as well affect the people surrounding them in their immediate environment. A clear example of this is the withdrawal syndrome that an infant may develop if the mother consumes drugs during pregnancy.

However, even chronic addiction can be successfully managed and eventually cured through the combination of medical treatment and behavioral therapy. The type of medication and method of treatment vary depending on whether they aim at preventing the patient from using drugs or avoiding relapse. In any case, it is the user's nature of addiction as well as medical, psychiatric and social background that determine the relative course of action.

Social consequences

It is an undisputable fact that drugs are harmful for the user's health. The consequences, however, for the society in general are even more devastating. One of the major social consequences are the increased crime rates observed as a result of the degree of drug consumption in a society. In other words, users need money to buy their drugs and thus this money comes often from stealing. In fact, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), nearly 70 percent of US state prisoners and 57 percent of federal ones used to be daily drug consumers. Child abuse rates are also correlated to the degree of drug consuming in a society. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has confirmed that 50 to 80 percent of parents, who have abused their children, were chronic drug addicts. Last but not least, alcohol, when combined with drugs, is responsible for approximately 75 percent of domestic violence cases.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The countries mostly affected by the world drug problem are the ones with a powerful and prosperous illicit drug market. There can either be countries, which produce or consume drugs, or even both in many cases, most prominently in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs). Apart from these countries, there are also other countries involved in the issue, the ones that have legalized cannabis consumption.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's history is characterized by chronic sociopolitical turmoil and recent conflicts, which are among the reasons why it ranks among the world's leading producers of opium, with 90% of the substance being produced there. The country belongs to the Golden Crescent- Asia's dominant area of illegal production of opium, the raw material of heroin. Despite the persistent request made by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan has intentionally neglected to address the problem as the prosperity of its economy is inextricably related to its drug market.

Myanmar

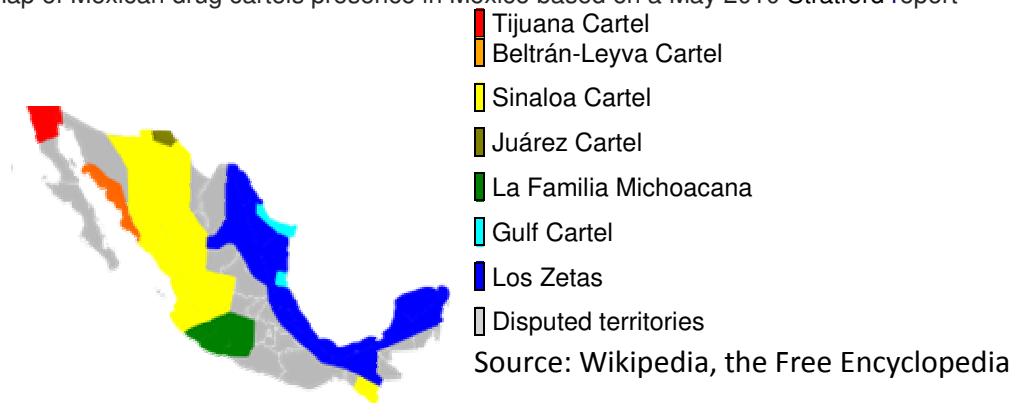
According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), being second to Afghanistan, Myanmar, also known as Burma, has witnessed a dramatic surge in the production of drugs with opium production soaring by 26% from 2012 to 2013. Myanmar is a part of the "Golden Triangle", one of Asia's two main areas –together with Golden Crescent- of illicit opium production.

Mexico

According to the US State Department, Mexico is the gateway for 90% of the cocaine that enters the country, despite it being produced in third countries such as Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. This is also true for heroin and methamphetamines

which Mexico is a small-scale producer of, but major supplier to the United States. However, the country produces and exports to the US large quantities of cannabis.

Map of Mexican drug cartels presence in Mexico based on a May 2010 Stratford report



Colombia

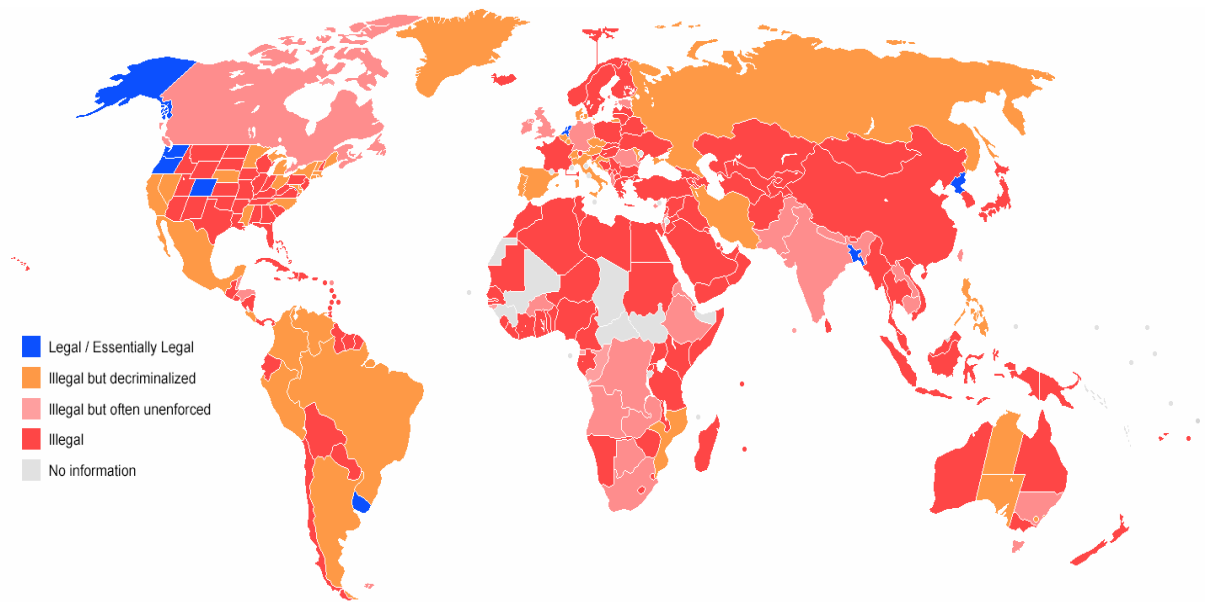
Colombia still leads in the production of cocaine despite the eradication of the Medellin and Cali cartels and the appearance of new, smaller organizations with “Norte del Valle Cartel” or “North Valley Cartel” being the most notorious one. In fact, it is currently regarded as one of the most prominent drug cartels since the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) ensures that it will act unencumbered by law officials.

Peru and Bolivia

Following Colombia, Peru and Bolivia are the second biggest producers of cocaine in the world. Since President Morales’ inauguration in 2008, Bolivia has been shunned by the US along with Myanmar and Venezuela for the obstruction of cooperation among Member States regarding drug trafficking and its perception of cocaine as a characteristic feature of the Bolivian culture.

Countries-Legality of cannabis

Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, North Korea, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Uruguay, the U.S. states of Alaska, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, the U.S. cities of Portland, and South Portland, both in Maine, and the District of Columbia have the least strict laws towards cannabis, while China, Cuba, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates have the strictest laws against cannabis.



United Nations Office On Drug And Crime (UNODC)

The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime is an organization operating under the United Nations Development Group. Its initiatives focus on the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. The UNODC was founded in 1997 as a result of the merger between the United Nations Drug Control Program and the Centre for International Crime Prevention. The UNODC guides Member States, whose funding it depends on, in their cause to eradicate the illegal drug market, crime and terrorism. Its main objectives include “technical cooperation projects, research and analytical work to increase knowledge and understanding of drugs and normative work to assist States in the ratification and implementation of the relevant international treaties as well as the development of domestic legislation on drugs, crime and terrorism.”

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1912	The first international Opium Convention meets at The Hague
1931	Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs
1936	Convention for the Suppression of Illicit Traffic in Dangerous Drugs

1946	Establishment of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs by ECOSOC to succeed League of Nation's Opium Advisory Committee
1953	Opium Protocol
1961	Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs
1971	Convention on Psychotropic Substances
1972	Protocol Amending The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the creation of United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control
1988	United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances
1997	Establishment of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime
2006-ongoing	Mexican Drug War
2011	Bolivian Government denounces 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961-UNODC

This Treaty, which is based on the principle of active cooperation among States, addresses the problem of drug abuse by a) restricting different aspects of drug use to strictly medical and scientific purposes and b) prosecuting drug traffickers.

Signed: 30 March 1961

Condition: 40 ratifications

- Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971-UNODC

The aim of this treaty is the establishment of an international control system for psychotropic substances (psychoactive drugs). Its main objective is the limiting the consumption of a number of synthetic drugs.

Signed: 21 February 1971

Condition: 40 ratifications

- United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988-UNODC

This Convention provides a guide of comprehensive measures in order to combat drug trafficking, including measures focusing on money laundering and precursor chemicals. This treaty is based on mutual international cooperation, calling for the extradition of drug traffickers.

Signed: December 20, 1988

Condition: 20 ratifications

As far as the UN drug-related resolutions are concerned, there are numerous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly (GA), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). The most important and recent ones are the following:

UNGA resolutions:

[A/RES/69/200](#)(2014)

Special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016

[A/RES/69/201](#)(2014)

International cooperation against the world drug problem

[A/RES/68/196](#)(2013)

United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development

[A/RES/68/197](#)(2013)

International cooperation against the world drug problem

ECOSOC resolutions:

[Resolution 2011/34](#)(2011)

Support for the development and implementation of an integrated approach to program development at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

CND resolutions:

[Resolution 57/4](#)(2014)

Supporting recovery from substance use disorders

[Resolution 57/6](#)(2014)

Education and training on drug use disorders

[Resolution 57/7](#) (2014)

Providing sufficient health services to individuals affected by substance use disorders during long-term and sustained economic downturns

[Resolution 56/13](#)(2013)

Precursors: raising awareness on the diversion in international trade of non-scheduled substances for use as alternatives to scheduled substances in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 26 June

By resolution 42/112 of 7 December 1987, the General Assembly decided to observe 26 June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking so as to express its determination to strengthen action and cooperation in order to finally build an international society free of drug abuse.

"Efforts against illicit drugs must be connected to our work to promote opportunities through equitable and sustainable development. We must continually strive to make the weak and fragile stronger."

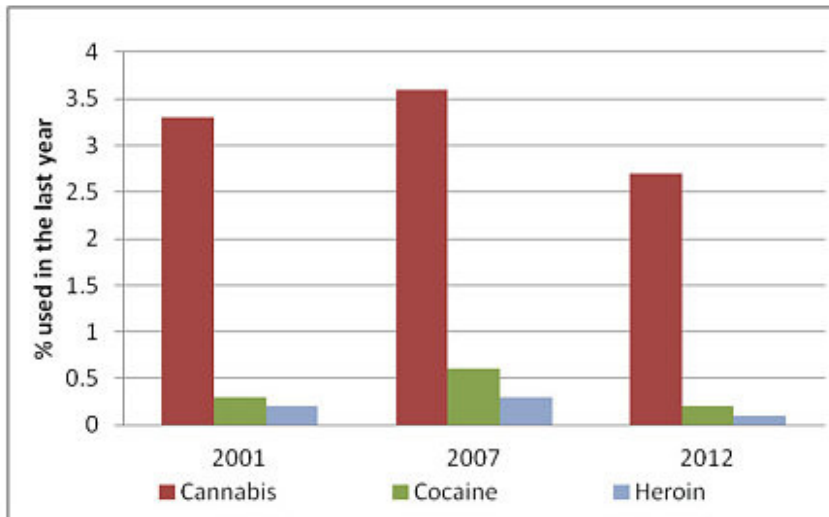
Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

For many years, the international community has made several efforts towards finding the final solution to the drug problem. Unfortunately, seeing as the issue mutates over time, there has been no definitive answer to this modern obstacle. Both, the governments of countries separately, and, international organizations have taken action against drugs.

a. Governmental action

The drug problem shows a different aspect of itself everywhere, and, therefore, each government has to adopt a different approach to combat it. In 2001, Portugal decriminalized all drugs, due to the fact that drug-related deaths in the country had increased to an alarming number. This action was



Portugal – trends in adult drug use, 2001–2012
(Source: EMCDDA Statistical Bulletin)

based on the idea that prevention and treatment is more effective than jailing, and, hence, the number of infections and deaths caused by substances would decrease. In fact, the country met its goal, since drug use did not rise. Other countries that have liberalized drugs include the Netherlands, Argentina and Uruguay.

On the other hand, Japan has imposed several laws against drug use and possession. Long time prison sentence is the punishment that drug users and dealers are convicted to. Following Japan's example, Sweden counts as one of the countries with the strictest regulations against drugs. It has zero tolerance concerning both the use and possession of substances, and, even minor use can result in a prison sentence. Reports by the UNODC show that Sweden has one of the lowest drug usage rates, due to the fact that its drug policy focuses on prevention and treatment, as well as law enforcement.

As it can be understood from the previously mentioned examples, there are two prevalent methods that governments enforce to tackle the problem; drug liberalization and their restriction through the imposition of laws. Controversy may be raised concerning the effectiveness of each strategy, seeing as they differ from each other in many ways.

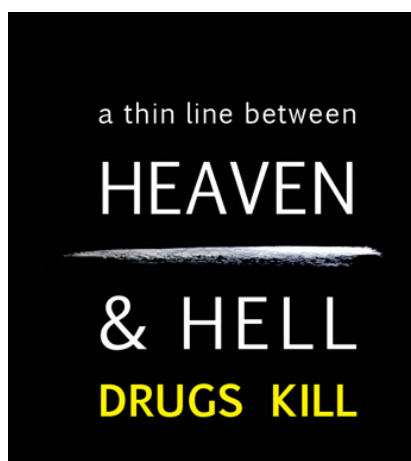
b. International action

Many organizations, including the UN, have for long tried to battle this problem. More specifically, the United Nations have proposed a series of resolutions that aim to tackle the issue. Furthermore, there are specific

organizations ran by the UN that focus on drugs, such as the UNODC. Each year, the UNODC publishes a drug report that informs the international community about the activities of the UNODC to help member states all over the world deal with drug-related problems. The three most important treaties proposed by the UNODC are the ones that were mentioned previously. The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 are mutually abetting and interdependent.

Possible Solutions

Drug rates may be lower than in the previous years, but this does not mean that the world has found the solution to this problem. Thus, both governmental and international action needs to be taken over time to solve this issue. Public awareness is a key point of the issue. Raising awareness can easily be done, beginning from schools and further expanding to campaigns organized by local institutions. Other important ways of dealing with the drug issue are prevention and treatment.



Prevention can happen through education, because, when people know the risks and consequences of drug abuse, they usually don't indulge into using them. As far as treatment is concerned, it is the best solution for people that have already become addicted to substances and cannot stop their use. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, treatment should concentrate on the life of the addicted person, including their medical, psychological and work needs. Treatment and counseling should be provided and funded by NGOs.

LET'S DEVELOP OUR LIVES OUR COMMUNITIES OUR IDENTITIES WITHOUT DRUGS

Bibliography

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/secured/wdr/wdr2013/World_Drug_Report_2013.pdf

https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr2014/World_Drug_Report_2014_web.pdf

http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2012/WDR_2012_web_small.pdf

<http://www.thegooddrugsguide.com/blog/0754/7-countries-where-drug-lords-lord-it-over/>

<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/02/world/asia/myanmar-kachin-heroin-problem/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Drug_War

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legality_of_cannabis_by_country

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/index.html?ref=menutop>

<https://inpud.wordpress.com/timeline-of-events-in-the-history-of-drugs/>

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/>

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/illicit-drugs/definitions/>

<http://www.ceida.net.au/drugs.asp>

<http://www.ceida.net.au/stimulants/>

<http://www.ceida.net.au/depressants/>

<http://www.ceida.net.au/hallucinogens/>

<http://www.dvorak.org/blog/2009/04/15/portugal-decriminalizes-drugs-gets-positive-results/>

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/212972-what-are-some-solutions-to-drug-abuse/>

<http://www.britannica.com/topic/Opium-Wars>

<http://www.drugpolicy.org/new-solutions-drug-policy/brief-history-drug-war>

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn9924-timeline-drugs-and-alcohol.html#.VZW71Pmqgko>