



## Committee: Drug control

### Topic 1: Preventing drug and alcohol abuse during national lockdowns

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#### I. Background Information

Shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic first struck over a year ago, lockdowns have become one of the main tools used to combat and limit its spread. This type of solution, however, comes with many downsides including an increase in drug and alcohol abuse among the populace. In the USA, it was found that alcohol sales have risen by 27% during the spring of 2020 with the use of drugs such as nonprescribed fentanyl, methamphetamine, heroin, etc. rising alarmingly as well.<sup>1</sup> Groups that are socio-economically disadvantaged have been affected particularly severely.

These alarming trends have presented major health risks, especially those related to mental health such as substance use disorders (SUD). Besides the obvious risks to both mental and physical health of the populace, this problem may also contribute to its already significant loss of work habits caused by the pandemic, effectively becoming a serious economic issue as well. Substance abuse may therefore lead to numerous employees losing their jobs at a time of great economic instability.

An important matter concerning this issue is also how the current circumstances have forced substance-abusing individuals to transfer to stronger types of drugs<sup>2</sup> and drug traffickers to change their strategies, such as the pandemic-induced digitalization of drug markets worldwide and how to combat these forms of drug trafficking.<sup>3</sup>

#### II. Questions to consider

- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the trend of substance abuse in your country?
- What are its impacts on public mental and physical health as well as socially and economically?
- What policies has your country implemented or considered to combat substance abuse and drug trafficking? What can be done by the UN in this regard?
- Research the impacts of mental health issues on drug use and vice versa. How can this information be utilized to improve the current conditions?

#### III. Sources and useful links

<sup>1</sup> Sparkman, D. *Drug Abuse on the Rise Because of COVID-19*. EHS Today. <https://www.ehstoday.com/covid19/article/21139889/drug-abuse-on-the-rise-because-of-the-coronavirus>

<sup>2</sup> Abramson, A. Substance use during the pandemic. American Psychological Association (APA). <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/03/substance-use-pandemic>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) - *UNODC World Drug Report 2020*. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/press/releases/2020/June/media-advisory---global-launch-of-the-2020-world-drug-report.html>