



**Republic of the Gambia
Ministry of Health
The Quadrangle
Banjul**

SEVENTY-NINTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER, GENEVA 2026

Agenda Item: C	Public Health Dimension of the World Drug Problem
Documents	A79/26 and A79/26 Add.1
Requested action	Take note of the report
Time limit	2 mn
Commission	B

Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The Gambia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Niger on behalf of AFRO on the public health dimension of the world drug problem. We welcome the progress report and commend the continued collaboration between WHO, UNODC, and the International Narcotics Control Board in advancing a public-health-centred response.

The Gambia recognizes that substance use is not solely a law-enforcement issue, but a major public health and socio-economic challenge that requires evidence-based, people-centred, and rights-based solutions. In our national context, substance use—particularly among young people—continues to affect mental health, education outcomes, livelihoods, and community wellbeing, calling for a strengthened and prevention-focused response.

The Gambia has made progress integrating substance-use services within the broader mental health agenda. Through the WHO mhGAP programme, we have trained frontline health workers to improve identification, management, and referral of substance-use and mental health conditions at the primary health-care level, significantly expanding access in underserved communities.

We have also strengthened public awareness and risk-communication efforts through nationwide campaigns and youth-focused community engagement, aimed at reducing stigma and promoting early help-seeking.

Despite progress, challenges remain, including limited specialized human resources, stigma, resource constraints, and weak data systems. We therefore welcome WHO's continued support to strengthen treatment services, update guidance on dependence and overdose prevention, and promote harm-reduction approaches within integrated health systems.

Excellencies, addressing the public-health dimension of the world drug problem requires whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, grounded in strong health systems and sustained investment.

I thank you.