

SEVENTY-NINTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

GENEVA, 18 - 23 MAY 2026

Agenda item 22. - Matters for information: progress reports
Sub-item C. - Public health dimension of the world drug problem

Statement by Portugal

Chair,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
distinguished delegates,

Portugal thanks the Director-General for the progress report and takes note of the work undertaken by WHO on the public health dimension of the world drug problem.

We welcome WHO's continued cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Narcotics Control Board, as well as progress on treatment and prevention standards, particularly opioid dependence treatment, overdose prevention, controlled medicine's policies, and harm reduction.

The report confirms that the world drug problem must be addressed through evidence-based, people-centred, human rights-based and public health approaches. This means strengthening prevention, early identification, treatment, recovery, social reintegration, risk and harm reduction, and action on stigma and discrimination.

Portugal underlines three points.

First, harm reduction is an essential component of public health. Needle and syringe programmes, opioid agonist treatment, overdose prevention, and outreach services are critical to reducing HIV, viral hepatitis and other preventable harms.

Second, responses must be integrated into health systems, including primary health care, mental health services and community-based care. Particular attention is needed for people in situations of vulnerability, including those in prisons and other places of detention, where continuity and equivalence of care are essential.

Third, balanced access to controlled medicines remains a core public health issue. Countries must ensure access for medical and scientific purposes, while preventing recreational and non-medical use.

Portugal's experience confirms that sustained, integrated responses can produce meaningful results. Our national approach combines prevention, treatment, harm reduction, reintegration and intersectoral coordination.

We encourage WHO to continue providing normative guidance, technical support, surveillance and platforms for Member State exchange, in close cooperation with relevant United Nations partners and affected communities.

Portugal takes note of the report and supports continued WHO leadership in this area.

Thank you.

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