Position Paper

Committee: WHO (World Health Organisation)

Agenda: Combating Youth Substance Abuse and Its Long-Term Consequences

Country: Thailand

I. Topic Background

Substance abuse among adolescents refers to the repeated use of harmful and often illegal substances during critical years of brain development. These substances include alcohol, opioids, synthetic drugs, and inhalants. Youth are especially vulnerable due to peer pressure, poverty, trauma, and lack of awareness.

This crisis is not limited to one region—it affects both developed and developing nations, and it continues to grow. According to the UNODC, over 13 million adolescents are affected globally. In Southeast Asia, synthetic drug production and trafficking have made the region a hotspot for rising addiction.

This issue is deeply important because early substance abuse causes long-term damage to mental health, academic performance, social skills, and employment opportunities. It also increases the likelihood of criminal behavior, self-harm, and generational poverty. Without targeted action, these youth will continue to suffer in silence.

II. Past International Action

The United Nations and WHO have taken several initiatives to fight youth substance abuse.

Key actions include:

WHO Mental Health Action Plan (2013–2030) emphasizes early intervention for adolescents.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ensures children are protected from drug use and trafficking.

UNODC Youth Initiative promotes youth engagement in prevention.

General Assembly Resolution A/RES/76/186 supports integrated health strategies for drug prevention.

In addition, NGOs like Plan International, UNICEF, and YouthRISE have led campaigns for peer education, awareness, and harm reduction.

III. Country Policy

My country has seen the direct impact of substance abuse due to its geographic proximity to drug-trafficking zones in the Golden Triangle. Poverty and youth unemployment are major causes behind early drug use and even smuggling.

Recognizing this, my country has:

Shifted from punitive to rehabilitative drug policies, especially for juveniles.

Launched school-based awareness programs and early mental health screening.

Partnered with ASEAN Drug Monitoring Networks for regional cooperation.

Strengthened community-based rehabilitation centers.

We recommend:

The integration of psychosocial risk assessments in school health systems.

Stronger cross-border efforts to cut off synthetic drug supply chains.

UN support for education, employment, and rehabilitation to prevent youth from falling into addiction.