

World Health Organization (WHO)

Country: Federative Republic of Brazil BR

Agenda: Addressing Global Youth Substance Abuse: Focusing on Prevention, Intervention, and Long-Term Solutions

1. Background of the Agenda

Substance abuse among youth has become a global challenge that's no longer hiding in the shadows. From smoking and drinking to drug misuse and prescription pill addiction, teenagers are increasingly exposed — often without knowing the long-term harm. The **UNODC 2023 report** shows that nearly **1 in 7 people aged 15–24** has used drugs in the past year.

The reasons are complex — from mental health struggles and trauma to peer pressure, unemployment, and lack of support. In many regions, poverty and violence make young people even more vulnerable. Sadly, services like mental health care and rehab are either out of reach or highly stigmatized. Youth are slipping through the cracks — not because they don't want help, but because the help isn't always there.

2. Brazil's stand on the issue

Brazil recognizes that youth substance abuse is not a crime to punish — it's a **crisis to understand**. The Brazilian government views it as a major public health concern and believes in an approach that includes **prevention, early intervention, treatment, and long-term rehabilitation**.

Brazil stands for a **compassionate, community-driven response**. We must stop viewing substance-using youth as problems and start supporting them as people in pain. Awareness, mental health education, and safe spaces are key to helping them make better choices.

3. What Brazil has done so far

Brazil has already started taking steps to deal with youth substance abuse, such as:

- Setting up **CAPS-AD** (centers for alcohol and drug support) where people, including teenagers, can get free treatment and counseling.
- Launching **educational programs in schools** about the risks of drug and alcohol use.
- **Working with NGOs and social workers** to reach youth in risky environments — especially in poor neighborhoods.

- Hosting awareness weeks and campaigns to involve families and communities in prevention.

Also, Brazil is part of several international efforts like the **Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs** and works with **PAHO** and **WHO** to improve drug policies and health services.

4.UN and WHO's Role

The WHO plays a vital role in framing substance abuse as a **global health issue**, not just a legal or social one. Through campaigns like "**Health for All**" and its Mental Health Action Plan, WHO helps countries improve early intervention, rehabilitation, and reduce stigma.

Brazil encourages WHO to expand funding and research into **youth-specific addiction trends**, such as the rise of vaping and synthetic drugs, and to support **data-sharing platforms** that allow member states to build better, youth-centered programs.

5. Brazil's Suggestion for the Future

To really fight this issue, we need a mix of prevention, support, and long-term care. Brazil suggests:

- **Teaching mental health and substance awareness in schools**, starting early
- **Free and friendly counselling centres** where young people can talk without fear
- **More funding for community spaces** that keep youth active, supported, and off the streets
- **Training teachers and parents** to notice signs of addiction early
- **Social media campaigns** that actually reach teens where they are — not just boring lectures

Conclusion

Brazil knows this issue won't be solved overnight. But we believe that if we listen to young people, give them real support, and create safe spaces, we can help them choose healthier paths. Every teen deserves a chance to grow up free from addiction — and we're ready to work with the world to make that happen.