Position Paper

Country: Australia

Agenda: Substance Abuse

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Conference: WHO

Australia recognizes that substance abuse is a global crisis that affects millions of lives, disrupts public health systems, and contributes to social and economic challenges. The Australian government is committed to treating substance abuse not only as a legal issue but as a public health and community wellbeing issue that requires education, rehabilitation, and early intervention.

Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, illicit drugs, and prescription medications. In Australia:

1 in 6 people aged 14 and over reported using illicit drugs in the past year.

Alcohol misuse contributes to over 4,000 deaths annually and remains the most commonly abused substance.

There is growing concern about prescription drug misuse, particularly opioids and benzodiazepines.

Substance abuse has also been linked to mental health issues, family breakdowns, increased crime rates, and strain on hospitals and emergency services.

Australia has implemented a multi-faceted strategy to address substance abuse, focusing on prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and law enforcement. Key actions include:

National Drug Strategy (2020–2030): Focuses on reducing demand, supply, and harm from drug use.

Public education campaigns: "Drug Help" and youth education in schools aim to raise awareness and promote healthy choices.

Harm reduction efforts: Including needle and syringe programs and pill testing trials at festivals.

Investment in treatment and recovery services: Providing access to counselling, detox programs, and community-based rehabilitation.

Support for Indigenous and rural communities with culturally appropriate programs.

Australia supports working with international bodies like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to share research, build capacity, and develop consistent global frameworks for tackling substance abuse. Australia also emphasizes:

Stronger global education initiatives targeting youth.

Increased funding for cross-border rehab and mental health services.

Exchange of best practices in harm reduction and community care models.

Combating drug trafficking through international intelligence-sharing and cooperation.

Australia believes that substance abuse is not a challenge that can be addressed by law enforcement alone. It requires a collaborative global effort grounded in compassion, science, and a long-term commitment to wellbeing. As a delegate, Australia is ready to work with all nations to develop practical, youth-driven, and sustainable solutions that promote health, safety, and opportunity for all.