

Youth Forum is an annual event organized by the UNODC Youth Initiative in the broader context of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). Its main objective is to gather young people, nominated by Member States and active in the field of drugs use

prevention, health promotion and youth empowerment from around the world. The aim is to allow them to exchange ideas, visions and different perspectives on how to better protect the health and wellbeing of their peers and provide them with an opportunity to convey their joint message to the global level policy makers.

This year the Youth Forum was held in Vienna, from 12-14 March and 43 participants from all over the world took part. With the invitation of HE Ambassador Prof. Dr. Günther A. Granser among these young participants was also an Albanian Malteser volunteer, therefore we express our deepest gratitude for the support.

After discussing together about the reasons, consequences and solutions concerning drug abuse, they managed to write a statement (as shown below), which has been presented to a huge international governmental committee.

Excellences, influential representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for the opportunity to represent our countries from all over the world. Our contrasting backgrounds and experiences have allowed us to see and gain awareness of different perspectives on the world drug problem phenomenon and we stand here to ask you to do the same. We, the youth are an easy target of the world drug problem and acknowledge that we at times may be a contributing part of it, but we are also an integral part of the solution.

Increasing political conflict, grave social inequalities, relentless organized crime and violence make a very unstable and insecure world for the youth. The ease of accessibility of drugs, absence of evidence-based health and social services and immense pressure on youth to maneuver these challenges makes our generation more vulnerable to adapting unhealthy and unsafe coping mechanisms and curious about the perceived allure of drugs.

We urge Member States to strengthen collaboration between governments and NGOs, promoting youth to influence drug policy, positively engaging and consulting youth. Member States should increase access and awareness to human rights-based health centered drug dependence treatment and care but more importantly reduce stigma around drug use.

Last year, we called UNODC to develop a guide for Member States on how to positively engage youth in drug prevention. This year, we urge the UNODC to support the implementation of this guide and to train Member States on it. Moreover, we suggest bringing the gap between policy makers and youth closer by creating a regular forum for exchange.

Maybe our demands are too ambitious, perhaps they are not yet well-formed. But, we are ready and must work together, to reduce substance abuse we see every day amongst our peers and in our communities. It is crucial to engage youth in substance use prevention and see the situation through our eyes. This is a demonstration of our trust in you, as policy makers and role models. Together, we have the ability to save the lives that are being lost EVERY SINGLE DAY!

