

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY  
AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING  
26 June 2006**

Taking drugs or not is about making choices -- informed choices. Yet too many people in the world are badly informed about the potentially devastating effects of drugs. That is why we need to work for better education and greater awareness to prevent drug abuse. We need more consistent leadership from Governments. We need better examples from role models whose drug use damages more people than just themselves.

We need to spread the understanding that drugs are illegal because they are a problem; not a problem because they are illegal. Drugs cause health and mental problems. When addictive, they can spell misery for users and those close to them. When taken intravenously, they can spread deadly disease -- especially HIV/AIDS. When they wreak their devastation, they respect no boundaries of income, race, occupation or geography.

Our efforts must focus especially on young people -- through outreach, peer-to-peer networks, and using opportunities such as sport to keep young people active, healthy, and confident. That also means engaging and encouraging parents and teachers to play their part in full.

Our efforts also require working to reduce supply -- through law enforcement, and through working with the producing countries to give farmers sustainable alternatives to growing illicit crops. In this way, we must strive to tackle poverty and drug supply at the same time.

This International Day Against Drug Abuse is a reminder to all of us to play our part. The United Nations is here to assist you in this fight. Let us arm people with the information they need to say no to drugs.

Kofi A. Annan