



Virtual Conference  
16 Sept - 10 Nov 2020

**Drug Demand Reduction in Africa:**  
Prevention, Treatment and Epidemiology



#ISSUPAfricaConf2020

**\*\*Embargo until 00:01 on 16 September 2020\*\***

## **Press Release: Historic Virtual Conference Meets to Discuss Drug Demand Reduction in Africa**

*Demand reduction, prevention, and effective treatment services – based on robust epidemiological evidence of substance use across Africa - seen as vital solutions to Africa's growing drug problem.*

**Johannesburg, 16th September 2020:** With the support of the International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP), ISSUP South Africa will host the first virtual conference to convene international panels of high-level government officials, experts in public health policy, NGOs and healthcare professionals to discuss trends in drug demand reduction across Africa. Participants will convene for a series of six online plenaries due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference will be hosted in partnership with the **African Union Commission, South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA), Department of Social Development, Republic of South Africa (DSD), Organization of American States Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (OAS/CICAD), and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).**

“South Africa is experiencing a scourge of substance use disorders not unlike any other country in Africa”, said Mr. Roger Weimann, President of ISSUP South Africa and Director of SANCA Central Eastern Cape. “For ISSUP South Africa, this unique conference takes place in the wake of heritage month celebrations. It is an opportunity to become part of the solution, to take collective action to intensify substance use prevention and treatment efforts. It is a platform to deliberate and share and ultimately support an integrated holistic approach for Africa by Africa.”

This historic event is the first-time digital technology has been used to enable an international audience to gather and discuss the issue of drug demand reduction in Africa, with a core focus on prevention and treatment strategies based on the latest epidemiological research.

With the [World Drug Report 2020\\*](#) highlighting an increase in global drug consumption, the conference is a timely opportunity to discuss what it will take to deliver evidence-based, ethical

interventions to promote public health and social wellbeing for individuals, families, and communities across Africa.

Speaking on the eve of the conference, H.E. Ms Amira Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union, summarised the importance and timeliness of the event: “Africa like the rest of the world, is experiencing its fair share of drug use and drug use disorders. For us to achieve the Africa we want, an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, no one must be left behind! Recognising drug use disorder like any other health condition, we must collectively step up action with requisite responsive policies and programmes”.

More than any solution available today, a coordinated, balanced and evidence-based approach that addresses both supply control and demand reduction is recognised as the most effective way of tackling the drug problem across Africa.

Approaches to prevention and treatment that have great potential for rapid impact are expected to feature prominently throughout the conference. Plenary sessions will preview high-level discussions, provide key insights into regional action on substance use prevention and highlight successes and obstacles in treatment practice faced by practitioners who are forging new solutions at the national level.

A growing body of evidence shows that strengthening the role of traditional health practitioners and leaders in drug demand reduction improves health outcomes for communities. In response, the conference will devote a special plenary session to this topic on November 4, 2020.

Alongside analysis of global and regional trends in drug use, the opening Plenary on 16<sup>th</sup> September will feature presentations on the **African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2019-2023)** and **Global Initiatives by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, US State Department**.

Coming in the wake of the recent adoption of the African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2019-2023), Ms Amira Elfadil added that “this historic conference series provides us with an opportunity to unpack the vision and provide room for all stakeholders to honestly share, discuss, deliberate and determine actions that will support a multi-sectorial, balanced and integrated approach to drugs, addressing the health, socio-economic wellbeing, crime, terrorism and security in our Member States.”

ENDS

**Notes to editors:**

**Where:** Online (Virtual Conference). The six conference plenary sessions will be webcasted live.

**When:** The conference will convene six times from September to November 2020 (details below)

1. September 16, 2020 - Plenary 1: Setting the Scene for Drug Demand Reduction in Africa
2. September 22, 2020 - Plenary 2: Evidence-based Prevention: Policy and Practice
3. October 6, 2020 - Plenary 3: A Focus on Treatment and Recovery
4. October 20, 2020 - Plenary 4: Epidemiology and Its Role in Drug Demand Reduction

5. November 4, 2020 - Plenary 5: Role of Legislators and Traditional health Practitioners in Drug Demand Reduction
6. November 10, 2020: Plenary 6: Review and Reflections: A Panel Session

Conference programme: <https://www.issup.net/about-issup/issup-workshops/africa-2020/full-conference-programme>

**Who:** Plenary speaker listings are available [here](#) and in the [conference programme](#).

**Registration:** Press and media can [click here to register for individual Plenary sessions](#). All participants are asked to register electronically. There is no registration fee.

### **Press Enquiries**

For enquiries or to schedule interviews with speakers, please contact:

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### **About ISSUP**

The [International Society of Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals \(ISSUP\)](#) is a global, not for profit, non-government organisation to support the development of a professional prevention and treatment workforce. ISSUP has over 20 National Chapters globally, including in South Africa.

ISSUP serves as a focal point for information about substance use prevention and treatment. ISSUP's contribution is informed by science and research, promoting evidence based, high quality and ethical approaches and practice to substance use prevention and treatment. It does this through its unique website, providing access to up to date information and support for the substance use prevention and treatment community. ISSUP offers training and networking opportunities as well as resources that support the professionalisation of the global substance use prevention, treatment and recovery workforce.

ISSUP's work is informed by its vision of a connected, trained, knowledgeable, and effective international network of substance use prevention and treatment professionals undertaking and promoting high-quality, evidence based, and ethical substance use prevention and treatment.

### **References**

\* United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *World Drug Report 2020*.  
<https://wdr.unodc.org/wdr2020/>