



# WHO

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE

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## *PREVENTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND HIV INFECTION*

Report on a WHO Seminar

Chimkent, Kazakhstan  
17-20 May 1994

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1995

EUR/HFA target 17

5468  
EUR/ICP/ADA 533 (C)  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH  
UNEDITED

## TARGET 17

### TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS

*By the year 2000, the health-damaging consumption of dependence-producing substances such as alcohol, tobacco and psychoactive drugs should have been significantly reduced in all Member States.*

#### ABSTRACT

There are clear indications that substance abuse is a growing social and public health problem in the central Asian republics. Drug abuse in particular is spreading rapidly and although as yet HIV infection prevalence is still low in these countries it is feared that the virus will spread rapidly as a result of injecting drug abuse. The seminar brought together policy advisers and professionals from the five central Asian republics to review the current situation regarding the prevention of substance abuse and HIV infection in Kazakhstan and in the other republics, and to strengthen the exchange of information and cooperation between these countries. The participants expressed the need to establish institutionalized mechanisms for coordination and it was proposed that a coordination centre should be established to ensure the organization of periodic meetings and adequate dissemination of information. They appealed to the world community for assistance, multilateral or bilateral, and to the relevant international organizations, more particularly UNDCP and WHO, to strengthen their support.

#### Keywords

SUBSTANCE ABUSE – prevention and control  
HIV INFECTIONS – prevention and control  
NIS

The WHO seminar on the prevention of substance abuse and HIV infection for the Central Asian Republics (CAR) took place in Chimkent from 17 to 20 May 1994. The seminar was hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan and the local organization was in the hands of the Institute of Postgraduate Medical Training in Almaty and the Chimkent District Narcological Service. It was attended by delegations from the five CAR nominated by the ministries of health, observers from Kazakhstan, two WHO temporary advisers, a representative of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and two WHO staff members.

Participants recognized the rapid political and socioeconomic changes in the CAR, their vulnerability to illicit drug activities due to their geographical location close to major illicit drug-producing areas, and their potential for being important producers themselves with the associated proliferation of criminal organizations as well as the spillover effects of abuse on the local populations. They also recognized the urgency of commitments to be made by the governments of the CAR at the highest levels to consider drug control as a state priority (by issuing a policy statement, formulating a national strategy and a plan of action) in order to preempt a deterioration of the situation with possible destabilizing effects on the security, political and socioeconomic sectors of the CAR. They reiterated the conclusions and recommendations listed in the declaration which emerged from the previous seminar on demand reduction strategies in the CAR (Seminar on Substance Abuse for Central Asian Republics, Almaty, 10–14 May 1993), including the establishment of interdepartmental committees, the organization of training programmes, the establishment of data collection and analysis mechanisms, the establishment of national resource centres and the development of a mechanism for subregional collaboration.

This seminar proved again that it is a valuable strategy to bring together policy advisers and (key) professionals from the five CAR to strengthen exchange of information and cooperation between these countries.

Participants felt it necessary to establish institutionalized mechanisms for coordination among the five CAR. For that purpose a coordination centre should be established. This coordination centre should preferably be a permanent agency with a representation of the five republics in its management. Among other things it should ensure the organization of periodic meetings and adequate dissemination of information.

The participants welcomed action taken to include substance abuse in the list of state policy priorities in one of the republics and looked forward to similar policies in the other CAR. They urged CAR governments to promote healthy lifestyles among their populations at schools and workplaces.

Bringing together people working in the areas of substance abuse prevention and AIDS prevention – as in this seminar – was felt to be a very good initiative. In planning and implementing policies and programmes in these areas, responsible governmental and nongovernmental agencies should systematically pursue this combination.

Participants agreed that they would initiate (or continue to support) the formulation and development of national policies and action programmes on substance abuse in their respective countries.

Again referring to the above-mentioned declaration, participants wished to re-emphasize the need for national resource centres which would provide support to governmental and nongovernmental agencies in the form of information, documentation research coordination and competence-building.

Participants agreed that they would disseminate the information obtained in this seminar (including the conclusions reached) to their colleagues and to relevant institutions and governmental agencies in their countries.

The participants wished to thank the Government of Kazakhstan for hosting the meeting, the Chimkent District Narcological Centre and the Institute for Postgraduate Medical Training in Almaty for the local organization and WHO for organizing and sponsoring the meeting. They appealed to the world community for assistance, multilateral or bilateral, and to the relevant international organizations, more particularly the UNDCP and WHO, to strengthening their support which is essential for the development of policies and programmes in the CAR.