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Today, June 26 is the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. To mark the day, the United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has chosen the theme, **Drugs: Treatment Works**, to raise awareness among drug users, those at risk, policy makers and implementers, on the importance of treatment, support and rehabilitation of drug dependent persons.

UNODC has observed that young people tend to be at higher risk of drug use and addiction, and this year it has incorporated a new and growing problem in Africa, that of drug use among child soldiers. It notes that a better-coordinated detoxification approach is required to accompany the existing efforts at demobilizing and rehabilitating the child soldiers.

With the youth in mind, this year's commemoration emphasizes the role of the family in giving support and care to recovering individuals, especially to the vulnerable members of society. It is the family's role to educate their children on the hazards associated with drug and substance abuse early in life, at home and at school. The role of the family in treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration should be the first option over institutional management.

It is no coincidence therefore that the global community is also marking the International Year of the Family, to avoid breakdown of the family structure which can often result in domestic violence, child neglect and vulnerability to drug addiction.

Accordingly, member states, the AU, UNODC and other Development Partners are called upon to join hands in implementing the Plan of Action on Illicit Trafficking and Abuse of Drugs in Africa.

**Addis Ababa, June 27, 2004**