

HMDC Presents... WHO: Opening Speech Outline

HMDC Presents... Opening Speech Outline: World Health Organization: Social Effects of Addiction

THIS IS A MODEL TO LEARN FROM, NOT TO COPY. We use this sample speech for the Portuguese Republic to hear how a one-minute opening speech sounds, and then we build our own speech for our own country with the fill-in-the-blank outline below. We plan for about one minute of speaking time, so every word has to earn its place.

THE FIVE PARTS OF THE SPEECH

Harvard's December chairs want to hear about real people and real neighbourhoods, so every part of our speech points back to families and communities.

1. **Hook:** One short sentence that makes the room look up, usually a surprising fact that shows how addiction touches families or neighbourhoods in our own country.
 2. **Our country's stake:** One or two sentences on why this topic matters to our people and our communities.
 3. **One key fact with source:** A single number, spoken with its source, that proves the problem is real.
 4. **Our two solutions:** Two ideas we want the committee to adopt, each in one sentence, and each one about helping people or communities directly.
 5. **Call to allies:** One sentence inviting the countries that agree with us to work with us in caucus.
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THE SAMPLE SPEECH

Delegation: The Portuguese Republic. About 150 words, about one minute at a calm speaking pace.

Honourable Chair, distinguished delegates.

In 1999, almost half of Portugal's prisoners were held for drug offences. Behind every one of them stood a family and a neighbourhood.

Portugal chose a different path. We send people to doctors and social workers instead of courts, and HIV and drug deaths fell. We know that addiction never harms only one person. It harms children, partners and whole communities.

Yet, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, only one in twelve people with a drug use disorder receives treatment. For women, it is only one in twenty-three.

Portugal asks this committee for two things. First, treatment and naloxone, the medicine that reverses an opioid overdose, for every family and every community left behind. Second, community services for children and families that stay open even when donors leave.

We invite every delegation that puts people first to join us in caucus.

Thank you.

Where the facts come from: The prisoner figure (44% in 1999) and the fall in HIV and drug deaths are from the HMDC report, entry 1.18 (UNSW Sydney, November 2024). The treatment figures are from entry 1.3 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Last Accessed: October 2026). The first solution comes from entries 1.12 and 1.22, and the second from entries 3.2 and 3.3, which show community services closing after donors cut funding. We left out health taxes and gambling, because Harvard's December session is about communities, and one minute only holds our two strongest ideas.

OUR FILL-IN-THE-BLANK OUTLINE

We copy this outline onto a card and fill every blank from our own Country Report and our HMDC research report. Then we read it aloud with a timer until it fits inside one minute.

1. **Hook:** "Honourable Chair, distinguished delegates. In ____ (year), ____ (one surprising fact about how addiction touches families or neighbourhoods in our country)."
2. **Our country's stake:** "The delegation of ____ (country) believes that addiction harms ____ (families, children, workers, young people), because in our country ____ (one short example)."
3. **One key fact with source:** "According to ____ (publication), ____ (one number that shows the size of the problem)."
4. **Our two solutions:** "____ (country) asks this committee for two things. First, ____ (solution one, such as treatment, naloxone or a health route instead of courts). Second, ____ (solution two, such as support for children, families or community services)."
5. **Call to allies:** "We invite ____ (the countries or bloc that usually agree with us) to join us in caucus. Thank you."

DELIVERY TIPS

1. **Saying the source out loud:** We say "according to" and the publication name slowly and clearly, because the chair cannot see our citations, only hear them. One source spoken clearly helps us more than three sources rushed together.
2. **Pausing after the hook:** We stop for one full second after our first fact, so the room has time to feel it. A pause feels long to us, but to the listener it sounds confident.
3. **Looking at the camera, not the paper:** On Zoom, the camera is the chair's eyes. We practise until we can look up for the hook and the call to allies. We keep the card below the camera so our eyes only move a little.

