



CND - 62nd Session

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INTERVENTION OF URUGUAY DELEGATION

WHO RECOMMENDATION ON CANNABIS RECLASSIFICATION

Vienna, March 18, 2019

Mr. Chair,

The Delegation of Uruguay has stated that we do not agree with the fact of postponing the necessary discussion on the recommendation of the World Health Organization regarding the reclassification of cannabis, given the growing scientific evidence indicating that this substance could be beneficial for treat different health problems.

At the request of some honorable delegates who manifested that their countries were not in a position to offer an answer, my delegation was forced to agree to postpone the vote.

As we all know, the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence has recommended that cannabis resin and other cannabis products be moved from list IV to list I, with respect to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961.

The committee also recommended that tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main psychoactive ingredient in cannabis, be designated as a Schedule I drug to simplify its classification. Currently, THC is classified separately in list IV of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

In addition, the Committee proposes that products made with cannabidiol (cannabis compound), containing no more than 0.2% THC, be removed from all international drug control conventions.

We must keep in mind, that the list IV is the strictest category described in the document, which nowadays can restrict the work of scientists who wish to investigate the possible therapeutic effects of the plant.

We cannot ignore that this recommendation marks a significant change in the position of WHO, which during the last six decades had positioned itself against the use of cannabis in medicine. We warmly welcome this evolution in the concepts that WHO is involved in.

It is our obligation to establish that by postponing this decision, the CND demonstrates once again that it cannot accomplish the tasks assigned to it decades ago.

According to the most reliable estimates, cannabis represents 57% of total drug consumption worldwide.

Undoubtedly, this is not the first time that the discussion about Cannabis is postponed *sine die* by the CND.

In 2004, in Resolution 59/160 of the UN General Assembly, Member States requested UNODC to prepare a global survey on cannabis,

which led to a special chapter in the World Drug Report 2006, entitled "Cannabis: why should we worry?"

In the report, UNODC stated that "the world community is confused about cannabis," and that "reaching agreement on cannabis matters is important because it is, by a wide margin, the most popular illicit drug in the world." It also recognized that "much of the initial material on cannabis is now considered inaccurate, and that a series of studies in several countries have exonerated the cannabis of many of the charges against him." It noted that "the medical use of the active ingredients, if not the plant itself, is championed by respected professionals."

The report recognized that supply reduction is impossible given the potential to grow the plant anywhere and that all previous attempts to control availability had failed. In its final conclusion, the report already raised the key issue on cannabis, before UNGASS 2016, and I quote: "The world has not reached an agreement about cannabis as a drug. In some countries, the use and trafficking of cannabis is taken very seriously, while in others, they are practically ignored. This inconsistency undermines the credibility of the international system, and the time to resolve the global ambivalence on the issue is far behind. Either the gap between the letter and the spirit of the single Convention, which manifests itself about the cannabis, must be overcome, or the Convention parties must discuss the redefinition of the state of the cannabis".

However, the cannabis issue was not discussed at the 2016 UNGASS, despite the fact that some jurisdictions had already legally

regulated the substance for non-medical use and others had announced that they would do so.

For decades, the Academy has been discussing the potential damage to the health of different psychoactive substances. In all serious work on the subject, cannabis has been considered a substance outside the group of the most harmful and addictive (among which are alcohol and tobacco although they have not been subject to international control). It is imperative that the CND not continue to be oblivious to this concept and, conversely, incorporate it into their work.

Consistent with the vision, insistently promoted in this Commission, of basing decisions on the best available scientific evidence, we must take into account the contribution made by the highest Experts Committee on the subject within the framework of WHO. Additionally, the proposed modifications, if approved, may encourage the development of new knowledge about the cannabis plant and its derivatives.

Honorable Delegates, for the aforementioned reasons, accepting the WHO recommendation is imperative and this decision should not be postponed indefinitely. Recall that the proposed change is for the benefit of the health of humanity, and that not taking a decision means damaging, day by day, millions of people. The CND should not be held responsible, by omission, for this purpose.

My delegation would like to end this statement by proposing that the recommendation be adopted as soon as possible, in the course of this year, instead of being this decision postponed for the coming year. **Specifically, we formally request that this Commission schedule the treatment to the WHO recommendations regarding cannabis at the next Reconveniened Meeting in December 2019.**

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.