

**Agenda Item 5 of the reconvened 63<sup>rd</sup> session  
of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs  
National Statement delivered by Ambassador Umej Bhatia  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Singapore**

Thank you, Mr Chair, for giving Singapore the floor.

2. We appreciate your leadership and efforts to steer the CND on this important issue.
3. Singapore respects the WHO's treaty mandated role to conduct reviews of substances and provide its recommendations on the global controls to be imposed on them, and the principal role of the CND as the policy-making body in the UN with prime responsibility for drug control matters.
4. We are disappointed that recommendation 5.1 has been accepted. The voting outcomes today demonstrate clearly that there is no international consensus on the WHO-ECDD's recommendations on cannabis and cannabis-related substances, despite the many discussions before the vote to reach a common understanding.
5. There is clearly a lack of adequate and robust evidence to substantiate these recommendations, particularly on the safety and efficacy of cannabis and its related substances for medical purposes. In contrast, there is well-founded and incontrovertible research<sup>1</sup> that establishes several short-term and long-term adverse effects associated with cannabis use, including impairments to one's respiratory and cognitive functions. The adoption of recommendation 5.1 today, taken in spite of sharp disagreements between Member States and the dearth of robust and persuasive scientific evidence, fundamentally goes against our principles of consensus and evidence-based drug

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Hall and Louisa Degenhardt, "Adverse health effects of non-medical cannabis use", *The Lancet*, vol. 374, no. 9698 (2009), pp 1383-1391; Jeanette M. Tetrault and others, "Effects of marijuana smoking on pulmonary function and respiratory complications: a systematic review", *Archives of Internal Medicine*, vol. 167, no. 3 (2007), pp. 221-228; Theresa H. M. Moore and others, "Cannabis use and risk of psychotic or affective mental health outcomes: a systematic review", *The Lancet*, vol. 370, no. 9584 (2007), pp. 319-328; Mary P. Becker and others, "Longitudinal changes in cognition in young adult cannabis users", *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology*, vol. 40, no. 6 (2018), pp. 529-543; C. Heather Ashton, "Pharmacology and effects of cannabis: a brief review", *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 178, no. 2 (2001), pp. 101-106; Marta Di Forti and others, "The contribution of cannabis use to variation in the incidence of psychotic disorder across Europe (EU-GEI): a multicentre case-control study.", *The Lancet Psychiatry*, vol. 6, no. 5 (2019), pp. 427-436.

policy-making, and threatens to undermine our duty to protect public health and welfare.

6. The deletion of cannabis and cannabis resin from Schedule IV of the 1961 Convention carries a high signature, and will perpetuate the societal misperception that global authorities like the WHO and CND, no longer assess cannabis to be as harmful as it was once thought to be. This would encourage more abuse, especially among the youths, and create other social and safety problems. As such, we stress that the acceptance of recommendation 5.1 should not be viewed as an endorsement of recreational cannabis use and must not pave the way for further liberalisation of cannabis.

7. In conclusion, we reiterate our disappointment in the scheduling decision taken today. Cannabis is the most widely abused drug in the world and the acceptance of recommendation R5.1 may well compound this dire situation. Singapore remains firmly committed to our duty to our citizens to protect public health and welfare. We will continue to keep cannabis and cannabis-related substances under robust control in Singapore, to ensure that Singaporeans are kept safe from their scourge.

8. Singapore remains committed to working with the CND, INCB, UNODC and the WHO to ensure that the recommendations are implemented appropriately. We will continue our efforts to work together with all Member States, despite our differences in voting positions, to implement an integrated and balanced strategy to address and counter the world's drug problem.

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