As part of the delegation of the Vienna NGO Committee On Drugs (VNGOC), an organization in consultative status with ECOSOC, today I have the privilege of speaking on behalf of the European Institute for Multidisciplinary Studies on Human Rights and Science - Knowmad Institut.

The trafficking of illegalized substances through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is becoming increasingly common. The darknet and "cryptomarkets" are a notable innovation in the illicit market of controlled substances. However, the most popular social networks have evolved and avoid the need to enter the darknet to acquire substances.

The information that can be analyzed from trade data in darknet markets and social networks can lead to the development of useful methods for detecting newly emerging psychoactive substances.

Therefore, in the quest to consolidate safe spaces on the network, it is important that law enforcement and government agencies do not forget that privacy and anonymity are a fundamental right in our hyper-connected society.

Two facts force us to rethink our world: coexistence with seemingly limitless artificial minds and memories, and our growing interest in modifying and expanding our own limited human minds. At the crossroads of these critical issues are privacy and dignity.

It then becomes clear that there is a need to rethink current strategies and assume the priority of focusing law enforcement resources on the skills of the fledgling specialized cybercrime units, and the time and funding to investigate the most pernicious cybercrimes that threaten the general public and not the recreational substance markets.
Recent literature indicates that people who use drugs (PWUD) and who acquire substances through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) tend to adopt harm reduction practices, and promote “responsible use” in which self-determination and management of pleasures with privacy and greater security by being mostly in their places of residence.

Likewise, law enforcement practices must be nuanced without losing focus of real threats, such as the booming market for opioids and counterfeit controlled drugs. Implementation is problematic when the market is not regulated by States, but by Organized Crime; which makes us raise once again the need to respect the self-determination of individuals, to seek a balanced and humane regulation of legalized substances to educate and reduce harm in our world which is a one young world.

Therefore, from the European Institute for Multidisciplinary Studies on Human Rights and Sciences - Knowmad Institut we urge this commission and the Member States to study the feasibility of realizing a convention on cybercrime with a specific provision towards crimes related to controlled substances, which would represent a first useful step to recognize the negative consequences and lessons learned from the current approach.

A thorough training of law enforcement on the risks associated with general take-down approaches to recreational substance markets should take into account health professionals with expertise in harm reduction, civil society actors such as the Rome Consensus 2.0 coalition and should also have the invaluable accompaniment of the Cybercrime, Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism Department.

We urge a multidimensional approach to cybercrime related to drugs (especially recreational drugs) and respond accordingly with a humanitarian vision that puts people’s dignity and safety first.

Finally, we call upon you and the governments you represent to take awareness and action to ensure a healthy transition during the adoption and standardization of emerging technologies in the fourth industrial revolution.

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