

Statement for the record from SAM
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Thank you Chair and your excellencies for the opportunity to speak today on behalf SAM, Smart Approaches to Marijuana.

We come to the commission this year gravely concerned about global developments, both in terms of the unprecedented human toll of addiction, which is reaching catastrophic levels in many regions, and in the policies we are crafting to confront this challenge.

No matter how unfashionable it might be, we should never turn our back towards the vision of a drug-free society.

This is a noble vision and goal, even if it may not be perfectly attainable in the near future. Would we ever want the United Nations to turn its back on other so called unattainable goals – like a society free from “extreme poverty?”

Or a society free from “violent conflict”?

We ask the members today, is it REALLY too much to seek a society free from the use of drugs, too?

If we care about human life, and we care about encouraging people to recover and live a life, not only free of drugs, but one fully participating in society, then it should not be.

In this same spirit, how can any nation justify violating the essence and letter of you and conventions by simply opting out of certain provisions, so that we can legalize drugs and encourage and facilitate addiction?

These actions violate the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, and threaten international cooperation concerning drug abuse and trafficking.

We ask all member States to refer to both the current experience of the catastrophic affects of commercializing cannabis, from increase youth used to increased psychosis and schizophrenia, to increase violence, and addiction AND to our recent global history, a time, no more than

100 or so years ago, when we had no protections, and therefore suffered from the consequences of drug use.

We agree that it is noble to include tools like Naloxone, the opioid overdose reversal medication, reduce the harm of drugs and meet people where they are at, but we should do so, only in the spirit of not leaving them where they are, and to facilitate recovery as opposed to encouraging ongoing use. There is no such thing as safe drug use. Member states that have made this critical error and failed to see how recovery should always be the goal have suffered from higher rates of drug related death and suffering.

We also remind the state parties about the health and social impacts of nonmedical drug use as described by the World Health Organization; and we look forward to the new WHO report on cannabis harms to be released soon. There is little doubt now about the costs of embracing cannabis, legalization, which we are seeing around the globe:

- ✓ Growing evidence reveals that regular, heavy cannabis use during adolescence is associated with addiction
- ✓ There has been an upward trend in the THC content of cannabis
- ✓ There is a consistent dose-response relationship between cannabis use in adolescence and the risk of developing psychotic symptoms or schizophrenia.
- ✓ A substantial majority of citizens around the world do not agree with legalizing cannabis.

Legalization is about one thing: making a small number of business people rich. If it were about ending the War on Drugs, recent policy changes would be limited to decriminalization. But instead, a host of business interests are getting involved with the legal marijuana trade in Colorado and elsewhere. They have set up private equity firms and fundraising organizations to attract investors and promote items such as marijuana candies and sodas, oils, and other products. And in the United States, the effects have been negative across the board.

This rise in youth use of marijuana is particularly frightening to see given the longterm implications involved with young people becoming addicted to marijuana

Some supporters of legalization have argued that the relaxing of marijuana laws would lead to lower rates of alcohol consumption. The data prove otherwise. These substances are used together.

Commercialization advocates have long argued that legalization will reduce black market marijuana activity in legalized states. However, criminal activity has only been amplified.

One of the most common arguments prevalent amongst the pro-marijuana lobby is that the legalization of the substance will greatly assist communities of color. But it is they who are suffering, the most, as they are being bombarded with a money hungry industry.

The marijuana industry is actively working to become the next Big Tobacco. The use of THC candies and drinks are catering to young people and getting them into the drug at an early age.

This doesn't mean we want to saddle people with criminal records for using cannabis. We are not calling for mass imprisonment. We want to emphasize prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery. But to deny the addictive potential of cannabis or negative mental health effects is to deny the overwhelming scientific evidence available today. And our experience tells us that we should not welcome with open arms a new industry – like Big Tobacco – which will focus on commercializing and increasing the use of a drug far more potent today than it has ever been.

Moreover, we stress that an international legal cannabis industry is likely to leverage bilateral and multilateral investment treaties to challenge public health regulations across the globe, as the tobacco industry has done. The legal actions tobacco companies have pursued

have had an outsized impact on developing countries, and are often resolved through secretive international arbitrations rather than in domestic courts.

We therefore request that member states follow the three international drug conventions and reiterate their commitment to the conventions, in connection with the debate around the legal status of cannabis and other drugs like psychedelics. The use of these drugs for non-medical purposes is not a solution to existing challenges with drug control. Nor is legalization the only way to promote alternatives to incarceration of drug users.

We remind member states to implement their obligations from the three Drug Conventions.

These three conventions are the backbone of international supply and demand control, and are flexible enough to adapt to cultural differences. They are not flexible enough, no should they be, however, to adapt to political whims or for-profit business schemes which only aim to further enslave our brains, hold back the generation, and condemn people to a life of addiction to mind altering substances.