

Summary of Drugs & Democracy Activities, April - June 2014

NEWSLETTER, April - June 2014



The dynamics of reform in the Americas continues. This time, the momentum comes from the Caribbean region. Jamaica and other Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states are now moving to change their marijuana laws. Among the proposed changes discussed in Jamaica were the decriminalisation of possession of small amounts of ganja for recreational and religious use and cultivating it for medicinal purposes. According to the [Jamaica Gleaner](#), the country “went a step further in June approving proposed changes to the country's drug laws that would decriminalise possession of up to two ounces of marijuana and remove the smoking of ganja, as well as the possession of pipes and other items used in the practice as criminal offences.” The reaction of the U.S.

government to this measure is interesting because it shows the weakening of its traditional prohibitionist position regarding drugs. As two U.S. states have legalized marijuana, Mr Brownfield was inclined to admit that the drug conventions have some room for interpretation, and that they have to accept the legalization of cannabis undertaken by some countries.

At the same time, the debate on drug policy grows in Latin America. The recent 44th General Assembly of the OAS resulted in a number of resolutions and recommendations aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights in the search for new approaches in development and implementation of a proper integration of human rights instruments with drug policy in the Americas. [This Resolution](#) of June 5th is a good example. The resolution was promoted by Uruguay, and supported by Ecuador, Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

“What we are simply doing is modifying the penalty regime to make it more suitable for our reality in Jamaica and less oppressive of our people.” Jamaica Justice Minister Senator Mark Golding

“Now there is a space for debate that is totally legitimized... a flexible interpretation of the conventions has now gained legitimacy. And finally, the need to change present policies has been accepted. There is no longer any doubt of the legitimacy—and need—to seek alternative drug policies.” Milton Romani, Uruguayan Ambassador to the OAS.

EVENTS



April 8-10 – The ministry of public health of Uruguay and the “Universidad de la República”, organized with the support of TNI, WOLA and Drug Policy Alliance (DPA), an international forum on medical use of cannabis, [Actualización sobre los usos médicos y terapéuticos del cannabis](#). The event aimed to present the scientific evidence for various medicinal and therapeutic uses of cannabis, best practices and comparative experience, among other issues. Tom Blickman attended the forum.

April 10th-12th – TNI and the Washington Office on Latin America WOLA held the [X Informal drug policy dialogue in Quito](#). The event was co-sponsored by the Ecuadorian government through Consejo Nacional de Sustancias Estupefacientes y Psicotrópicas ([CONSEP](#)). The event was attended by officials from various Latin American countries and representatives of civil society. Among the main points on the agenda were the preparations towards the UNGASS in 2016, regional fora addressing the drugs issue such as CELAC and OAS; cannabis; policy alternatives and

reduction of drugs market-related violence. Martin Jelsma, Pien Metaal and Amira Armenta attended the event.

April 29-30 – Martin Jelsma participated as an observer in the 55th regular session of [CICAD](#) (Inter American Observatory on Drugs), the drug policy forum of the OAS. The agenda included important issues like preparations for the special session on drugs of the OAS General Assembly in September in Guatemala, judicial reform and alternatives to incarceration and cannabis policy developments in the region.

May 1st - Martin Jelsma gave a presentation on Possible Reforms to the International Drug Regime at a closed meeting in New York on the Drug Policy Debate in the Americas of the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum (CPPF), organized with the UN System Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking.

April 30 – Martin Jelsma was invited by the [Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the OAS](#) for an exchange of ideas on the drug agenda for the Americas.



May 7-9 - At the [European Harm Reduction Conference](#) in Basel, Martin Jelsma gave a plenary presentation on Cannabis regulation and UN treaty reform, largely based on our report [The Rise and Decline of Cannabis Prohibition](#), and a parallel session talk on recent developments in Dutch cannabis policy. Presentation: [Cannabis Regulation and the UN Treaty Reform](#) Video Session 6 Martin Jelsma



May 15th - Tom Blickman spoke at a hearing of the Permanent Committee for Security and Justice in Dutch parliament to comment on the report: “International Law and Cannabis” by the Radboud University Nijmegen. The [Transnational Institute had been asked to respond to the report commissioned by the government](#), which not only regulated cultivation but also the current coffee shop policy.

May 19th - Pien Metaal organized and chaired a one-day expert seminar in coordination with [Forum Droghe](#), in Rome, in order to exchange experiences of harm reduction practices with stimulants around the globe. Participants came from Australia, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

May 20th - TNI organized in Rome, Vatican City the expert seminar “[Global Experiences with Harm Reduction for Stimulants and New Psychoactive Substances](#)”. The objective of this seminar was to compare the findings on innovative tools for the prevention of problematic cocaine use patterns, with experiences with harm reduction measures for stimulants in other regions of world. Tom Blickman attended the seminar.

May 21-23 - Tom Blickman attended the [Eighth Annual Conference of the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy \(ISSDP\)](#) held in Rome. He also chaired several sessions.



May 31st – Pien Metaal was one of the speakers at the Palm Beach (Aruba) conference [Mind Your Eye](#). The [conference](#) dealt with the history of the UN cannabis regime, and what options countries have to regulate its market. She met with local politicians, academics and activists, and attended a Oranjestad University meeting.

June 1-10th - Mission to Burma

On **2 June** Tom Kramer, Martin Jelsma and Ernestien Jensema presented the report [Bouncing Back. Relapse in the Golden Triangle](#) to interested diplomats, UNODC and EC staff at the EC office in Yangon.

From 3 to 5 June the TNI-Puang Ku Opium Farmers Forum brought together thirty farmers and representatives from all major opium growing regions in Myanmar. Farmers from Chin, Kachin, Northern, Eastern, Southern Shan and Kayah States including a wide variety of ethnic minorities, met to discuss the follow up of the First Southeast Asia Opium Farmers Forum that took place in July 2013. The Forum revisited the outcomes of the first Forum and decided on a structure that would help build capacity to advocate for more development oriented and humane policies towards opium farmers. Government and local authorities' policies to reduce opium cultivation should focus on providing assistance to address the basic needs of the people, as well as to develop infrastructure such as irrigation, electricity, and roads. The farmers also stressed that the armed conflict must end. Only a peaceful environment will allow them to become less dependent on the opium crop.



On the evening of **8 June** the opening dinner of the Burnet-TNI Drug User Round Table took place in Yangon. The Round Table meeting held at the Burnet office aimed to exchange information on the implementation of drug control policies in different regions in Myanmar. The main recommendations produced from the meeting included: drug addiction should be viewed as a chronic social disease; harm reduction services should be scaled up; obligatory registration to receive methadone maintenance therapy should be abolished and specific programmes targeted at female drug users should be set up.

In the **afternoon of the 9th** NGOs and Intergovernmental Organisations working in the drug field met for an informal dialogue to discuss recent drug policy developments in Myanmar. A representative of the Farmers Forum presented the outcomes of the Forum and a representative of the drug user round table presented the conclusions of their discussions in the morning. An important outcome of the dialogue was the formation of an informal drug policy working group to engage more actively with parliament and government on legislative changes. A follow up meeting to this dialogue will take place in Yangon at the end of July. The meeting was concluded with a presentation of the “Bouncing Back” report and a reception.

June 11th - Tom Blickman spoke on the regulation of cannabis cultivation, production and consumption in Uruguay and whether or not that is permitted under the current UN drug control conventions at the symposium “[Cannabis legalisation: high hopes or reality?](#)”, organised by the Utrecht study association for International and European law (Urios).



June 19-20th – Brussel, the final conference concerning an EC-funded research project took place. The project was titled “The Links In the Chain: Understanding the Unintended Consequence of International Counter-Narcotics Measures for the EU”. Martin Jelsma was asked to share his comments in the concluding roundtable on the relevance of the outcomes in view of the UNGASS 2016.

June 15-27 - Training on drug policies. Pien Metaal organized the hosting of a group of Latin American professionals from four different countries; they received lectures and had debates on international and local drug policies. An intensive communication training program was also part of it, with the purpose for the participants to apply these skills in the drug policy field at home. During the next six months all participants will be individually guided to reach some advocacy goal.

PUBLICATIONS

Report – Latin America [Informal Drug Policy Dialogue \(Quito\)](#), by Amira Armenta



Report - [Bouncing Back – Relapse in the Golden Triangle](#) , written by Tom Kramer, Martin Jelsma and Ernestien Jensema. This report is an indepth examination of the illegal drug market in the Golden Triangle. The report details the failure of ASEAN's 'drug free' strategy and the need for a new approach.

[Primavera cannabica](#), article by Amira Armenta, May 5

[Milestone in Colombia Peace Process Addresses Illicit Crops But Not Root Problem](#), article written by Ricardo Vargas, June 4th.

[Repressive policies only stoking Asean's drug problem](#), article by Tom Kramer and Martin Jelsma published on Nikkei Asian Review, June 6th.



Briefing - [Scheduling in the international drug control system](#), Drug Law Reform Series No.25, June 2014. Written by, Martin Jelsma, Christopher Hallam, and Dave Bewley-Taylor. The joint IDPC/TNI briefing paper on Scheduling in the international drug control system [link] was released just prior to the 36th WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence in Geneva from 16 to 20 June, where crucial recommendations have been discussed about international controls on ketamine, tramadol, cannabis and a large

number of New Psychoactive Substances.

[La reelección de Juan Manuel Santos](#), article by Amira Armenta, June 17th

[Reforming the Global Drug-Control System: The Stakes for Washington](#). Article by Martin Jelsma voor the North American Congress on Latin America NACLA, June 27.

[Internationaal recht en cannabis. Rondetafelgesprek coffeeshopbeleid Commissie Veiligheid en Justitie](#), Analysis by Martin Jelsma and Tom Blickman. May 15th.

IN THE MEDIA

“The consensus that existed for a number of decades about the basic principles of drug control at a global level—that consensus is gone,” says Martin Jelsma in an interview with OZY on cannabis legalisation initiatives. [The beginning of the end of the drug war](#), April 02, 2014.

TNI provided information to the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad for this article on Uruguay cannabis law, [Blij wiet roken in Uruguay](#), April 09, 2014.

The “Globo Reporter” a Brazilian channel interviewed in April Tom Blickman for a documentary on Amsterdam and the cannabis policy.

Pien Metaal was interviewed by Caribbean News Now for the article [Aruba to host crime reduction and prevention conference](#) next month, April 25th.

The report “[Ending the Drug Wars](#)” published in May by the London School of Economics quotes TNI's briefing “[A matter of substance](#)” by Ernestien Jensema. Related article on the Dutch press: De Volkskrant, Vrijdag, 9 mei 2014 [Toeconomen hekelen Nederlands drugsbeleid](#).

Pien Metaal contributed a chapter to the Colectivo de Estudios Drogas y Derecho (CEDD)’s new study [The chapter was titled “En busca de los derechos: usuarios de drogas y las respuestas estatales en América Latina”](#) and it assesses state responses to illicit drug use in eight Latin American countries: Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Bolivia. The study received widespread coverage (More than 20 articles) by the mainstream media in Latin America.

“The treaties do not ask the countries to apply the death penalty, but they do ask for severe sanctions, then leave it to the countries to decide what sanctions to apply,” Martin Jelsma is quoted in this article by Vice: [Global Drug Policy Is Still Deadly and Ineffective](#), Jun 1st.

Our work in Burma has got a [broad media coverage in Asia](#)

Stratrisk published the article [SE Asia’s war on drugs is ‘fueling production’ of opium](#), mentioning TNI's recent publication [Bouncing Back – Relapse in the Golden Triangle](#).

TNI is quoted on the Dutch cannabis beleid in the article [Schijterigheid](#), De Volkskrant, June 10.

The [Drug Policy Debate Radar](#) wrote a piece based on our briefing [Scheduling in the international drug control system](#), June 14th.

Tom Kramer provided information and was quoted on the article, [Myanmar's wildlife trafficking hotspot](#), Aljazeera June 17th.

Our monthly column in Cáñamo magazine (Barcelona)

- La condena del cannabis (April)
 - Pena de muerte por delitos de drogas. Por fin la JIFE se pronuncia contra la pena de muerte para los condenados por drogas (May)
 - El cannabis, un ministro y 25 alcaldes desobedientes. Sobre cómo la obstinación del ministro de Justicia holandés impide los avances de la política para el cannabis en un país caracterizado por ser vanguardia en el tema (June)
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Coming up the next quarter

July – Launch of the Spanish version of the cannabis report *Auge y caída de la prohibición del cannabis*, Barcelona, July 23rd.
Augustus – Expert seminar on law enforcement and social programmes in Southeast Europe
September - GIZ-TNI Asia Informal Drug Policy Dialogue, in Delhi.

Publications

July – Drug Policy Briefing No 42, Drugs, armed conflict and peace. How does the agreement on drugs between the government and the FARC help to put an end to the armed conflict in Colombia?
- Basic Guide on the UN Drug Conventions (web publication)

Augustus - -Drug Policy Briefing on cannabis in Morocco.
-Drug Policy Briefing on the *paco* (cocaine pasta base) routes in Latin America.